

Top Ten Things That Must Be Done During Your First Year

1. **Document Everything You Do.** Set up a file. Slip into it a note every time that you are appointed to a committee, give a talk to a student group, write a new syllabus, and receive a thank you note from a student.
2. **Be Certain That Your Statement Of Expectations Reflects What You Actually Do.** If your duties evolve in a different direction from your original expectations, it is your right to request that your expectations be changed to reflect those new or altered duties.
3. **Find A Mentor Or Mentors.** Seek advice and guidance from two or three different, experienced colleagues. These need not necessarily be all in your department. In fact, there are advantages to receiving advice from someone in a different department. Ideally, one of these people should be someone who has recently completed the tenure and promotion process.
4. **Be Selective In The Committee Assignments You Accept.** There is tendency is to overwhelm new faculty with committee assignments and a variety of other departmental duties. A mentor from outside your department can often help you achieve a better perspective on the degree to which your department may be overlooking your needs in favor of its needs.
5. **Use Department, School, And University Resources To Enhance Your Teaching Skills.** Make a point of sitting in on the classes of colleagues known to be good. It's one thing to listen to a lecture as a student. It's very different to listen to a lecture as a colleague/new instructor. If you are new to preparing and teaching courses, try to emphasize "low-tech" approaches which you can prepare in a relatively short period of time.
6. **Start Writing.** Your first year is often a time spent learning the ropes rather than pursuing new scholarship. As such it is often an ideal time to write up existing data (including your dissertation) for publication.
7. **Demand A Useful Evaluation.** It is in your best interest for your peers to carry out an honest, constructive evaluation of your performance. The University's Tenure and Promotion Committee (TEP) values faculty who demonstrate improvement over the years. Evaluations that rave about scholarship that are not supported by your C.V. are looked at with suspicion. Singularly, peer observations that never make any suggestions for improvement may also be suspect.

8. **No One Cares About Your Tenure And Promotion As Much As You.** Therefore, you must take it on yourself to make certain that your peers and chairperson conduct classroom observations when they should, that student evaluations (SRIS) are administered to all your classes on time, and that the reports are written up and submitted to your dean by the appropriate deadlines. For the first year:

- Student evaluations (SRIS) must be done in all your classes, each semester.
- Your evaluation committee must conduct peer observations twice each semester – a total of four times a year.
- A chair observation must be done during the first semester.
- Prepare an updated vita.
- Your "first annual review" is, in real time, a report about your first semester. The renewal recommendation of your evaluation committee is due to the dean with a copy to the chair by **January 30**. The renewal recommendation of your chair is due to the dean by **February 7**.
- Your "second annual review" is, in real time, your second semester and the beginning of your third semester. The report of your evaluation committee is due to the dean with a copy to the chair by **November 1**. The evaluation of your chair is due to the dean by **November 8**.

N.B. The deadlines for first year faculty are remarkably early. Be vigilant. If you must, hound your evaluation committee repeatedly to ensure that all deadlines are met. You may also feel the need to ask your department chair to apply appropriate pressure.

9. **Respond Proactively To Criticism.** Most of us who become university faculty members are unaccustomed to less-than-glowing feedback on our professional work. The reality is, however, that many of us, especially in the first years on the faculty, get some negative responses to our efforts. This may take the form of scores on SRIS that are below your expectation, an article to a professional journal returned marked "Revise and Resubmit," a harsh peer review of teaching, or loss of an election for a post you seek. Don't just sit on and stew about this kind of feedback. Exert effort to set aside your emotional reaction and look for the valid information negative feedback may give you about your work. Consult with a trusted colleague about such criticism to help you to gain perspective. Develop a plan to respond to the useful information that is available in negative feedback so that it becomes a useful tool for your own development.

10. **Shameless Self-Promotion.** Let others, including your department chair, evaluation committee chair, and dean, know what you are up to. Every time that you publish a paper, present a talk, etc.; forward that information to your dean. When your department chair requests "bullets" each month, dutifully send information on your activities.