



## Tips for Advancing to “Full” Professor

While the process for obtaining tenure and promotion from assistant to associate professor may often be well-defined, the process for moving from associate to professor or “full” professor is often ambiguous and unclear. As no requirement exists for moving from associate to full, there are often no formal rules about when or how to do it.

Below we provide some tips and ideas for considering your promotion to full.

### **What do your guidelines say?**

Every department and discipline is different. While some departments may be explicit in expecting a particular number of years to have passed before promotion (e.g., 5-6 years after tenure), or a particular kind or number of publications (e.g., two books), or a particular dollar amount or responsibility level in external funding (e.g., lead PI in large, federal grant), many other departments may not have any clarification whatsoever.

Regardless of clarification level, the first place one should begin when considering a promotion to full is the unit’s Peer Committee Guidelines. Read them carefully and look for any tips about expectations. In addition, ask those who are on the Peer Committee, your chair, dean, and senior faculty you trust about their experiences in evaluating cases for promotion.

### **What is “The Norm”?**

Similarly, it is important to find out from peers and your chair what normative expectations have been in the past: How long do you wait? When is the best time? What kinds of scholarship are needed and how much? Ask them, “Given my record thus far, what do you think I need to be considered for promotion?”

### **Assessing your Reputation**

Most units expect faculty members at the full level to be recognized nationally and/or internationally for their expertise, generally through one’s scholarship. If considering a promotion to full, it is important to take stock of your reputation within your field/discipline and assess your network of peers. The external letters of support for promotion that will be part of your application are particularly important. It is suggested that you build up this network of peers through regular involvement in national and international professional associations and by presenting in these venues.

Along those lines, don’t be humble on campus, either. A little self-promotion will do one good – share your accomplishments with your peers, tell your department chair about new publications, send an email to Marketing & Communications about your newest study.

### **Be proactive**

In our study of those who pursued promotion to full professor at UMaine, many of the faculty members were told – after the fact – that they waited too long and could have pursued promotion much earlier. Don’t wait to be tapped on the shoulder and told, “It’s

time.” Constantly evaluate your contributions and accomplishments against recently promoted full professors. When your accomplishments are comparable to those of others at the rank, request consideration for a promotion. Some have even suggested keeping up the pace that you set before receiving tenure. Consider the promotion process to be timeline-oriented like tenure and set a goal for yourself and your productivity.

### **If at first you don't succeed...**

There is no limit on the number of times one can pursue promotion to full professor. Unlike promotion and tenure to associate professor where the “up or out” rule applies, one cannot be dismissed for a failed attempt to be promoted. If you are unable to achieve promotion, use the feedback provided and plan to resubmit.

Our study also revealed some interesting gender differences. While some of the individuals studied were initially dissuaded from pursuing promotion, all of the men disregarded this information and were ultimately successful. Women, who were dissuaded on the other hand, waited and then later re-applied, often only to be told they should have applied earlier.

### **Preparing the dossier**

Have a plan and include a timetable for developing promotion materials, following the System guidelines and any unit guidelines for formatting. It's never too early to start getting organized. It is particularly important to document your growth since your last promotion or even your last 4-year review. When describing any collaborative work, be explicit in discussing your contribution in terms of percentage effort or authorship. Think about telling a coherent story about your scholarship in your statement – how do all pieces connect? What's innovative and new about your work? In short, don't rely on others to interpret these points or let the publications speak for themselves. In general, don't underestimate the amount of time it will take to develop a quality promotion application.

In addition, be prepared to document the following:

- Growth since last review (tenure, post-tenure review)
- Indicators of expertise or reputation (citations, etc.)
- Collaborative work in department, college, and university – good academic citizenry
- Leadership activities in unit, college, campus, system, and in discipline
- Service work at a level commensurate with a campus and disciplinary level
- The students you have mentored and advised
- Level of engagement in professional associations
- The resources (fiscal and human) that you have brought to the unit and the institution
- Indicators of continued professional growth and development (workshops attended, other professional development experiences)