Tips for Pre-Tenure Faculty

(Adapted from *Giving and Getting Career Advice: A Guide for Junior and Senior Faculty*, University of Michigan, [http://www.advance.rackham.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf](http://www.advance.rackham.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf))

1. Read the faculty handbook and become familiar university policies and procedures regarding promotion and tenure.

2. Become conversant with your advisors’ research and career trajectories. Read their CVs whenever you can.

3. Get the unwritten information. There are unwritten organizational structures, rules and customs defining the departmental and institutional culture.

4. Learn what services are available from the department and institution, such as clerical help, release time, research assistance, and financial support.

5. Recognize the influential people in the department. Be observant and find out which behaviors are valued and which are not.

6. Be active and energetic. Do not assume that anyone else will look out for your interests. For example, in some departments teaching assignments are scrupulously fairly assigned, in others not. It is not best to simply suffer in silence; it is best to get the situation remedied and senior faculty in the department or even in the dean’s office will be able to advise you about it.
7. Develop a strategy that will guide your progress as a scholar, teacher, and colleague over the next five years. A lot of information about the tenure process is not written down. Make it your responsibility to ask questions about how to achieve your career aims.

8. Keep careful records of your activities (e.g., research and scholarship, grants written and funded, service activities, teaching and/or mentoring). Scrutinize your own record regularly to judge if your effort and priorities are aligned.

9. Determine if there are publication outlets that you should avoid because they are not valued. Try to not waste your time serving on committees that are not valued, or teaching courses that do not strengthen your case for advancement or for tenure.

10. Seek information, advice, and assistance in developing, implementing, and revising your strategy; do not make major decisions without talking to other people.

11. Actively seek feedback from colleagues, senior faculty, department head, or unit director. Recognize that other junior faculty are often sources of valuable advice and help too.

12. Do not assume that no feedback means there are no problems.

13. If your position was defined in specific terms when you were hired, be sure you know what’s in the job description. You want to be sure there are no aspects of the job you are expected to do that you don’t recognize.
14. An annual review should be in writing. If it is negative and you believe the comments are legitimate, you should discuss them with your career advisors, including your department head or director, and plan what you need to do to improve. If you believe a comment is not accurate, provide written materials to refute the evaluation.

15. Develop your own networks with junior faculty colleagues and others in your field.

16. Read and discuss any written policies about tenure and/or promotion with your career advisor(s).

17. Let your career advisors, department head or director, and colleagues know when you have done good work. Be sure that professional information is put into your personnel folder.

18. Communicate. Failing to communicate is the biggest pitfall for all relationships. Remember that face-to-face meetings can often clear up misunderstandings better than email. Problems and concerns need to be discussed as soon as possible.