

NCTM 2015 Mentoring Session
“Navigating the Tenure Process”
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These notes are thoughts that we compiled while reflecting on how we navigated the tenure process in our respective institutions and departments (mathematics and mathematics education).

The tenure process generally revolves around three aspects of a dossier:

- Publications
- Statements
- Letter writers

We address each of these below:

1. **Publications:**

Understand institutional expectations in advance (e.g., specific numbers, role of teaching and service, grants, expectations across different university bodies, tier of journals).

Fix a research direction rather than working in a variety of disconnected projects.
Publications should relate to the research focus.

“Writing to the top” - One tip: First choose your journal and then write. Read what has been written in that journal on your topic. If nothing, consider a different journal, or a different framing.

For co-authored publications, keep track of division of contributions (e.g., research study, conceptual work, data analysis, writing, etc.)

Getting writing done:

1. If possible, keep summers open to do the bulk of your writing
2. Invite prominent scholars to co-author with you. You may do the majority of the writing, but they can help craft the paper so that accepted into higher-tier journal.
3. If necessarily, privilege writing over research and professional development. You can write several different papers from one data set (e.g., conduct different kinds of analyses, write a theoretical piece, or use a part of the data set you hadn't looked at before).
4. Write at least one theoretical piece to illustrate the trajectory of your thinking and how relates to the field.
5. Work with a writing group to keep yourself on track and to get feedback on your work.

If you are a researcher who publishes across disciplinary boundaries, reviewers may be confused about the contribution you are making. Make sure you spell out: (1) why you are targeting other audiences, (2) the journal rank and the type of publication that counts for this field, and (3) your methodology.

2. Statements

Generally, you will be asked to submit three statements with your dossier: Research, Teaching and Service.

We recommend that you get copies of these from peers, and start at least 4 months in advance of the submission of your dossier.

3. Letter writers

Your committee will solicit reviews of your tenure case from colleagues in the field as a part of your dossier. This process is handled differently by different institutions.

Many institutions give you the opportunity to nominate a given number of people as letter writers for your case. You will need to know the following:

-How many people can you nominate?

-Do they need to be of a certain rank? Which institutions are considered “comparable”?

One strategy is to focus on people who would be less obvious choices to your committee/dean.

4. Other Recommendations

Context matters - depending on if you are in a teaching institution or research institution, there are different requirements. Further, there are differences between a college of education and a math dept.

Example: In a math department math education is not well understood by mathematicians. Thus there is a need to clarify your work through your statement during any review process. For example, conference presentations and publications are not reviewed in math, but they are in math education. In fact PME-NA proceedings are highly cited (see BYU study), and can be added to your case.

Solicit senior faculty to write nominations of professional awards for you (e.g., an award within your SIG, university awards, AERA awards)

Develop strong collaborators. It is hard to do everything on your own. There are times you don't feel like going on. You also need someone to look at your work to get feedback. Manage your time well. Disengage with unproductive collaborators.

Working with others in the department can be challenging sometimes. Be polite always. Remember your focus.

Teaching - Only spend an allotted time each week. Watch the ratings. Request class times that work for you.

Service - Sometimes this can be tied to your research. Explain how the time you spend in service can establish relationships that help move your research forward. Also helps for grants. For example, I was able to recruit EL students through teachers in the Mathematics Teachers Circle.

Reviewing work - Makes you a better writer. Not too many.

Metrics for citation - Google scholar, SSCI, Web of knowledge.