



## Associate → Full Mentoring Program

In 2013, UMaine associate professors were surveyed about their intentions and concerns regarding pursuing promotion to “full” professor. The top concerns expressed included the following:

- 1) Wondering how productivity is evaluated  
“Is it enough?”
- 2) The time to prepare the application and produce more scholarship  
“How do I do more when I’m already doing so much?”
- 3) Unclear criteria and expectations for promotion  
“What am I supposed to be doing?”
- 4) Politics in the department and in peer committee deliberations  
“How do I deal with things that are out of my control?”

The fact is, ***out of the 39 academic units on campus, only four have specific criteria*** for promotion to professor. Nationally, expectations are similarly unclear (Buch, Huet, Rorrer, & Roberson, 2011; Gardner & Blackstone, 2013).

The Associate → Full Mentoring Program, sponsored by the Rising Tide Center, is meant to assist associate professors on campus in finding connections to and information from more senior mentors about pursuing promotion.

This document is meant to assist associate professors and their mentors in structuring meaningful, strategic, and helpful conversations around pursuing promotion.

### **A Few Facts about Professors at UMaine and Beyond**

- As of 2017, there were 203 professors at UMaine
- 25% of professors at UMaine are women
  - 20% of professors in STEM fields are women
  - 24% of professors in social-behavioral science fields are women
  - 38% of professors in humanities and professional fields are women

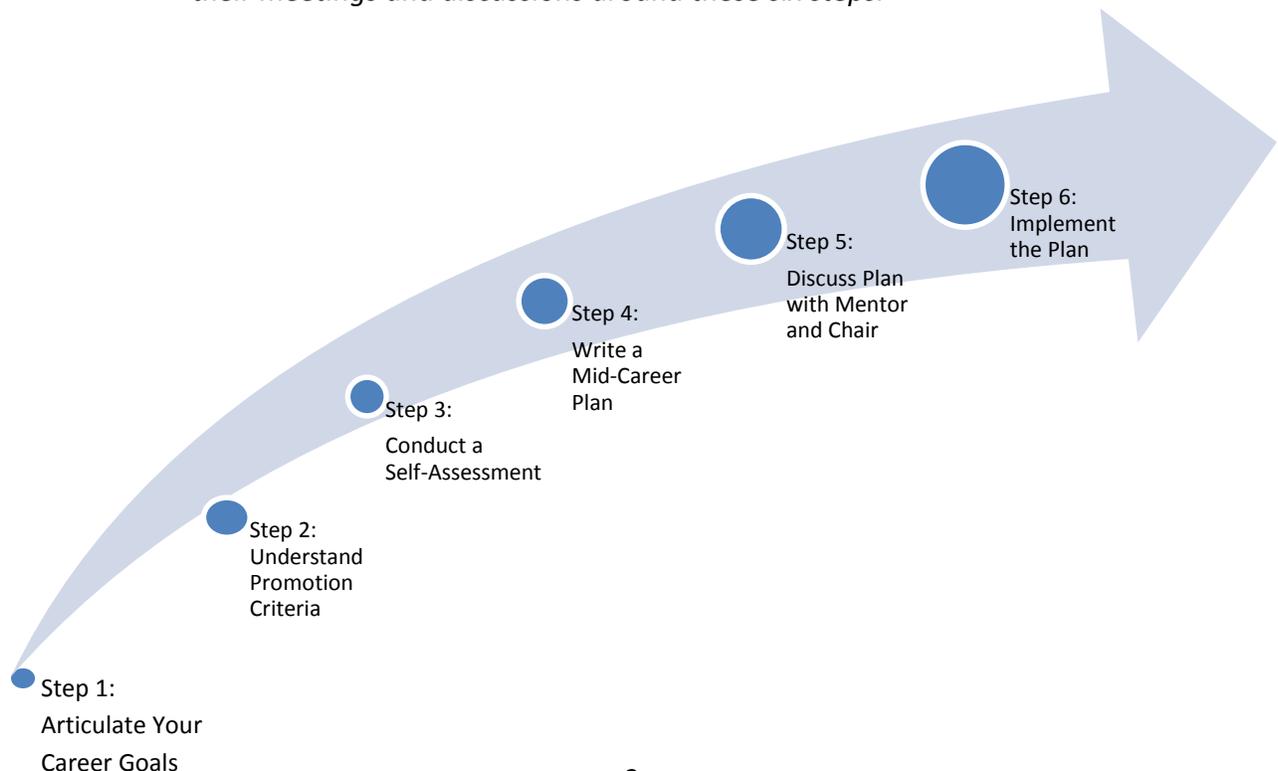
- On average, faculty at UMaine spend 7.67 years at associate rank before receiving a promotion
- Nationally, women faculty spend 24.2% longer at the rank of associate professor than men (MLA, 2006)
- Associate professors, both at UMaine and nationally, report lower levels of job satisfaction than their assistant professor or “full” professor peers (Trower, 2011)
- Associate professors also report higher service loads – both at UMaine and nationally – than assistant professors, who tend to be shielded from high service responsibilities, and their “full” peers, who often feel more able to say “no” (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011)

## Devising the Plan

Unlike the tenure process, where a set timeline provides the structure for pursuing the next rank, the pursuit of promotion to professor is much more ambiguous.

Utilizing resources from UNC-Charlotte, we provide here a structured process for planning the promotion process. For each of the six steps outlined below, we discuss some of the specific resources, details, and tips that may assist faculty in this process.

*We encourage associate professors and their mentors to structure their meetings and discussions around these six steps.*



## Step 1: Articulate Your Career Goals

- What are your long-term career goals?
  - Promotion to full?
    - In what area of distinction?
  - Movement into an administrative role/position?
- What are your shorter-term goals that will ultimately take you there?
  - What are the obstacles that currently stand in the way to obtaining those goals?
  - What resources are available to overcome these obstacles?
- How are these goals aligned with your department's/unit's needs and expectations?

## Step 2: Understand Promotion Criteria

- Examine both departmental/unit criteria and UMaine criteria
  - Available in your unit or online at <http://umaine.edu/provost/departmental-evaluation-criteria/>
  - Seek clarity as needed
  - Discuss criteria and guidelines for promotion with chair, peer committee representative(s), dean, mentor, etc.
  - Attend Rising Tide Center's "Advancing to Full" workshop in the fall
- Have expectations changed over time in your unit? How have these changes coincided with your career progress?
- Ask to see examples of previous (and recent) successfully promoted candidates in your area
- Compare the results of Steps 2 and 3

## Step 3: Conduct a Self-Assessment

- Consider the trajectory of your career thus far
  - How has its course changed? Why?
  - How has it departed from your original career plan/direction?
  - Have these departures been intentional? Have they been aligned with your changing interests and opportunities?
  - How has it been affected by work-life balance issues?
  - How has it been affected by needs of the department/unit?
  - What needs to be adjusted so that it aligns with your goals in Step 1?
- Assess your strengths and areas that need development

- What are your strengths and development needs?
  - What resources/mentoring do you need?
  - How is your current situation aligned with your department/unit needs and expectations?
  - Ask peers, mentors, and others for their input on the above
  - Examine previous performance feedback
- Compare the results of Steps 2 and 3

#### **Step 4: Write a Mid-Career Plan**

- The plan should map out the general path you want your career to take and help match skills and strengths and performance
- It is a changing, dynamic document that should be continuously examined and updated
- The aim is to build upon current strengths and interests and to align them with department needs and performance criteria, by identifying areas for development and providing a way to address them
- The plan should incorporate the results of Steps 1-3 above and should include:
  - A list of your skills and strengths that you can build upon
  - Specific skills, strengths, etc. that you need to develop
  - A list of approaches/resources/strategies/training, etc., you will need to achieve your plan (e.g., how will you implement it?)

#### **Step 5: Discuss Plan with Mentor or Chair**

- Specifically, seek their input on how realistic the plan and timetable are
- Do they have ideas for obtaining the resources/implementing the plan?
- Do they see that the plan is aligned with department/unit needs?
- Do they feel the plan is aligned with the peer committee criteria?

#### **Step 6: Implement the Plan**

- Put your plan into action
- Revise and modify the plan as necessary
- Review the plan with your mentor(s) and chair regularly

## A Few Last Points to Consider...

- **To serve or not to serve...**
  - Associate professors are often tasked with more service than their assistant and “full” peers (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011)
  - Consider the “Law of Conservation of Committee Mass”:
    - Only add a new committee responsibility if you can subtract one (or more) or consider prioritizing more “prominent” service opportunities (i.e., leadership roles)
  - It’s okay to say “no” – especially if it means you need to focus on your scholarship for promotion. Like it or not, no one receives a promotion for their service
    - Can your peers in the unit lend an extra hand for a year or two while you focus on your promotion?
- **Is it ever “too late”?**
  - There isn’t any “right” time to pursue a promotion and it is certainly never too late. While some units may have specific guidelines for how quickly an individual can pursue promotion, research also shows that the likelihood of promotion decreases substantially after the seventh year (Penn State, 2007)
- **Consider more clarity**
  - If you are in a unit that has unclear expectations for promotion to professor, considering revising them. Four units on campus already have such criteria and can possibly serve as models:
    - Biology & Ecology
    - Economics
    - Education & Human Development
    - Modern Languages & Classics

## Resources

- Buch, K., Huet, Y., Rorrer, A., & Roberson, L. (2011). Removing the barriers to full professor: A mentoring program for associate professors. *Change*, 43(6), 38-45.
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- Trower, C. A. (2011). *Senior faculty satisfaction: Perceptions of associate and full professors at seven public research universities*. Cambridge, MA: TIAA-CREF Institute.