



Now What? Making the Transition from Student to Faculty Member

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Surviving Your First Years as a Faculty Member

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Life as a junior faculty member can be hectic. Not only are you and your family adjusting to a new environment, but you are also learning the organizational climate and culture of your institution. Add to this the development of new courses, the expectations of departmental and college-level service, the increased pressures to garner external grants, and pressures of student advising--and you quickly realize you have very little time to write and publish your work.

With a few tips, however, you can make your junior faculty experience a lot less stressful and your job a lot more enjoyable. These tips are merely anecdotal in nature, and are grounded in painful lessons I've learned along the way. I offer these to you to help you avoid some of the pitfalls I've encountered in my short time of being a faculty member.

As a student

1. **Get to know key people in the field:** You will quickly realize that key players in Educational Administration attend—and are affiliated with—UCEA and AERA (Division A and L). Attend their sessions, get to know them, and generally hone your social/schmoozing skills. As with any academic field, the more people recognize you, the better off you are. Remember, conferences are a key opportunity for individuals to discuss position openings, network, and build professional relationships. More importantly, the people you meet today, can serve as external reviewers when you go up for tenure six years from now!
2. **Publish early:** It is important to demonstrate your writing skills and publishing abilities when you apply for a faculty position. Remember, applicants with 1-2 publications are rapidly becoming the norm across the country. If you want to land that position, you need to demonstrate that you are as good (or better) than the competition.
3. **Be selective in choosing job positions:** In our field, as with any other academic program, rank and status is critically important. Moreover, an institution with UCEA membership is also positively viewed by others. Choose your schools wisely, and realize that (while entirely symbolic), your university affiliation does play a critical role in having people recognize you and your scholarship. Remember, program rank and departmental rank are two different entities. Don't confuse a strong university with a strong academic program in Ed. Admin.
4. **Be selective in choosing recommendors:** While letters of recommendation are largely subjective in nature, a letter from a well known individual in the field can—and often does—carry a lot of weight in the eyes of faculty members reviewing your application!

5. **Prepare for interviews well in advance.** This includes doing internet and other type of research on the university, the department, and the faculty in those institutions. This not only communicates a genuine interest on your behalf, but also ensures that you have some specific questions about the program prior to your interview. You also need to prepare and practice your academic presentation with colleagues and peers. The ability to “nail” your presentation will be a critical component in landing your first job.

As a new faculty member

1. **Know publication hierarchy.** There is indeed, a hierarchy when it comes to publishing your work. As a new faculty member, you should familiarize yourself with the publication hierarchy and realize that what you publish (and where you publish) will ultimately determine promotion and tenure decisions. A possible hierarchy may look like the following:
 - (a) Sole author of a major article (data-based or theoretical; refereed national journal)
 - (b) Co-author of a major article (data-based or theoretical; refereed national journal; first authorship is critical)
 - (c) Sole author of a book
 - (d) Co-author of a book
 - (e) Sole editor of a book
 - (f) Co-editor of a book
 - (g) Sole author of a book review or minor article (secondary-level journal ; position paper; wisdom of experts)
 - (h) Co-author of a minor article or book review
 - (i) Author or co-author of a standardized test and/or technical manual
 - (j) Sole author of a book chapter or monograph
 - (k) Co-author of a book chapter or monograph
 - (l) Author or co-author of unrefereed technical report; article in state journal or newsletter
2. **Know exactly what is expected of you at your institution.** Most universities have a specified number of publications that are indicative of satisfactory progress (e.g., 2 peer-reviewed publications per year). You should familiarize yourself immediately with what the expectations are at your place of employment. Your dean, department chair, or academic personnel committee should have this information.
3. **Start getting things into the pipeline early:** The economy of academe is measured in publications. Get them out and get them out frequently.
4. **Have a research/publication plan and stick to it religiously:** This is one of the hardest things to do, but one of the most important. Academic life constantly has you juggling many different tasks, many of which take you away from your research/publication plans. Because of this fact, it is critically important to hone your planning and organizational skills. You should develop a long-range “plan” which includes the type(s) of research you want to do at any given year, and the number/types of publications you plan to submit per year. Reward yourself for your accomplishments, but don’t punish yourself should you not meet your expectations. Remember, expectations should be realistic *and* attainable.

5. **Pace yourself/Get into a groove.** Believe it or not, there is a “rhythm” to successful publishing. Most faculty members prepare papers for a conference (UCEA and AERA), present their work, obtain feedback, and submit the paper soon afterwards. This ensures that their paper has been “field tested,” and increases the probability of getting it accepted to a major academic journal. This rhythm/groove is what distinguishes successful faculty from unsuccessful ones.
6. **Hit the ground running.** During their first semester, many new faculty are still detoxing from the vicious dissertation experience. Consequently, many do not start working on their publications until the end of the first year or the beginning of their second year. Remember, your tenure clock begins your first day on the job! It also takes about 6-8 months for journal editors to make decisions about your manuscripts. Without a doubt, start writing/re-writing and gathering ideas for publications ASAP. In addition, take time to familiarize yourself with protocol for IRB, external funding, and other miscellany.
7. **Negotiate a reduced course-load/RA’s.** While many colleges and universities offer a reduced course-load and/or RA’s to new faculty members, there are several programs in the nation that do not. You should negotiate this issue in advance, and certainly ask about them during your interview.
8. **Use your RA’s wisely.** For a variety of reasons, many of us do not take advantage of an RA—or do not feel comfortable delegating responsibility to them. In my first year, my RA was hired for 20 hours/week, but I only used her for 2 hours or less every week. I had to learn to “let go” of my research/data and trust in my TA’s competence to do a good job with my research. This freed up my time to focus on other projects!
9. **Take advantage of winter/spring/summer breaks.** Consider this “down time” or time that you can focus exclusively on your work. You’d be surprised how much you can accomplish during 1 week, especially when there are no students, colleagues, or phone calls, to pull you away from your writing!
10. **Do service sparingly.** Service is important. It communicates to others that you are a team player and are willing to take on extra responsibilities for the department or the college. You must remember, however, that service alone will not get you tenure. You must, therefore, learn how to say “no” without necessarily giving the impression that you are not a team-player.
11. **Don’t get caught in the “new course” syndrome.** New professors commonly teach a variety of courses and/or are usually the first to take on a course when the department is in a proverbial “pinch.” Consequently, many find themselves “preparing” new courses every semester. In my first three years, I had developed and taught 8 new courses—a practice certainly not conducive to publishing! If you find yourself in a similar situation, negotiate with your department chair and have her/him understand that these practices are taking you away from your overall productivity.

12. **Stay away from writing/editing books, monographs, reviews, etc..** These don't count for much at Research 1 institutions, and are additionally, quite time consuming. I am currently working an edited book, and wish I did not take on this responsibility this early in my career! My advice is to use your time wisely and try to get peer-reviewed publications, instead.
13. **Take advantage of small grants.** There are many university and national grant out there that that can help you secure some time away from the office and/or help fund your research. Take advantage of these small grant opportunities.
14. **Take your time before applying for doctoral faculty status and/or chairing dissertations.** Universities have different procedures for obtaining doctoral faculty status. While you certainly want to have some dissertation chair experience when you go up for tenure, you should not feel rushed to jump into this experience. Take time to publish, do research, and get your feet on the ground before taking on dissertation chair responsibilities. Remember, you will not get tenure on the number of dissertations you chair.
15. **Make friends in the department and college.** One of the greatest things I appreciate about my job is the fact that my colleagues and I are friends as well as colleagues. We not only work together, but we also share a friendship outside of work. This type of informal networking is critical: it functions as a type of support as well as a form of camaraderie where shared experiences function as a source of psychological and emotional nurturance.

Surviving Your First Years as a Faculty Member

Scott McLeod
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1. **Define your own job.** Others will try and define your job for you. Stay focused on what you want to do, not what others want you to do. If you are supposed to be doing research, for example, don't let others suck you into committee / administrative work or working on grants unrelated to that research. One of the benefits of being a professor is almost total control over your time. Outside of some basic teaching responsibilities (which often can be bought out) and regular department meetings (which you probably should attend), your time is yours; use it wisely to advance your career in the direction you see fit. It is your career and your life, not anyone else's. **It is okay to say no; it may be career suicide not to** (repeat daily).
2. **Keep in mind the priorities of the institution.** Understand clearly that your institution defines the tenure guidelines. You must play the game if you want to stay there. Hopefully your personal and professional priorities match up well with those of your institution (i.e., hopefully you are not at a big-time research institution if you like to teach but not do research). If not, skip to Number 10.
3. **Ask questions; ask for help.** All institutions have support systems. Ask faculty and staff colleagues about the day-to-day stuff related to working in your institution; you'll get the information that you need and you also will be building important relationships. Asking someone a question is a great way to meet her. Don't wait for people to bring you needed information; be proactive about getting the help that you need to function effectively and efficiently within your organization.
4. **Be wary of "opportunities" that arise.** It is important to be a team player. It is important to forge relationships / partnerships with colleagues in your institution. That said, much of that may not amount to much at tenure time. Determine how your institution values different collaborative efforts, committee work, etc. In many places, the expectation is that you will be a primary, not secondary, author. In many places, involvement with a grant is not worth much when it comes to tenure unless you are the principal investigator. In many places, they will ask you to serve on committees but then not value it very much at tenure review time. Get the idea?
5. **Always strive to serve the needs of students.** One of the quickest ways to get a reputation as a good colleague is to be a good instructor and advisor. Students will talk about you to other students and to other faculty members. Do everything you can to create quality teaching and advising experiences for students; whatever time and effort you expend will be rewarded tenfold.

6. **Actively look for and create opportunities / resources.** Find out every resource that is available to you within the institution. Many colleges and universities have centers / offices to help faculty and students with teaching, writing, statistics, getting and implementing grants, etc. Find out all of the internal funding opportunities (teaching, research, professional development, etc.) in your institution and apply for them as often as you can. If you need funding for your research, begin looking for external sources early in your career.
7. **Recognize that your first year is going to be an acclimation year.** Your first year should be about “learning the ropes” and building your capacity. Have modest, achievable goals for your first year. For example, at a large research institution, a successful year would be 1) to submit for review an article off of your dissertation, 2) to have one or two other research projects in progress, 3) to develop and teach whatever courses you were supposed to teach, and 4) to begin building your capacity to begin new research projects, forge ongoing research partnerships with other scholars in your area, and identify funding opportunities for your research. If you begin to do some advising and perhaps sit on one committee, you have a very full year. At a smaller or teaching-oriented institution, your year may look very different (see Number 2).
8. **If you work in a research-oriented institution, print out the next page and put it on the door to your office.**
9. **Don’t let “getting tenure” rule your life.** Lead a balanced, healthy life. The job of a new assistant professor can be all-consuming if you let it. Make time for family and friends, engage in pleasure reading, exercise, go on vacations – do all of the things that keep you on an even keel.
10. **Finally, don’t be afraid to leave.** Your job should meet your needs as well as those of your institution. If you find that your institution is not a good match for the kind of professional life you want to have, find a place that is. All tenure does is let you stay at your institution. If it’s a place at which you don’t want to be, why work toward staying there? Now is a tremendous time to look for educational leadership jobs, either in academia or in the field. There are more academic openings than there are “qualified” candidates; many faculty searches have been ongoing for several years. In this buyer’s market, it makes little sense to stay in a place that makes you unhappy. You got your first job, there is no reason you can’t get another one. If you don’t have the experiences to get a particular job, stick it out for a year at your current institution, do everything you can during that time to get those experiences, and then apply for the job. Life is too short to be professionally miserable.

Good luck! Get in touch if you want moral support!

Am I interested in it?



Does it lead to publication?

Surviving Your First Years as a Faculty Member

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[coming soon]

Surviving Your First Years as a Faculty Member

David Quinn
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It seems hard to believe that just three years ago I was sitting where you are today. I was finishing my final year at the University of Missouri, taking my last class or two and working diligently on my dissertation research. I was also seriously pondering where I wanted to interview for a faculty position. I was lucky to have an incredible advisor to assist me through the Ph.D. process, interviewing, and offer advice on being a junior faculty member. I would like to present some thoughts to you on lessons I have learned the last two and a half years.

1. The most important thing you can do when you become a member of the academy is to create and nurture relationships. As in any position, the relationships that you establish will get you through the tough times that you are sure to encounter. Build relationships and a support system with other junior faculty, members of other departments and members of the college administration. The connections you establish will be essential in your pursuit of promotion and tenure. Foster positive and reciprocal relationships with local school districts. These relationships with superintendents and principals will give you local credibility and open doors for obtaining research data.
2. If you plan on obtaining a faculty position at a research university, start researching, writing and submitting publications now. Many universities expect applicants for assistant professor positions to demonstrate evidence of research, writing and publication. These publications will also provide you with a “head start” towards your future institution’s research expectations for promotion and tenure.
3. Although research is paramount in your journey towards promotion and tenure, effective teaching is a crucial element. We are in the field of “education” and there is no excuse for poor teaching. To be an effective educator, it takes time, effort and commitment to students. Obviously, you need to find a balance between time spent on your research and time spent preparing for instruction, however I firmly believe that it is our duty to develop a deep understanding of theory and application for our students to be successful educational leaders.
4. Service is another important component in the life of a junior faculty member. However, service can dominate a significant portion of your time if you are not careful. You have a duty as a faculty member to provide service to your department, college and university, however understand that you cannot provide future service if you do not make tenure. You should also provide service to the local educational community. This is a good chance to get a “twofer” and use your service experience as data gathering and writing opportunities.

Surviving Your First Years as a Faculty Member

*Megan Tschannen-Moran
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In working with the Division A Task Force on Research Quality, I conducted a study of highly productive and more typical professors in educational administration. Below is some of the wisdom that I gleaned from both surveys and interviews about their life and work.

The thing that came through most strongly in both the surveys and the interviews was that the job demands in this field are intense and that you will need a strategy to keep from being run ragged. The strongest advice that I heard was that you needed to know yourself and “to your own self be true.” This will help you to prioritize the many competing demands, both personal and professional, that vie for your time.

Most scholars said that what most motivated them was to make a contribution or to make a difference. Some professors seemed to want to make this contribution through research and writing, while others wanted to make a difference through their teaching and through the contributions of their students. In finding a research agenda, it is important to connect with your passion. At the same time, you’ll want to make sure that your research stream is grounded in the field of practice. Find ways to connect with practitioners to keep your ear to the ground of important issues in the field. You’ll be better off if you can find a research agenda that can last up to a decade or more, rather than switching from topic to topic with each project.

A strategy that seemed to mark successful scholars was their ability to connect with others for social support, and very often for collaboration on projects. As young scholars many of them intentionally sought out relationships with others who had skills that they lacked. But throughout their careers they sought out people with similar interests. These partnerships often lasted over many years. The scholars I talked to were careful to make sure that they brought valuable skills to these partnerships. Several said that they did their best work in these contexts in order to not let down a respected colleague.

Most of the scholars interviewed acknowledged that the writing process was hard work that required setting aside uninterrupted time to be successful. For some this meant collecting data and literature during the academic year, but reserving time in the summer where they could think more deeply and write. For others it was certain days of the week when they did not go into the office, and for still others, it was a certain time of day, such as early morning or late at night that they carved out for writing. Most mentioned making use of the rhythms of conference proposal deadlines (such as UCEA and AERA) to design projects and then to provide the external deadline to get them done.

Although nobody I interviewed said they really liked getting negative reviews of their work through the peer review process, many commented on how much they had come to value the process of peer review in improving their work. Several mentioned strategies they had developed for coping with the sting of reading a negative review, sometimes putting the piece away for a few days or weeks before they came back and began to address the concerns mentioned in the review. As they had moved through their career, some said, the amount of time they needed to let a piece “rest” after reading a review had gotten shorter.

Recognize that the role of being a professor of educational administration is a complex one and takes time to master. Your first year you may need to devote a larger proportion of your time to developing your courses and “getting your sea legs.” Do try to do at least some writing. Try to have at least one piece submitted for publication, perhaps from your dissertation, by the end of your first year. From this you can begin to learn the complex and sometimes circuitous route of an article on its way to publication.

Don’t sign up for every committee that sounds interesting your first year. Many universities try to protect junior faculty from the demands of committee work for the first year. If yours doesn’t, then protect yourself and learn to say no. There will be time for involvement in faculty governance and institutional maintenance once your career is more established.

Above all, have some fun. If you don’t find ways to enjoy this work, then all that you have invested to get to where you are may be wasted.

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Pam Tucker
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My story:

- Mid-life Transition (Levinson, 1978)
 - Graduate school/new faculty position reflected my “mid-life transition”
 - Levinson described middle adulthood as the “most creative season in the life cycle”
 - Rang true for me
 - Sense of stability in my relationships with family and friends
 - Freedom to pursue professional interests
 - Better grounding as a person
- Career entry phase: novice professor
 - 1 year at W&M, 4 years at UVA
- Focus of those years, consistent with Baldwin (1995)
 - developing effective teaching skills
 - becoming aware of institutional resources
 - understanding formal policies
 - accepting university norms
 - tackling new courses
 - developing and beginning a research agenda
- Institutional response at the novice stage
 - reduction of work - The more you seem to handle, the more you get.
 - formal orientation - Curry, President, Provost, HR
 - supportive administrators – Listen to their advice.
 - mentor – There are many possibilities but the best is self-selected.

Learnings:

1. Know thyself –
 - The three-part university job description is service, teaching and research. Depending on where you choose to work, these will have differential importance for your promotion.

Advice

- Be aware of your institutions expectations and make a conscious choice to align yourself with them or be prepared to be undervalued.

- Consider carefully what projects you select in each area. To the extent possible, integrate these three aspects of your work so that your research informs your teaching, service informs your research, etc.
- Be faithful to those topics/causes about which you feel passionate.
- Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses and focus your energies on those projects that build on your strengths but always be open to opportunities to improve your areas of weakness.

2. Long-term planning -

- Long-term planning can be difficult in the fluid environment of higher education. I am a rational, logical planner but I never planned to be where I am.
- Career development typically is the result of a natural evolution and not a carefully planned career plan.

Advice

- Take advantage of interesting opportunities that present themselves and make the most of them.
- Focus on *discovering* your niche versus *deciding* upon it.

3. Importance of mentors -

- At every juncture, I have excelled, in part, due to the support and guidance of a mentor. I had a mentor as a school administrator, graduate student and now as a faculty member.
- Role of mentor:
 - support and guidance
 - promotion of your professional growth
 - gentle pressure to make that next transition
 - socialization into the academic world
 - collaborative projects
 - nominations for various projects and professional opportunities

Advice

- Find and work with a mentor at every stage of your career. Learning is a social activity and respected, supportive colleagues are critical to your success.

References

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