



EFFECTIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERIES

PAMPHLET #6:

Promotion and Tenure

Case:

A faculty member (she/her) begins her new job as an Assistant Professor at an academic institution in the division of Academic Specialists in General Obstetrics and Gynecology (ASGOG). She just completed her residency in ob-gyn, and this is her first job. She won several teaching awards as a resident, including the Resident Teacher of the Year award given by the graduating fourth year medical students. She would like to establish a niche in medical education.

A clearly defined path is key to success in academic medicine. Faculty must be proactive about seeking personal and professional development opportunities to make progress towards promotion. This includes establishing relationships with mentors and sponsors, engaging in education scholarship, being familiar with institutional guidelines, and continuous documentation of effort and accomplishments.

Clarification of Institutional Rules

Former House Speaker Tip O'Neill famously said that "all politics is local." All promotion and tenure policies are local too. Review and learn the institution's policies. Additionally, ranks and tracks vary from institution to institution so know the institution's ranks and tracks.

Know the Institution's Pathways or Hierarchy of Ranks

In general, one progresses from one rank to the next in order. The standard academic ranks are Instructor > Assistant Professor > Associate Professor > Professor. Some schools may use Instructor > Lecturer > Senior Lecturer. Tracks most commonly include tenured, tenure-track, and nontenured track. The majority of medical school clinical faculty are in the non-tenured track series.

Areas of Engagement

Clinician Educator

Clinician-educators should seek to develop their skill set in four main areas. First, they must maintain their clinical expertise, ideally becoming their institution's go-to person when those issues either arise clinically or require teaching to a group of learners. Second, they must actively work to develop outstanding teaching skills so that they can shine in teaching in a variety of formats: lectures, small-group facilitation, and bedside instruction delivered in the context of clinical care. Third, clinician-educators need to develop the ability to support ongoing scholarly activities, either in the educational realm or in their clinical focus. Finally, because many effective clinician-educators are promoted into leadership positions, they need to seek additional leadership

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training to develop as a competent administrator.

Clinician-educators can be involved with education in many ways. Broadly speaking, these activities include clinical “bedside” teaching, large group lecturing and facilitation, small-group facilitation, curricular innovation and design, administrative leadership of courses or training programs, and production of educational scholarship.

Research

Faculty whose primary focus is research are expected to have superior quality, pioneering, and original research contributions. They are expected to produce substantive scholarship, including original peer-reviewed manuscripts, and/or lead a funded research program. Faculty are encouraged to serve on School of Medicine and University committees, task forces, search committees, NIH study sections, and in leadership positions in professional societies or a national organization. They will also maintain sustained and/or independent research funding. Effort on funded grants or other forms of demonstrated contribution to ongoing funded activities is expected.

Teaching

Faculty with a primary focus on teaching are expected to provide a list of their teaching activities, teaching evaluations, and learner assessment activities. They also should note any curriculum development activities and specify if it is a single conference, a conference series, or some other enduring material. Keep track of the curricular impact by documenting learners’ participation numbers, evaluations of the session, evidence of dissemination, implementation beyond the department, or publication. A list of mentees and advisees, dates of service, their current position, and significant mentee achievements should also be tracked.

Clinical Service

Faculty with a primary focus of clinical care are expected to deliver high quality, compassionate and evidence-based clinical care. They should perform clinical duties with the highest level of skill, empathy, and professionalism, and be recognized by peers as an outstanding, caring, and efficient physician. They should contribute to process and systems improvement at both a local and national level. They should also attempt to establish a reputation for expertise in a field, and develop new clinical

treatments or devices, as evidenced by original publications, reviews, or books.

Scholarship

Scholarship can be demonstrated across any of four broad categories:

- *Scholarship of Discovery*: Original research
- *Scholarship of Integration*: Synthesis that brings new insight about information and knowledge across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time
- *Scholarship of Engagement*: Application and evaluation of knowledge and expertise applied to consequential problems and societal needs of individuals and institutions
- *Scholarship of Teaching*: Systematic study of teaching and learning processes

Scholarship is critical to the demonstration of impact and is expected of the faculty seeking promotion. There are many potential forms of scholarship: original contributions in diagnostic methods, therapeutic or surgical interventions, safety and quality of care delivery, population health and informatics, bioethics, medical humanities, health care communications, education, basic science, translational science, clinical research, health services research, and other clinical care and health care related fields.

Promotion Process

Promotion is the reward system of academic medicine. Successful promotion requires that the candidate exhibit excellence and significant accomplishment in key performance areas including patient care, education, academic research and productivity, citizenship, and advancing the mission of the institution. Specific requirements are dependent on the academic track assigned to the faculty member.

The timeline of promotion from assistant to associate professor is between 5 and 7 years. Promotion to full professor usually occurs 5 to 7 years after promotion to associate professor and is based on the candidate’s demonstration of continued contributions in the areas outlined previously. Promotion to full professor is acknowledgment by peers that the faculty has obtained recognition of their academic achievements and expertise in a chosen area and academic track. Along the way, faculty and department leaders should participate in annual reviews of their portfolio. The purpose

of the annual review is to provide the faculty with written information about their performance in the department, identifying both strengths and weaknesses. The review entails a cumulative evaluation of the faculty's achievements and progress in the past year and progress toward promotion.

Specific details regarding the criteria for and process of promotion vary from institution to institution. Guidelines and instructions for promotion and tenure should be readily available to all faculty and can usually be obtained from department leadership. In general, leadership within the medical school will request nominations of faculty whose accomplishments warrant consideration for promotion or tenure. Nominations are usually made by the department chair and are prepared in conjunction with the faculty.

Core components of the supporting material in the application may include:

- Signed letter of recommendation by the department chair
- Curriculum vitae and full bibliography
- Education portfolio (EP)
- Clinical service responsibilities
- Grant support
- Copies of peer-review publications with separate description including impact and relevance to a specific field
- Professional references and letters of recommendation (from within the institution and outside the institution)

Faculty should pay particular attention to the details and content of their application. Every item put into the application should address the personnel action question that applies to the faculty's specific situation. For the most part, this will include the updated curriculum vitae, personal statement, publications and creative materials, evidence of excellence in teaching and mentoring, and any supplemental materials. Many schools now require arm's length letters of assessment and not letters of recommendation so prepare a list of potential individuals who can provide this information.

Conclusion

A clearly defined career path in academic medicine to guide the new physician's development is often lacking. It is important for faculty to identify mentors who can help create the individualized pathway.

More importantly, it is the faculty's responsibility to maintain their CV and EP to be prepared when annual evaluations and promotion packets are due.

The annual evaluation with the chair or division chief is the perfect opportunity to update the CV and EP to ensure the proper pathway for promotion. Note that in putting these documents together, the individual faculty member is the only person who can describe the detailed importance of their work. Do not rely on anyone else to do this.

Intentional effort to continuously improve your performance as a clinician, teacher, scholar, and administrator form the core measures to maximize the chances for academic success. Developing the skills for success in each of these areas requires conscious effort to find appropriate mentors and collaborators as well as access educational and other resources both within and external to your home institution.

Take Home Points

1. Keep your CV and EP up to date
2. Seek peer evaluation and feedback
3. Seek advice from mentors on how to best represent the breadth of accomplishments
4. Use the annual review to track progress
5. Articulate goals to know where you are headed
6. Know the P&T committee members and programs they may offer to assist with the P&T process

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