

AALS Workshop on Retention of Minority Law School Teachers
Plenary Session – Promotion and Tenure: Getting to Yes
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Learning the Art of When to Say Yes or No

- I. Tenure Challenges for Faculty of Color
 - A. Potential for Extraordinary Demands on your time and energy on the part of students, faculty, committees, community organizations – everybody needs you
 - B. Potential for social justice scholarship that is harder to get accepted and placed at prestigious law reviews
- II. Organization is Key
 - A. Learn the Formal and Informal Standards for Promotion & Tenure at your institution
 - B. Maintain Your own Document Files on each element for Promotion & Tenure
 - Scholarship
 - Teaching
 - Service
 - C. Seek out Internal Mentors to Assist you in Navigating the Institutional Norms and Buffering You from Inappropriate Demands
 - D. Seek out External Mentors (from conferences etc.) to Assist you in Assessing the Professionalism of your Institution's Culture & Norms
 - E. Circulate yourself and your work (via conferences and email outreach) to Scholars in your area who may one day be solicited to be External Reviewers for Tenure Evaluation (but be sure to check what your institution's rules are about pre-tenure contact with External Reviewers)
 - F. Ask for Help – You Don't Have to do this Alone

III. Structure Time for **Scholarship** (Let the “Do Not Disturb” sign be your best friend)

Be Strategic in What you Say Yes & No To

Yes:

- * conferences where you can meet people in your area (future external reviewers!)
- * conferences where you can have an article published (that you were already planning to write)
- * circulate your manuscript for constructive feedback outside your institution in safe spaces first
- * set aside specific days and times to research and write (and do not look at email/answer phone/keep office door open while doing so)
- * post your articles to Bepress and SSRN for greater exposure

No:

- conferences your friends are going to
- conferences that are only interesting because of their location
- summer teaching of any kind (abroad or at home)
- non-law review article writing (small bar journal pieces, etc., are time consuming too and can wait until post-tenure life)
- avoid co-authored pieces when possible

IV. Structure Time for **Teaching** Preparation

- A. Be firm in setting up a fixed collection of courses you are willing to teach during the tenure process, and seek an agreement to repeat courses continually (to reduce the strain of course preparation time)
- B. Set aside a minimum of 4 hours of prep for each class (reading materials, hornbooks, recent periodicals, writing lecture notes in Question/Answer format)
- C. Do not change casebooks pre-tenure if at all possible (each author and edition presents a new learning curve and adaptation that takes time away from scholarship)
- D. Structure when and how students can access you with:
Specific office hours; office hours by appointment; email inquiries

- E. Visit other professor classrooms across subject-matter to learn tips for success
 - F. Schedule Weekly Meetings with other professors teaching same course
- V. Structure Time for **Service** Commitments
- A. You CANNOT say yes to everything! The students, your colleagues and the world matter – but so do you and your tenure process.
 - B. Try to say yes only to invitations that can be turned into law review articles (everything else can wait until you have more disposable time AFTER tenure).
 - C. Be literally visible when you do attend events. Don't be shy. Say hello and shake hands with the Dean and other "persons of importance." You want your "face time" to count!
 - D. Attend faculty scholarship workshops and offer helpful comments; offer to read drafts of your colleagues.
 - E. Be figuratively invisible during faculty meetings (offering provocative comments at faculty meetings will not serve your interests no matter how important the topic of discussion -- you want only your scholarship & collegiality to be remembered at the time of the tenure vote)
 - F. When contentious faculty votes are imminent, ask your faculty mentor to request a closed ballot.

VI. Conclusion

Prioritizing your commitments and time expenditures is not selfish – it is self-preservation! Once you are tenured you will have the luxury to expend greater amounts of time doing additional institutional service, community service, summer teaching abroad, public intellectual projects . . .