

Notes from WICS Webinar on Preparing a Tenure Portfolio
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Featuring Remarks by Barbara Walter, Ashley Leeds, Page Fortna, Kelly Kadera, and
Sara Mitchell.

Edited by Heather Smith, Megan Shannon, and Erica Chenoweth.

I. Soliciting Tenure Letter Writers by Barbara Walter

The Letter Process

- Some institutions allow the candidate to have input regarding the list of potential writers
- But the department is under no obligation to use any of the names.
- Departments that want you to get tenure will ask for letters that are likely to be favorable.

Strategies for Soliciting Letter Writers

- Meet people! It's all about networking.
- Get those people to read your work, and impress them with the quality of your work.
- Let your friends in the discipline know that you are willing to give presentations at their institutions, and even offer to pay for it (if you can)
- Organize a conference. Barbara hosted a "young scholars" conference, where participants presented a new idea unrelated to their dissertation. The idea was to get to know each other and form networks.

II. Writing a Research Statement by Brett Ashley Leeds

General Advice

- Think about making yourself tenurable not only at your school, but at other schools
- Teaching and service can break a tenure case, but they usually don't make a case.
- How your colleagues perceive you matters for your tenure case, and your teaching and service can affect that.

Research Statement

- Frame your contribution in the research statement.
- Emphasize your strengths, address your future plans and trajectory and put any potential weaknesses in the best light.
- Show how your full body of work fits together and let the committee know what the scholarly world knows now that they would not have known without your contribution and why that is important.
- To know what to write here, you need to think about the questions others will raise in looking at your record. Have your mentors read the statement and look at your record as critically as possible.

III. The Tenure File Based on a Book by Page Fortna

- The normal standard at Research 1 department is 1 book out, “substantial progress” on 2nd. There’s wiggle room in what “substantial progress” means – ideally enough for dept to see if project will pan out empirically, & make a mark (under contract helps, but not necessary). but substantial progress can mean less if rest of file is very strong, or as Barb said, if dept wants to tenure you.
- There is an issue of how closely related your second project should be to your first (for articles as well). If they are too close, people might question how big a contribution the first is over the second – don’t want all your publications to be making the same argument. But if they are too far apart, people might wonder whether you have a coherent research agenda. So ideally, there should be clear links between your projects, but also clear distinctions
- The press that publishes the book is important (in the same way that the perceived rank of the journal is for articles) in that publishing with a very highly regarded University Press provides external validation of the quality of the work. but committee and dept. will also judge quality for themselves. So a well respected UP is necessary but not sufficient.
- In judging quality – making a mark on field & innovation is in some ways more important than whether the case is entirely backed up empirically (that is, you don’t want your work, even if it’s considered really solid, to be considered “pedestrian”) -- though obviously both innovative and solid empirically is best.
- University presses care less about whether some parts of the argument or evidence have appeared in print than journals do. So better to publish an article or two from the project along the way, before sending out whole ms, than to try to publish articles once the book is out or in production.
- Edited volumes don’t count for much – help a little, esp. if they make a mark, but probably not nearly as much as the effort they take. so save your ideas for edited volumes for after tenure.
- Co-authored work. In a fair world, there’s some attempt to discern how much the tenure candidate contributed. sometimes that’s clear, esp. when people team up because have very different skills. sometimes less clear, in which case the story can be spun either way, depending on whether the committee wants to tenure you or not (again, lots of wiggle room here). to be safe, make sure at least some of your publications are single authored.
- Find out from senior people in dept. whether more emphasis is placed on books or articles. In some places, 6 articles = 1 book, but at other places articles, esp. if land in good journals and make a strong & innovative arg., count for more than 1/6th of a book. This can also differ by subfield within a department, so make sure you talk to be people about standards for your subfield.

IV. The Tenure File Based on Articles by Sara Mitchell

- In a recent APSA survey of 1130 members with PhDs conducted by Michael Brintnall and Vicki Hesli, the mean number of published articles reported by associate professors was 7.61. The average number of books published by

associate professors is 0.87, or not quite 1 per professor. The number of book chapters averages 3.77 for associates.

- Generate enough papers to reach the desired quantity. Not all papers you write will successfully find their way into print, so you should plan on having more papers than 7-10 in production. For example, if you wrote 3 papers a year for the first five years on the track, you would have 15 papers, which would create an expectation of a 2/3 conversion rate to reach the target number.
- Generate a portfolio of research by targeting different types of journals. . So you should try to generate a first tier and second tier of papers in your work. For example, when I was junior, some papers would be sent on the first round to *Journal of Conflict Resolution* or *International Studies Quarterly*. Others would go to *APSR*, *AJPS*, *JOP*, *IO*, or *World Politics*. By diversifying where you send things, this will help you build more articles on your CV. Yet you can still be strategic about selection in the second tier of journals; *JCR* is a better publication than *CMPS*, so think about the rank ordering of journals in the second tier also when submitting.
- Coauthoring: it is a simple fact that you can generate more papers by coauthoring with others. Yet you need to be strategic about these coauthor choices. The most ideal coauthor is someone who is your academic peer, such as a grad student colleague, or another assistant professor in your department. It is also ideal to collaborate with grad students, although you will end up doing more of the work in a lot of those cases.
- Get to know journal editors, grant folks, book editors, etc. A lot of publishing success depends on solid connections to journal and press editors. As a journal editor myself, I'm often more inclined to look at something more carefully, especially before I reject it, if this is work by someone I know.
- Consider writing in 2-3 distinct areas. It is important to be known for something, or to have a clear academic identity. At the same time, however, this can be a risky strategy if the area you are working in is difficult to publish in.
- Consider applying for grants. I often tell people to treat grant writing as a part of the research process, because you can use that exact same text developed in the grant for journal articles and book chapters.
- Use your teaching to help your research

V. Building a Tenure Portfolio by Kelly Kadera

Components of a Portfolio

- Distinctiveness – a scholarly identity
 - What are you known for?
 - Conceptual ideas
 - Unique theory
 - Substantive theme
 - Collection of a novel dataset
 - Development of a new measurement technique
 - Facility with a particular analysis tool
 - Other

- *Coherence*
 - Are you especially good at it?
 - Grants
 - Professional awards
 - High-profile invited talks
 - High citation counts
- Second strike
- Solo work
- Your own contributions are evident in co-authored work
- High profile publication venues (blue chip journals, university presses)
- Trajectory, e.g.:
 - Papers under review
 - Ongoing projects
 - Development of theory
 - Follow-up on issues raised in previous papers
- Quantity
 - Know your department's standards
 - Get copies of CVs for previous cases – positive AND negative

The Portfolio as a Whole

- Every publication doesn't need to have all these qualities. Rather, the *collective* record needs to demonstrate these qualities.
- Even if all components exist, there can be problems
 - Your highest placement / most cited paper is coauthored with your dissertation advisor
 - Your coauthors are all senior to you
 - Your solo work is all in 3rd tier journals
 - Your only solo paper is in a non-peer-reviewed journal
 - Your distinct contribution is writing all the programming code
 - You have 12 publications, but 5 are encyclopedia entries
 - Your second strike is to fix the mistakes or shortcomings in your dissertation

Packaging

Don't leave it up to your senior colleagues to interpret. Provide relevant information and flag the criteria in your research statement. For example:

- Give specific details about your role on coauthored work. Solicit letters from coauthors if necessary.
- List past winners of awards.
- Provide a concise and informative summary of how your book manuscript differs from the dissertation.
- If you have a paper in a special edition of a journal, ask the editor or guest editor to write an explanation of the review process.
- Give the ISI ranking of the journals that have published your work.
- Report the GoogleScholar citation count for especially prominent publications.

VI. General advice from the Webinar chat

Navigating Conflicts with your Chair

- Enthusiasm about what you are doing goes a long way. If a colleague asks how your semester is going, actually tell him or her something interesting you have learned/done, etc

Interviews and Informing Departments

- Transparency is a good idea when you are on the job market.
- Let your chair know when you are asked to apply places, when you get interviews, and obviously offers.

Leaves/Research and Maternity

- Know the official policy, but if your university does not have an official policy, it is almost certain that unofficial accommodations have been made in other departments if not in yours. Learn about what others have negotiated and go in informed when you explain what you want. Have senior people to help you ask for changes in policy.