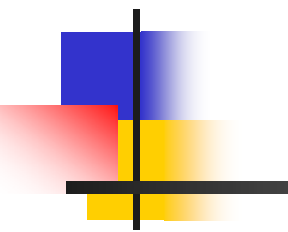


# SUCCESS STRATEGIES AND STRESS REDUCTION TIPS FOR NEW RESEARCHERS



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# SOURCES OF ADVICE FOR THIS TALK

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## **Collegial Advice for Assistant Professors**

*Hints for Success and Stress Reduction as an  
Assistant Professor at UC Davis*

Written by Professor Evelyn M. Silvia (deceased)

Department of Mathematics, UC Davis

Link provided at: <http://academicpersonnel.ucdavis.edu>

Also thanks to: Scott Bartell, Ron Christensen, Rafael Diaz,  
Dan Gillen, Johanna Hardin, Wes Johnson, Peter Mueller,  
Debashis Paul and Kathy Prewitt for helpful suggestions.



# Your Job as an Assistant Professor

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WORK

LIFE



# THE MAIN CHALLENGE WITH WORK

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Developing a  
focused, productive  
research program

Everything else:  
teaching, service,  
etc.



# ESTABLISH A FIVE-YEAR PLAN

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- At most universities you will be reviewed for tenure at the start of your 6<sup>th</sup> year.
- Set **short** and **long** term goals, such as:
  - Year 1, **short term**: Publish paper(s) from dissertation, develop course notes.
  - Year 1, **long term**: Investigate grant options, plan to apply for a grant in year 2.

## **Source: Collegial Advice for Assistant Professors**

- Make a reasonable but comprehensive 5-year schedule for research, publishing, and grant seeking. As a part of that plan **select some goals with long term payoff** and some **short term goals** that will demonstrate your ability to become a productive research scholar. It is important to establish a good track record. **Having a clear picture of where you think you want to be five years from now** can give you a better basis **for making professional decisions** than immediate surroundings and demands.
- Once you have a reasonable 5-year schedule, **put it where you can see it every day as a reminder**. No matter what, try to stick to reaching your goals. By **anticipating that there will be plenty of interference**, you can act to minimize its effect. The **visibility of the plan can help you focus** your professional efforts.



# ADVICE ON TEACHING

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- Everyone is expected to be a good teacher. Being an excellent teacher is generally not sufficient to get tenure, but being a bad teacher can hurt.
- Teaching is immediate and it is easy to know what to do. Often there is immediate positive feedback. It is tempting to spend too much time on it. Strive to be a good teacher, but set limits on yourself and your students. Remember the 80/20 rule.
- Develop notes and materials you can use again.
- Expect to have some bad teaching days!



# MORE ADVICE ON TEACHING

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- Find out if your campus has a Teaching Resource Center, and use its services.
- Ask a colleague known to be a good teacher to sit in on your class and give feedback. But remember everyone is different! Develop your own style.
- Ask students for honest feedback.
- Learn what materials you will need to supply for your tenure review and keep them.





# ADVICE ON SERVICE

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- This is the easiest area to get led astray!
- Types of service:
  - Dept: Search committees, oral exams, advising, etc.
  - Campus: Faculty senate, search, exam, etc.
  - Profession: Referee, ASA/IMS/WNAR committees, etc.
- Not all service is bad! Campus and professional service are great ways to get to know people outside your department. This can be important for feeling of community, and for tenure!



# STANDARD ADVICE ON SERVICE

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- Good teaching and research are not negotiable. Service is.
- It's nice to be wanted. This can tempt you to say yes. But your default answer should be no.
- Never say "yes" to a request right away!
  - If it isn't appealing, say NO immediately!
  - Consider what you will get out of it.
  - What is the time commitment?
  - Are you the only person qualified to do it?
- There is plenty of time for service, after tenure!



# COUNTER-ADVICE ON SERVICE

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**JUST SAY  
YES!**

You never know where it might lead.

Sometimes you need to follow your instincts and not worry so much about the future.

Just make sure you are saying yes for the right reasons.



# PRACTICAL ADVICE: RECORD KEEPING

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- It is important to keep records in real time.
- Include talks given, papers submitted and accepted, service (e.g. referee, oral exams, committees), grants, consulting, etc.
- **Some record-keeping options:**
  - Email folder – send yourself an email.
  - Paper folder – throw in a slip of paper
  - Day-timer – write everything you do, highlight what you will need for your review packet.
  - Index cards, color-coded for different activities



# THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

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- Most journals have low acceptance rates – don't be discouraged if a paper is rejected!
- Most funding agencies have low acceptance rates for grant funding.
- (Almost) every set of teaching evaluations will have at least one bad one in it.
- Most academics suffer from “the imposter syndrome” to some degree, especially at first.



# THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

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- Common among high-achieving, successful people.
- Includes feeling like a fake, people will find out you aren't as smart/good as they thought.
- Tendency to attribute success to luck and failure to inadequacy. Afraid to take chances, might fail.
- Different from low self-esteem, because the imposter syndrome is made worse by success. Adds to fear of "being found out."
- Search "Imposter syndrome" on web for more!



# QUESTIONS TO ASK: REVIEW PROCESS

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- Is there a published set of criteria? (UC has "APM")
- When is your first review?
- What's expected by then?
- How often are you reviewed? Annually? Every two years?
- Who does those reviews?
- Is there a pre-tenure review, a few years in advance?
- Who has the real power in tenure review? Dept? Dean? Campus committee? Vice-Provost/Chancellor?
- In recent tenure denials, where did the denial occur?
- Does anyone have the power to overturn the denial?



# QUESTIONS TO ASK: WHAT COUNTS?

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How much does the department value:

- Co-authored papers with other statisticians
- Single-authored papers
- Collaborative papers involving new or innovative methodology
- Collaborative papers not involving new methodology (consulting)
- Grant applications that are not funded
- Grant applications that are funded (and source)
- Collaborative grants where you are not the P.I.





# Questions on TEACHING, SERVICE, ADVISING

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- How is teaching evaluated?
  - Students only?
  - Choice of student evaluation form/method?
  - Peer-review?
- How much service is expected?
- Are assistant professors encouraged to supervise graduate students?
- What is the process/etiquette for matching graduate students with dissertation advisors?



# QUESTIONS ON QUALITY OF LIFE

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- Is there a formal mentoring program?
- What is the policy for parental leave? How is it implemented?
- Is there reduced teaching responsibility for assistant professors?
- What is the sabbatical policy and is sabbatical leave automatic or competitive?
- Are there other leave programs in addition? Research leave? "Faculty development" leave?



# Finding Your Own Mentor(s)

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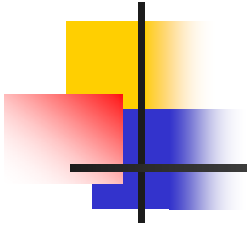
- Ask for advice from Dept colleagues and note who is willing and able to give it.
- Get to know people in related areas on campus and ask their advice on campus culture, procedures, etc.
- Get to know senior people in your research area, and ask them for advice on publishing, grants, etc.
- Network with other assistant professors.



# SOME FINAL ADVICE

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- The most important people to get to know and love, and treat with utmost respect are the most powerful people for your career:
  - The Department tech support
  - The Department office staffAnd finally, ...
- There is no substitute for doing what you love, even if it means going against all of the advice you have just seen!



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QUESTIONS?