

Your Academic Career - The Basics

Types of Higher Educational Institutions

The Carnegie Foundation's rating system is widely used in the U.S. to describe higher educational institutions. These are divided by highest degree awarded, numbers of degrees conferred each year and by amount of funded research done.

Doctorate-granting Universities. In the latest Carnegie Foundation rating system, doctorate-granting institutions are differentiated based on measures of research activity. The ratings now use a multi-measure index, not just a measure of federal funding used previously.

Doctorate-granting universities include those institutions that award at least 20 doctoral degrees per year (excluding doctoral-level degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practice, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, etc.). There are three categories of doctorate-granting institutions:

- 1) RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)
- 2) RU/H: Research Universities (high research activity)
- 3) DRU: Doctoral/Research Universities (lesser research activity)

Because of these changes, the new categories are not comparable to those previously used (which were Research I & II and Doctoral I & II; and Doctoral/Research—Extensive and Intensive).

Master's Colleges and Universities. Include Master's colleges and universities include institutions that award at least 50 master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees per year. Master's institutions are assigned to one of three categories based on the overall number of master's degrees conferred:

- 1) Master's/L: Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
- 2) Master's/M: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
- 3) Master's/S: Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)

Baccalaureate Colleges. Include institutions where baccalaureate degrees represent at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and that award fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees per year.

- 1) Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences
- 2) Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields
- 3) Bac/Assoc: Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges

Associate's Colleges. The Carnegie classification now includes two-year colleges.

Types of Academic Hire

a) *Tenure-track* - usually beginning with a three-year contract, the tenure-track leads to formal review for promotion and tenure (usually) after the sixth year on faculty. Once a faculty member is tenured, research productivity and teaching is not reviewed on a regular basis at most institutions. Tenure track faculty have different ranks based on experience and productivity (Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor).

b) *Clinical faculty* - in many professional schools, including many schools of social work, clinical faculty work on one-year to multiyear contracts with the main focus on teaching and generally a much lesser focus on research and publication. However, overall clinical faculty productivity and quality of teaching is reviewed on an annual basis. Contracts are typically reviewed and renewed or terminated each year. Clinical track faculty often have a range of ranks (Assistant, Associate, etc) based on experience and productivity.

c) *Adjunct faculty* - in most institutions adjunct faculty serve for a defined, contract period. This may be to teach a specific course, to teach for a semester or year. In no case is one's contract automatically renewed; adjunct teaching may be used to fill in for tenure-track faculty sabbaticals, etc. Contract teaching by adjunct faculty may be a useful complement for those mainly in clinical practice. Adjunct appointments may or may not be ranked; many are solely ranked at instructor level.

Academic Ranks

a) *Instructor*: Is the lowest level of faculty appointment. Instructors may serve as temporary adjunct faculty, or may reflect that the faculty member lacks a doctoral degree. All adjuncts at some institutions are given this rank – despite holding other ranks at other institutions where they are full-time faculty members. A Ph.D. may not be required.

b) *Assistant Professor*: The most common rank for an initial full time faculty appointment is to the Assistant Professor rank. Assistant professors typically hold the Ph.D. degree.

c) *Associate Professor*: After review of performance on a faculty, most frequently after six years, one may be promoted to the Associate Professor rank. Promotion to Associate Professor often, but not always, occurs jointly with tenure.

d) *Professor*: After continued high quality performance on a faculty, an associate professor may request him promotion to “full” professor rank. A full professor has demonstrated high quality research and teaching. Typically the “full” is implicit – one is not entitled to use the label “professor” until reaching full professor rank.

Named or Endowed Professorships maybe granted to faculty who have demonstrated high quality research in an area. Their appointment is to a specific "*chair*" which is

typically named after the donors who funded the position. These are typically full professor ranks only.

Core Academic Roles

There are several core academic roles. In all institutions 1) *research*, 2) *teaching* and 3) *service* are key criteria for promotion and tenure. In many institutions, 4) *obtaining external grant funding* is considered a key aspect of research achievement. Some institutions also value 5) *administrative work* as a criterion for promotion and tenure – especially after tenure. A recent publication in social work indicates that research and scholarship are generally weighted much more heavily than is teaching in reviews of promotion and tenure, with service a distant third. That said, institutions vary widely on the differential emphasis they place on these core criteria.

Teaching always includes core classroom teaching as rated by student evaluations and most commonly by peer observations and observations by administrators such as sequence chairs. Field advising is typically excluded from teaching. Institutions vary in the consideration they place on other forms of teaching such as in-service trainings and staff training.

Research always includes empirical research projects but (often) also includes many other forms of scholarship. Published books, published journal articles and conference paper presentations are typically considered as core scholarly works. In many cases institutions create hierarchies to differentially weight the value of different forms of publications and presentations toward promotion and tenure. Typically single author peer-reviewed journal articles are given highest weight. The journal in which they are published may also influence the weighting process - journals of larger circulation or greater impact factor on the discipline are considered more desirable than those in journals of smaller circulation. Some institutions also highly regard interdisciplinary publications; others do not. Books are more highly valued when published by academic presses that include an academic peer review process. In most cases single authored publications are weighted more than are multi-author publications. First author status (that is, being the first named author in a list) generally holds highest regard; impact decreases for each consecutive author where there are many authors to a single article. Some institutions weight publications by quantitative *impact factors* or ratings of the number of times an article is cited in the *Social Science Citation Index* which is a catalog of reference lists from published articles.

Conference paper publications and workshops are typically valued less than publications. This is because of their ephemeral nature and the lack of means to gain systematic feedback about them. While book reviews and a peer review (also called “juried”) vetting process of published articles allow for wide feedback from within one's profession or discipline, conference paper publications do not afford a systematic method for assessment. Still, they offer visibility within the profession.

Numbers of publications expected for tenure vary widely among institutions. Many institutions argue for between 12 and 30 publications at time of tenure. Some institutions require a book for tenure; others do not. Expectations around numbers of publications will only be rough estimates; in no cases should the simple attainment of any number of publications be viewed as a ticket to tenure.

Service relates to committee work, citizenship as well as service to the community and service to one's discipline or profession. Almost all faculty are expected to do student advising and participate on several institutional committees. Some institutions value community or professional service, while others do not. Service is generally an expected part of promotion to full professor rank, where one's impact on the discipline or profession may be evident in leadership roles beyond the academic institution.

Obtaining Grants is often merged with research, but is a pivotal part of retaining a job at many research intensive institutions. Informally, obtaining grants equal to at least one's salary (often including overhead) or ideally more than one's salary is increasingly a rough benchmark. Of course, this may be a bit erratic - a big grant for three years and only small grants for the next, etc. Many recent job descriptions highlight grant funded research potential explicitly.

Administration is valued in some institutions. This includes leadership work beyond ordinary committee service such as faculty hiring, sharing a sequence, or leading a reaccreditation process.

Clinical practice may be viewed as a second job if you are paid for it. This may mean it is not viewed as part of one's academic work, even if you teach practice. Always be clear on such expectations - best in writing. Sometimes only *pro bono* work is considered service; in other institutions it is not viewed as vital to an academic career.

The Tenure and Promotion Process

For new Assistant Professors, there is (typically) an annual review with the Dean or Associate Dean to review progress and identify strengths, concerns and areas for additional attention. In reality the way this is done, its depth and its perceived helpfulness vary widely. These reviews are as much formulative and guiding as summative. Of course, the faculty member may play a part in this – we may not hear what we don't want to hear, or assume criticism when guidance is intended.

A 3rd year review (at the end of the first contract or half way to tenure) is very common. This process is summative of achievement and also of future potential, as well as formulative in guiding future work. (Some schools give year four as sabbatical to do scholarship and research prior to coming up for tenure.) Grants obtained may be an important part of this deliberation.

During the 5th year one begins to prepare a dossier including 1) an updated CV, 2) a statement of teaching philosophy, 3) a list of faculty assignments (course taught,

other academic roles), 4) course evaluations (which may be left to the faculty member to complete or may be compiled by the Dean's or Registrar's office), 5) copies of funded grants - and in some cases promising but (as yet) unfunded grant applications, 6) copies of all publications (in print and accepted; some want copies of manuscripts under review but these will (usually) have less weight than those accepted or better in print already).

Some institutions will also want syllabi the faculty member has developed, materials used for teaching, and perhaps materials from conference papers (such as handouts of PowerPoint slides). One should add materials that make the best case.

Some institutions use a portfolio approach where faculty create summaries of selected works that represent various aspects of their contributions and achievements. Of course, at a meta-level, the materials the institution traditionally requires one to prepare amount to a sort of portfolio – but most portfolios allow more variety and more selectivity.

Most institutions also ask the faculty member to prepare a list of potential external reviews who must be faculty at other institutions (but ideally not close friends or anyone who will be perceived as unduly biased toward the candidate). These will be 4 to 8 names. The tenured faculty, Dean or Provost will also prepare a list of external reviewers. These people will be contacted until a final list of reviewers (about 4) is finalized – half from the candidate's list and half from the faculty list. These reviewers are ideally PhD level, well known and senior academics. These reviewers are (usually) asked to appraise the candidate's research and scholarship (and sometimes teaching). They are asked to rate the candidate in comparison to the institution's written promotion and tenure criteria as well as to address future potential and sometimes comparable experiences at their own institutions.

All of these materials are appraised by faculty members in one's school or department who hold the rank one seeks or higher rank. (That is, no people early on in their own careers review other newcomers.) The criteria used are specified in the institution's *Faculty Code*. After faculty review, an administrative review by the Dean takes place using the same criteria. (If the institution has a graduate school, the graduate school faculty and Dean may also do a review.) Finally, the institution's Provost and President do the final review.

Planning Your Own Academic Career

Most early career academics describe themselves as happy and productive, and almost all planned to stay in the academy. Concerns include: a lack of protected time for research, a lack of understanding about the rules and procedures of promotion (only 31 percent said they understood), problems in communication with Deans (often centering on too few meetings about promotion); uncertain funding for research; concerns about financial security and greater concerns among women about good to excellent chances for promotion.

Full-time positions in social work are increasing with new BSW, MSW and PhD programs. Many opportunities (or points of entry) center on teaching

undergraduates. Teaching and advising may be heavy in such roles, research less so. However, success in BSW teaching can be a stepping stone into MSW teaching. For PhD teaching the limited emphasis on research, publications and grants, however, may be less than optimal.

Many adjunct positions are also available in social work. These afford and opportunity to do both practice and teaching, to diversify one's workload. The down side is that pay for adjunct work is piecework by number of courses taught (\$2,000 to \$5,000 with experience and institution) and generally lacks benefits. Adjuncts may also do field advising or rub off-campus satellites of larger programs on a contract basis. Pay for such work varies widely.

Some things to consider:

1) *Identifying your own interest, goals and personal needs.* Where you teach will provide varied opportunities and pose varied demands on your and your time. Seek good match of institutional research and teaching expectations with your interests and goals. There is no best institution for everyone.

2) *Look for the type of institution that fits your goals and needs.* There are more BSW teaching positions than all other levels combined. They are also widely distributed geographically. MSW teaching positions are fewer and tend to be more concentrated in urban areas – they are also more competitive. PhD teaching follows success at MSW level.

The first job is usually the hardest to obtain. But it is easier to more among institutions when you have been a successful faculty member at one institution and are more widely know within the profession.

3) *Look at the available supports within the academic institution.* How is the annual review process done? Is it viewed as helpful to guide new faculty?

Are there good library resources? Office space? Computers? Other equipment needed for research? Are there resources such as grant finding and grant writing supports available?

Is there support and staff help both in identifying grant opportunities and in writing up grants. Is there help with budgets and cost estimates, specialized tools and equipments, statistical backup, etc.? What perks come back to you as a faculty member if you obtain a large grant? (How is overhead handled?)

4) *How is mentoring done?* Is there a formal program and system? Are there options to choose mentors or is one appointed? Can one have multiple mentors in content areas as well as for the tenure process? Research and experience show that outside mentoring may be invaluable to women and persons of color.

5) *Is there other guidance regarding tenure and promotion* available in the institution? Some have training programs for all new faculty members. These may help you plan for the expectations of your specific location – which is a big help.

Try to complete and have published some papers and some conference publications before/during your doctoral studies. This is an increasing expectation as it shows your ability to complete article manuscripts and get them accepted through peer review.

6) *What are salaries and benefits?* Pay is often based on a 10 month contract thought there may be additional pay for summer teaching under separate contract. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* publishes annual summaries of salary ranges for different ranks at the various types of institutions. Do consider that you may be able to continue a private practice, to begin to do workshops and trainings which can be additional sources of income.

Your Curriculum Vitae (CV) (aka a resume)

As you go through your PhD studies, you should develop and refine your CV. The goal is to find the best way to make clear—to market—your education, experiences and accomplishments and training—and the best way to describe them. You should catalog your teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations and other such details.

One good way to start is to review the CVs of other academics (in print or online – many faculty CVs are available online). Look for a good clear format and organization. Don't let key accomplishments and credentials to be lost in lots of minor points. Never fake or embellish – this can come back to haunt you or even get you fired. Present your credentials and qualifications clearly, succinctly and in descending order of importance. That is, your PhD goes before your MSW and before your BA. Recent events go before older ones. Tailor your CV to each different job for which you apply. Highlight those features that fit best – more practice or more research for instance.

You send your CV with a cover letter that describes your interest in the position you're applying for and that promotes your good fit for the position. Such a cover letter should also be tailored to each specific position for which you are applying. Make clear what/how you will contribute to the program—and institution—to which you're applying. Views differ on the length of cover letters: One view is to keep it brief; the other is to take as long as you wish to sell yourself – but no more than 3 sides. Tailor the cover letter to each position. Obviously you will have to look carefully and reflectively at key information about a program (catalog, syllabi, etc.) to tailor the cover letter to the specifics of the position.

Some Tips Learned from Experience!

File all tenure and promotion materials (all teaching evaluations, all letters that acknowledge your good work, all conference brochures showing what you've presented, agency ads) in a single file draw or big box. This will help with recall and preparing materials later.

Know the tenure and promotion specification in your institutions' *Faculty Code*.

Build Relationships with other faculty members and administrators. This may mean doing extra work – which is expected. Professional and community service also falls into this category – it build supports who may later serve as external tenure and promotion reviewers who know your style and academic work.

Attend Tenure and Promotion workshops.

Attend (and, still better, present) at Conferences. Network!

Begin to Identify Potential External Reviewers Early Tenure and promotion includes reviews of your work and accomplishments by well known faculty of higher rank at other institutions. These people should not be your teachers or best friends – they need to be favorably inclined by balanced reviewers. Think who might fit with your areas and type of scholarly work. Who appreciates the setting your will teach in?

Develop Writing Supports that allow you to produce well and get published.

Use Good Manners – thank you notes for interviews are always beneficial. Manners matter in all other ways too.

References:

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