Demystifying the Promotion and Tenure Process: Pathways to Tenure Workshop

“One of the best things was the opportunity to meet people across campus that I would not otherwise have the opportunity to meet. The networking opportunities and getting to know others in this campus community were really valuable.” - Workshop Participant

“I gained a much better sense of what I need to be doing over the next 5 years, and how to do it.” - Workshop Participant

How can you learn more about the promotion and tenure process at UNH? This question is clearly important for assistant professors, but also for tenured faculty because they serve as colleagues and mentors to junior faculty and help them navigate the promotion and tenure process. As part of its mission to promote the retention and career advancement of women faculty in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, UNH ADVANCE designed the Pathways to Tenure workshop open to all assistant professors.

The Pathways to Tenure program consists of three afternoon workshops designed to help participants identify where they are on the path to tenure, where they want to be, and how they can strengthen their records. The workshops feature individual and panel presentations; small group discussions with UNH Deans, Department Chairs, and senior colleagues; and time for individual goal setting and reflection. Each workshop has a specific focus, touching on key areas of the promotion and tenure process:

1. navigating one’s department
2. navigating one’s college, the university, and broader discipline
3. work/life balance and mentoring

UNH ADVANCE administered pre- and post-workshop surveys to gauge the impact of participation in the Pathways to Tenure program. The responses were overwhelmingly positive. When we compared pre- and post-workshop surveys, we found that after their participation, assistant professors reported significantly higher levels of knowledge in areas vital to the promotion and tenure process, including:

- how to improve work/life balance
- UNH’s tenure clock extension policy
- how to seek good career advice
- UNH’s family leave policy

In addition, when asked about their levels of satisfaction in post-workshop surveys, participants reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their:

- progress towards professional goals
- ability to establish professional goals and timelines
- sense of community with senior faculty at UNH

“[Participant] thought I knew that I didn’t know. And I hadn’t even thought about the external letter writers before, but they are so critical to the process.” - Workshop Participant
Reports from the 2016 UNH faculty climate survey underscore the importance of the Pathways to Tenure workshop. In our climate survey, while the majority of assistant professors (63.2%) reported they were very knowledgeable about the process and requirements for promotion and tenure in their departments, this number declined to 47.5% when asked about the requirements in their colleges. Furthermore, in the 2016 campus climate survey, only 13.4% of respondents reported that they were “very knowledgeable” about UNH’s tenure-clock extension policy, a number that dropped to 9.8% when asked about UNH’s family leave policy. Open-ended interviews with workshop participants illuminated these findings, as one participant noted that, “There were tenure-track faculty there who didn’t even realize there was a parental leave, and two male faculty whose wives were expecting who had no idea they had parental leave they could access.”

In sum, UNH ADVANCE’s faculty climate survey indicates that there is a need to improve information regarding the promotion and tenure process, particularly in the areas of:

- college level requirements and processes
- UNH tenure-clock extension policy
- UNH family leave policy

Participants in Pathways to Tenure overwhelmingly report that the workshops improved their knowledge in these areas, and that the workshops provided valuable opportunities for networking and strengthening their ties to the larger UNH community.

Quick Facts on Family Leave Policy:

**Improved Parental Leave Policy:** For dual career couples, parental leave is no longer a family benefit; it is now an individual benefit. When both parents are UNH faculty, they each qualify for the 12-week paid parental leave benefit.

**Tenure Clock Extension Opt-out Instead of Opt-in:** The tenure clock extension is now an automatic benefit rather than an application process for any faculty member who utilizes a parental or FMLA leave.

**Addition of Modified Duties for Parental Leave or FMLA Events:** With both Department Chair and Dean approval, paid modified-duty workload assignments may be available for up to two semesters to faculty members dealing with FMLA qualifying events.

Dates for Spring 2019 Pathways to Tenure Workshops

- February 15
- March 22
- April 19

Please register at https://tinyurl.com/Pathways2019 by February 4, 2019

UNH ADVANCE reviewed the P & T documents of all STEM departments and concluded that they varied tremendously in form and content, and ranged in length from one page to over 20 pages. During the 2014/15 academic year, a member of the UNH ADVANCE team chaired a Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on P & T Standards, which developed a set of recommendations to guide departments in creating comprehensive department P & T standards. The Faculty Senate unanimously approved these guidelines.

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