TENURE DISCUSSION

Dean Aaron Bobick

- Tenure is an objective assessment of a subjective process
- Plans to impart a set of processes, aligned with top universities, to gain some uniformity across departments
- Moving forward, these processes will be well-specified
- Tenure considers Research, Teaching, and Service
  - Funding is necessary in most cases to publish. If you’re not getting funded, either you have (1) trouble communicating your message/work or (2) reviewers are concerned about the impact of your work. It is difficult for those outside of your field to tease those two different reasons apart.
  - Teaching matters. Be a good teacher and seek help if you need it. But be careful about how much time you dedicate to the classroom; it would be difficult for SEAS to grant tenure to someone who is a good teacher but an unrecognized researcher.
  - Service may be:
    - internal with the department
    - external and on a national scale (e.g., workshop chair, associate editor on a journal, program chair)
- Questions a young faculty member should ask himself/herself:
  - Is my work influencing the way of thinking in my field?
  - What evidence do I have that I influence my field? That my work matters?
  - How can I demonstrate that people trying to advance a research agenda believe in me?
  - Are you collaborating on grants with senior PIs?
  - What is my h-index? (one way to document what you do)
    - It is possible to publish a lot and not matter much, but it is difficult to matter and not publish
    - Publication gets your important work exposed
    - Quality, not quantity. And citations are one way of demonstrating quality
- Advice
  - You will need to produce a list of letter writers.
    - Not all of the letter writers on your list will be asked
    - Letters will remain confidential, even if you get tenure
  - Plan a seminar/talk tour during your 5th year at places where letter writers are and/or invite them to give a seminar at WU and make sure they see your lab and your work.
  - Diversify your funding portfolio, especially if the typical, primary source (e.g. NSF) is a very low hit rate.
  - Entrepreneurial efforts need to be evaluated very carefully while you are trying to get tenure.
    - There is zero interest if they are simply for-profit ventures
    - Some interest if they are highly innovative
    - Patents do not generally count as publications
  - Put yourself in the shoes of the evaluators: are you influential in your field?
  - Focus on publishing research as senior/corresponding author. Evaluation focuses on your research as a faculty member (not as a student or postdoc).
  - Give invited keynote lectures. They matter because they show that people who control conferences believe that their attendees will be interested in what you say.
- Mid-tenure review – Spring of 3rd year
  - Where are you? What should you focus on?
  - Internal review:
    - Teaching
    - Research
    - CV
    - No external letters
Senior faculty will be involved and will help if needed.
Serious feedback to be given by chair; dean will NOT weigh in.
Forces department to pay attention with the goal of helping faculty improve case before tenure.

- **General timeline: Going up for tenure**
  - **April/May**
    - Discussion about anyone who might go up next academic year
    - Appoint three-person subcommittee who will put together the case book and create the “committee generated” letter writer list
    - Faculty member produces research statement, teaching statement, and papers (CV) and “candidate supplied” letter writer list
  - **Mid-August**
    - Letters solicited from both committee and candidate lists
  - **October**
    - Department vote by Nov. 1
    - Case presented to tenured faculty; vote recorded; chair writes letter of support
      - If vote and letter are negative, case will not likely leave department
      - If supported, case book and chair’s letter presented to school committee who take vote
  - **November/December**
    - SEAS Promotion & Tenure Committee meeting and vote
  - **January**
    - Dean makes decision
  - **March**
    - Provost does due diligence and confers with the Dean
    - Dean presents to Board of Trustees
- **Tenure extensions are possible**
  - Up to 3 years due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., lab not built, family medical issues)
  - Is there a reason to believe that things will turn around?

**OTHER ITEMS**
- Plans to mentor Associate Professors
- Plans to look at all faculty mentoring – not uniform across departments
- Next question: when will you get promoted to Full Professor? What are the criteria?

**Vice Dean for Research, Shelly Sakiyama-Elbert**
- New funding mechanisms sought to diversify the SEAS funding portfolio
- Open to workshop ideas
- Will assist with large research teams and center proposals
- Request PhD recruiting ideas
- Request feedback on faculty mentoring program