

Notes from the Mentoring Panel on Tenure and Career Issues October 21, 2009

Mary Shann – School of Education: Been a member on the school APT and University APT

- My advice to junior faculty: don't go it alone. Ask for help, from your mentor if you have someone that might be an evolving relationship, from your department chair, from your program coordinator, from your dean. In the school of education two years ago we put together a committee, actually its not a committee, but a junior faculty research and teaching forum that's headed up by two senior faculty and they have enacted some of these recommendations that I want to offer to you now.
- Application part ii, don't wait until 6 weeks or 6 months before you're due to complete that when you go up for tenure, look for it now. Go through it, see what the different items mean, have some help from senior faculty who can make you understand what these items are all about. What is service what is teaching.
- Keep meticulous records, I have an appointment book roughly 4 x 6 and I have a drawer full of them and I use exactly the same one from the same manufacturer. I've been doing that for a number of years that I've been here. You might want to keep an electronic version of the same thing; I prefer paper because I know it won't evaporate on me. I might use the electronic version in addition but I wouldn't use it on its own. And use it effectively. Mark the times that you offer service especially the conferences that you go to and the talks that you give. The people that you meet choose one that has a section for notation, so keep meticulous records.
- Submit proposals to major professional national organizations. Use that as an opportunity not only to present a paper and soon after turn it into a publication but also use it as an opportunity to network to find people in our field to get to know them. After a few years to volunteer to serve on the program review committees and don't get overburdened with it but use it as an opportunity to network. See it in a new light as an opportunity to build a context that you'll eventually for these referees. They want too many in my judgment.
- Develop a website so that your presentations are accessible. People will contact you after a conference and sometimes your organization is supposed to put that up and make it available and a lot of times they don't so develop your own website.
- Go to university sponsored or school sponsored programs about external funding. Learn about types of funding, individual fellowships, research grants large and small, training grants. There are a number of different types. Learn how to design a project, how to write a proposal, how to do a budget, how to work with collaborators. As far as grants and publications, be thick skinned. Get those conference presentations into writing and submit them but don't give up after the first rejection. Listen to what the advisors and reviewers have to say, take that to heart and resubmit. Ask a senior colleague to read a paper for you. We should be doing that, that's part of our job.
- Regarding teaching, I think, with great celebration with the medcap award and the center for teaching excellence that has tried to some things in last several years we really have no established culture for visiting each other's classes and helping out

- with teaching. I think we're very remiss in doing that and I don't think we're unlike other universities across the country. We need to focus more of our efforts on teaching. I think the deans and the department chairs who pile into the class a week before the dossiers are due mean well but that shouldn't be the way teaching is evaluated. We have come up with some new plans in the school of education, if there are questions later I will go into great detail.
- Regarding service how to be a good citizen versus how to be a doormat. You really need to choose the service wisely. Pick things that are inherently interesting, that are going to teach you about important aspects of your role here at Boston university, about your curriculum and how the university functions. If you're interested in research there are committees that deal with that expressly.
 - Don't get paralyzed by paperwork. Don't sign on to be the faculty advisor for a student organization too early because you're not going to get any advancement out of that. It might be very self satisfying and inherently pleasurable but its not a good way to spend your time early on.
 - Use national service to get a perspective on issues and make contact with people across the country. Lots of different things count for service, not just in your department but also in the university and in the outside larger profession.
 - In terms of writing your CV part II how to make your work more intelligible to people who are in a field outside of your own provide annotations. Don't overdo it but indicate in various areas of your writing how these seemingly disparate strands of research are somehow related. Give some perspective on national organizations or things that are really not evident to someone who is not immediately in your profession. I find the annotations very useful and I think you should use them judiciously. It shouldn't be all text on annotations but explain to people what you do the reviewers need it.

Joseph Restuccio – School of Management – served on the promotions and tenure committee at the school of management for 12 years, chair of it for 7 years and have served on the UAPT as well.

- In terms of research teaching and service if I were forced to place a weight on each of them I would place a max of 10 % on service, a max of 30 % on teaching and a minimum of 60 % on research. So lets start with the easiest one service.
 - Service: I think Mary's comments were very well spoken I would add that in terms of your department, what your department wants to see is that you're going to be good a citizen. That you will show evidence of pulling your weight especially when you get tenure and you have more time to devote to that activity.
 - In terms of teaching the main thing is to show that you are not going to be a problem in the classroom. That they are going to be able to count on you to deliver a good course. The marginal value of student ratings has very steep diminishing returns. So if you get ratings of 4.0 or something that's probably fine, most departments most schools that's just fine. If you get ratings of close to 5 it just doesn't add that much in terms of the value that is perceived. Peer assessments can be useful especially if your ratings

aren't so good and that means having a faculty member from your department come in and observe you and write it document it and put it in your file. And we'd like to see that people have had some variety in teaching, that maybe they've taught both undergraduate and grad school courses, core courses and elective courses and its also good to se that there's been course development and if there is course development again document it. And if its course development that has been used elsewhere in your department or Boston University or at other schools adds more value to it. And you have to document that, its very hard to do so if its used at other schools but if you know its used at other schools get evidence of it and put it in you file.

- In terms of evaluating research the most important thing are articles, refereed articles. Research is evaluated on the basis of the output in terms of books book chapters and published articles and to some extent but much less extent unpublished articles. But the sine qua non is refereed articles. You might be able to do it with a book but its really really difficult. I'll give you an example I had a colleague who spent most of his times as an assistant professor writing a book. The book came out about a year before he went up and there really wasn't enough time to do a sufficient evaluation of the book. Now its turns out that it was a major book, had a big impact and very influential in the field but it was too late. And he didn't get tenure. Refereed articles as long as the read time is for them they do come out quicker than a book well and you can do several. It is very good to have some A journal, top journal refereed articles. More and more that is what Boston University is looking for. That you are doing work that is in the top of the field. If you have a few articles in the top journals that will have a lot more impact than if you have lots of articles in B journals. You can have a mix just make sure you have some that are up there in the top. Co authorship by itself is not a problem but again it is a portfolio-balancing act. You want to make sure that you have not just coauthored articles; at least one single author article would be good. The author order is important you wan to see that the candidate has some first authored articles and you also want to see that they don't typically coauthor with just he same people especially if the same people include the dissertation advisor. In terms of work since BU there is value to work before BU but there is more value to the work after you've been at BU. So there is a somewhat of a "what have you done for me lately" perspective. Do the numbers matter? Yes they do matter. It will be very difficult to get tenure with just a handful of articles. You know unless they were all big hit A journal article. About proceedings, the refereed proceedings, unless you have a lot of articles to go with it, it's not going to cut it. External letters are very important; they are a representation of your field's evaluation of your work. You'd like to see an assortment of letters from reviewers who are well known in the field, they have to be tenure professors. They preferably would be full professors or chaired professors from high quality schools. Not schools that are a notch below BU, schools

that are at the same level at least and preferably better, our aspiration schools. It doesn't look so good if the external letters come from your advisor, coauthors, and schools that are clearly worse than ours. It's ok to have some of those but again make sure your portfolio has a balance that is weighted towards those other criteria that I mentioned. So with regard to external letters it is important to start cultivating your network so you have people in the field who know your work who will be able to preferably have already read some of your articles so they won't have to read that big stack that they get when they're being sent your tenure portfolio. It's also therefore important that you get most of them that are asked to say yes. If you have a bunch of people who say no "I'm too busy to do this evaluation" then that is an indication that they don't think this person is worth spending the time to evaluate.

Margrit Betke – Associate Prof in Comp Sci and Associate Chair – served on UPT committee

- The pipeline of the tenure decisions they start at the department level. The department has a report that goes to the college and at the college level an APT committee, short for appointments promotion and tenure committee. And then they make a recommendation to the dean and then you go to the level of the UAPT, the university appointment promotion and tenure committee. And that committee has 16 people and they write a report about the tenure case and make a recommendation to the provost. Then the provost looks at that and makes a recommendation to the president so this whole thing can take months of evaluations. And the different levels have different influence. So if you're in a department with only ten people and have ten people voting for your promotion vs. a department with 40 people, with 40 people voting for your promotion, 40 people looks great but you can't help that. There are different levels of how recognized departments are in the world. So biomedical engineering is ranked 7th in the nation and computer science is 48th so there are different levels of what your colleagues expect you to do, to feel good about you and recommend tenure for you. So the department recommendation is very important, the APT then looks at that and makes its own recommendations. At that level they often come to classrooms still and look at your teaching. The UPT doesn't often come to classroom visits anymore so there the focus is really on your research. I agree with Joe we are very much a research university that's the most important thing that is going to be the focus of your evaluation.
- I wanted to stress a couple of things that Mary was saying too.
 - Make yourself a website even if you don't have much to do with any technology it's important that people who evaluate for tenure: the external letter writers, the people on the UPT committee, that they find stuff very easily. They just Google you and find out. I remember there was this discussion about whether or not this guy had a grant or not and it was suggested to just go on the web and check out. If it's NSF of course you can find that information but it would have been much easier if I could have just gone to his website and he had a link to his grant page at NSF.

So you can make it easier for people to evaluate you and feel good about you if you make their life easier when they evaluate you.

- Another thing is also when you write your papers, I agree with Joe don't just try to write as many papers as possible. When evaluating your tenure case we aren't going to do bean counting and like checking what's your publication and did you publish 10 papers that year or 5, it really matters more that you have quality and if the papers are readable it makes it easier for your external letter writers to evaluate you too. If they get sent 3 papers of your and they spent that afternoon writing your tenure letter they can go through your papers and understand pretty quickly what its all about and figure out how to write that letter. So these external letter writers might know you, it depends on your field. If it's a very narrow field with just a few people that you meet at workshops and everybody knows everybody that's one thing but there are fields out there where there's thousands of people. SO you may get letter writers that don't know you personally and the strength of your papers that are sent to the letter writers is what is really going to make it there for you.
- Mary also mentioned annotations. So people on the UPT are people in different colleges and they have to evaluate tenure cases of people in very different fields and the publications rules are different in fields. For example in theoretical computer science the authors are listed alphabetically and most people don't know that so you have to tell your tenure evaluators that that is the case so that's kind of an annotation that's really important. Another thing that helped me a lot when I was evaluating cases was when there was annotations that explained who these other coauthors were. So was there sort of a career pipeline, so at first were you the junior person helping your advisor and then you were the postdoc and still there's an advisor at the end of the author list because that is there lab. And then eventually you are the lead author and all these other people are your students that you had to put the time into bring to the level to be coauthors. So its nice to know who these people are you can do that by putting in an annotation there.
- Ok so there's this folder we get when we go on the tenure and promotion committee and the provost sort of explains this. I wanted to mention a couple of things that he was telling us last year:
 - One thing to know is that you can get a three-year extension sometimes. But what that usually is that you're voted down for tenure and then people vote again to figure out if we should give you another chance in 3 years. The provost said it's not a good practice you really need a dramatic change so I really wouldn't count on that. You really need to shine the first time around.
 - So a couple other things we re talking about is student evaluations. Sometimes these tenure evaluation reports stress these averages, 4.2 or 3.8 only from the student evaluations. But the provost was mentioning to us you know 10 years later the students may actually feel much much differently about that class that they evaluated

relatively low but they just didn't know how important the material was and how much they actually learned. So its not just all about the averages there is more that goes into evaluating your teaching.

- Other things that the provost recommended was concentrate on the external letters and I wanted to give you the procedure of how it works when your tenure case is evaluated. So this is sort of the one month process:

1. So in the first week the cases are sent to a subcommittee and it might have 3 or 4 people who look at everything. So its all the teaching evaluations ever give to that candidate, all of the external letters lecture notes that the candidate made available (some people give us PowerPoint, some people give us hand written lecture notes from every class that they've ever taught, some people summarize it and give sample lectures and sample exams), thank you letters from proportional service organizations so they can be huge. So then there's one binder that has all the letters and all the reports from the lower levels, the APTS and department, some internal recommendation letters, student recommendation letters.
2. So all those kinds of things are given to everyone of the 16-committee members and in the second week there is a discussion by the full committee and if the case is good we try to get through it really quickly. I was so happy once I had a strong case and we made it through for that person in 20 minutes because it was so shining that everyone said lets vote for tenure. The problem cases we sit there for a couple of hours sometimes.
3. Whoever presented the case form the subcommittee then writes a report on the discussion in the third week. That gets looked at again especially if they are difficult.
4. In the 4th week after all the modifications are done the chair looks at it again and we're sort of done with that. So it's a very thorough process. If you know someone well in your department you may want to ask to look at the UPT report form their tenure case to give you an idea of how these reports look. I have report templates hear just to give you an idea: first we talk about the candidates education and background, when they came to BU, we talk about the research. Typically we focus on what they are actually doing, what their accomplishments were and then you sort of start the bean counting, how many papers in which journals. Then you discuss what the external letter writers said about the candidate. So you need to find people in your career to use those glowing terms. Don't be afraid to ask the touch professionals in your field from schools better

than BU, because those professors are likely to know what needs to be said to help you get tenure. So what these external letter writers say is really important and gets quotes on the report. As for teaching the evaluation averages get quoted but we also have text in there regarding how many students you have taught and what the courses were about and faculty went to a lecture a really liked it. The service portion is really really small, maybe a paragraph, just as Mary said you want to be a good citizen but not a doormat. Your department wants to know that you can help out but if you do too much they'll get suspicious and will start to wonder if you know how to manage your time.

Yannis Paschalidis – I have been at BU for 13 years and I have been through the tenure process:

- I will talk about where to publish and whether it's important to publish in top tier journals – yes! Aim high, aim for the top journals in your field. UPT committees are very knowledgeable and they look at impact factors of journals they know, which journals are hard to publish in and which journals are not. In some fields, for instance Computer Science and to a lesser extent Electrical Engineering there are conferences that publish refereed conference proceedings that are also extremely competitive and sometimes even more competitive than journals. There are conferences that have acceptance rates of 15% or even less than that. So it is important to publish in those conferences, to be visible in those conferences but of course you do need journal publications. I think you do need in the end, when you present your case, a couple of big hits, one or two. So papers that have had a big impact, have had a large number of citations and people and sort of associate you with those particular papers, so people who are leaders in the field should recognize that paper and also be able to comment on that particular paper in the evaluations that they write. The really good evaluation letters show that they understand your work. They are letters for instance that say they have read that paper, and that they used it in their work. This is an evaluation letter that is extremely important in your case and will be quoted by the UPT committees and will be given more weight than another recommendation letter that has a very generic recommendation and no specifics.
- Some APT committees, for instance in engineering, have started using the H index. To define it briefly the H index is the maximum H, so that you have H papers with H citations each. It is an index that has been proposed and created to show balance, so you don't want a person that has been writing many papers that nobody reads. You also don't want a person who's only written one or two really good papers with very large number of citations, so this index is trying to balance this. You may not agree on the particular formulation but it provides some really useful information. So not everything that you are going to do is of tremendous impact, but if there is something you see that has great potential, develop it, go for a really high quality of publication. Write this amazing paper and if its something

that is an interesting idea that you have done with a graduate student or the graduate student came up with and you think it can make a publication finish it quickly and send it out of the door so that you have a balance between the two types of papers.

- About service I would say that I agree with comments about service made within BU, you want to show that you are a good citizen. I would suggest that you do things you should be doing anyway so that you get additional brownie points for helping out, i.e. if you're starting out it is important to develop a group of graduate students that you can work with so be in the graduate committee and look at applications. That way you can evaluate students before they come in and then you can approach students when they come in and you can develop your own group. Be in the seminar organizing committee. If your department has a seminar try to be the coordinator for that seminar for a period of time. If your department does not have a seminar, develop a seminar series because you want to invite people from other universities, the leaders in the field. They will come here and you can talk to them and spend time with them so that they get to know you because these are the people that will evaluate you later on. Also I think it's important to be really active in the community. Often times on the engineering APT committee I will hear someone ask if this person is active in their community at BU, is this person recognized in the area. Go to conferences; go to the main conferences in your field. Organize sessions, which is an easy way to get good people to hear your talk. You organize a session and invite the top people in the field and your paper gets presented as well and people get to see what you do.
- A few things about work done before and after BU. I agree with the comments that have been made; what counts more is your work after you have come to BU. Also what is important is that you show substantial independence from your PhD or postdoctoral advisors. This doesn't mean that you should not collaborate with them, do collaborate with them but you also need to develop work for which you are recognized as being the leading person. So often times people look at students you are advising, have you written papers with them and no one else, you being the most senior person involved. It is important to annotate and educate regarding the way author order is done in your field because whatever is discussed about you finds its way to the UPT committee. It is useful to have 5 people in the department in your specific area because these are the people the chair will ask for suggestions regarding who to contact to get letters of evaluation from and so on.

Questions:

- **Funding:** Does funding matter?
 - This is definitely important in engineering. It is important to know if you can support yourself and your group, if you can make your own way and support the graduate students you need to do the important work. In some subareas this may be different, experimental researchers may require much more extensive resources in terms of dollars than more theoretical people. But the critical question is whether you have submitted and whether you

have gotten grants as PI, also if you have to be involved as co-PI and whether or not you can carry your own weight basically.

- I can also add that when the UPT gets reports from the APT, the APT's have reports on very different flavors. The engineering reports always stress more on funding than CAS, even CAS biology where there's some labs that get a lot of funding. You have to know about your community and what is expected and I think in CAS people are sort of stepping back a little, and are more about the big picture and don't worry about the money as much.
- I think the UPT members I have served with are very aware of the different levels of funding available in the different areas. We would never expect as much from people from fine arts, and theology than people in engineering, or physics and chemistry.
- **Does the person up for tenure get to say who writes the external letters?**
 - The person gets to nominate three people, so you can pick those three people, which is the formal process. But what often happens in terms of the informal process is the person often sits with their department chair to come up with a list of people that will be recommended to the school APT. The school APT will pick a good deal of those people and also add people. At the university promotion tenure committee not very often has there been requests for additional letters to come in, in my experience. I've only seen it in cases where we need more evidence to weigh some conflicting views.
 - People in your area in the department are an important resource because the chair will go to them and ask for names and sometimes you'll be asked by those senior people will ask for names. And then the dean and the college UPT committee will add names. The dean always adds more names maybe depending on the crop of letters that come in. So who writes these letters are important. People recognize the stature of different people in the community and you want to have letters from the leaders in your particular area and field.
 - This year in the school of education we've centralized the request for letters to come out of the dean's office. I know that Dave Campbell prefers that in some departments the letters come from recognized people in the field the same field that the candidate is coming from. But we are a much smaller school and frankly I urge that we take a page from dean Gina Shapiro who's done a marvelous job in getting her candidates to receive responses. They've centralized it there and my school ought to emulate, it's just much more functional. Same number of letters but there isn't the duplication of efforts or confusion such as wondering if someone has already asked a particular person. So centralizing it for us, has made a big difference.
 - But the candidate is still posing some names?
 - The candidate is still posing some names but I also get some signals that they shouldn't know, at the UPT level, whose being

asked to write letters for them. So there are mixed messages I have received in that regard.

- **With regards to your department and using your chair as a resource how do you know what to ask for and when?**
 - I think one thing that came to mind when people were speaking about teaching loads, making sure they have graduate and undergraduate courses, I actually think that you have to be proactive about that stuff as a junior faculty. So as good hearted as your department is in thinking about things they need classes stuff and they just throw stuff at people and they don't think about you coming up in your fourth year and whether you've taught a large undergraduate section yet or have you taught too many of them. So having a senior person that can look at your teaching, you have to go to them and say what you need, that is something I think junior faculty have to be proactive with.
 - Also it is important to ask for resources if you need them. If you need equipment and space but never speak up then you can't get what you need.
 - Another thing that can be asked for that can be very important is conference support or even trips to do research with someone remotely you can ask for that sort of thing. Departments usually do have support for that, discretionary budgets that can be used for that. I know in my department junior faculty get first dibs for those kinds of requests. Its sort of expected for senior faculty can bring in their own money to do it.
- With regard to letters the letter writers are promised confidentiality so the candidate should not know who has been asked to write letters on their behalf. So you can suggest 3 names and those names will probably make it onto the list but the candidate does not know who did or did not write letters for them. Also, in a letter packet the chair or the dean has to describe the relationship of the candidate to every letter writer so the ideal relationship is just that they are an expert in the field. It is perfectly ok to have some of the letters be written by collaborators or co-investigator but it has to be spelled out so the APT and UAPT can take that relationship into account.