

CHAPTER TWELVE

ON THE JOB: LIFE AS A JUNIOR PROFESSOR

When you are hired into a university department, you may be surprised to find that permanent faculty jobs vary enormously. In addition to the three major distinctions between professors – assistant, associate, and full professor – colleagues often carry very different workloads. Life in a mainly undergraduate teaching institution differs markedly from life in a graduate research institute, and if you have a joint appointment with two departments or campuses, you will face special challenges. Just as junior faculty on full-time but contractually limited appointments face heavier teaching workloads and enjoy fewer institutional supports than tenure-track colleagues, tenure-track and even tenured faculty in the same university can have very unequal workloads. In some departments, “new hires” are given reduced teaching and committee workloads in order to build up a tenure file. Graduate research faculty in large universities may do little or no undergraduate teaching, and a few senior colleagues manage to negotiate a permanently reduced teaching load as compensation for having made a particularly significant contribution to their department or university. The proliferation of research chairs has intensified inequities by rewarding certain faculty with research funds and lower teaching loads – although keep in mind that many “chairs” devote a great deal of time and energy to the administrative demands of their research programs and centres. All universities want their faculty to apply for external funds, but the pressure to do so may be greatest at universities with modest graduate student funding. In poorly-funded francophone universities in Quebec, for example, you almost certainly will be expected to help subsidize graduate education by winning research grants and hiring research assistants. As a new faculty member, you should be aware of where you fit in this schema. Whatever your situation, try to avoid complaining about unequal workloads and status; you don’t want to develop a reputation as a colleague with a chip on your shoulder.

It is important to know your rights and precisely what is expected of you as a full-time, pre-tenured assistant professor. In universities and colleges where faculty members are unionized, the requirements for promotion and tenure, research leaves, and other workload issues are most clearly spelled out in the union contract. If you are unionized, read your collective agreement! Most schools also publish a faculty handbook that outlines what is required academically and professionally at different stages. Do not hesitate to ask your chair, dean, personnel officer or union representative to clarify the rules regarding tenure, leaves, benefits, and so on. Colleagues can be helpful but they may not be up-to-date on procedures and (changing) levels of expectation for tenure.

Negotiating the Job Contract

Given the competitiveness of the academic job market, most people are extremely grateful to be offered an academic job. Do not let this gratitude get in the way of negotiating your job contract. Many universities will pay your moving expenses, and

even cover the cost of a trip to find a place to live before you start the job. Some universities provide interest-free loans, or outright grants, to help people purchase a home.

Before you negotiate your salary, find out what you can expect. Speak to colleagues and ask your faculty association or union for advice. If the university has a grid system, you should receive a copy of the grid or look for it online. Statistics Canada publishes a yearly report of academic salaries in Canada by university; this will give you a general idea of what other people in your prospective institution are being paid. It is very important to negotiate your starting salary, because even though salaries in the early stages of an academic career can rise quickly, they usually do so by predetermined increments. Your starting salary will play a large role in what you will be paid well into the future.

You may be able to negotiate a reduced teaching load and other benefits. Many universities give course releases in the first year or two of teaching, and some people are able to negotiate permanently reduced teaching loads. (If you do this, be aware of the impact it might have on collegial relations within your department.) Some universities also offer early sabbaticals or research leaves to junior faculty members. Most will provide you with a start-up grant for research expenses and perhaps an office computer. You can also negotiate funds to increase library holdings related to your teaching and research needs, especially if you work in a field that your university has not traditionally taught. Check into other grants that might be available for book-publishing, research trips, and research assistance – often, these funds are flagged for new projects. Some new professors negotiate a faster-than-normal time to tenure, but be aware that this is not always advantageous. It may take longer than you think to get your book published, and you might want extra time to build up your teaching or research profile.

First-year Teaching

The most obvious thing about your first year of full-time teaching is the staggering amount of time and effort required. You will get up early and stay up late preparing courses day after day. You will deliver lectures and lead seminars on subjects about which you know little and feel barely able to keep ahead of your students. Prepare yourself psychologically for this transition; you have gone from the top of the graduate hierarchy to the bottom of the faculty ladder. At times you will feel like a fraud; other times you will simply feel panicked. Try to remember that becoming a teacher is a learning experience, that it is okay to make mistakes, and that it will get easier. Also, try to step back from your graduate school mentality and think about your undergraduate students' needs. What will excite them about history? How can you convey difficult concepts in accessible prose and through illuminating examples? An undergraduate lecture is a performance that should convey the drama of the past as well as some chronology and a *few* analytical or interpretive points. Do not bombard students with umpteen facts and figures or, worse yet, with historiographical details and revisionist arguments that they cannot possibly understand. If you do, you will lose them.

It is not necessary to develop your courses in isolation – seek help! Many first-year teachers borrow outlines from more experienced colleagues, who are usually happy to share their materials. Syllabi are also posted on H-Net and other listservs and on institutional websites, such as that of the National Library of Medicine in the US. In addition, many universities have teaching centres that assist faculty in developing syllabi and improving their teaching. Most also offer courses on teaching with technology and provide assistance with other digital resources and the design of course websites. Get advice from colleagues about the most useful resources and technologies at your university, but recognize that opinions will differ.

Committee Work

Departmental expectations involving service for new faculty vary, but you will be expected to do some committee work, at least after the first few years. Department-level committees generally deal with student curriculum, job searches, tenure and promotion, and perhaps also graduate studies. You will probably also be asked to serve on university-wide committees or sit as the external member of another department's committee. Having a joint or cross-listed appointment with other programs can mean double and triple duty when it comes to committee work.

You are expected to do your share of this sort of professional service for your university community, but do not let committee work drive you into the ground. Many departments try to lessen the committee load for new arrivals; some may protect you from all committee work. If this is the case, do not be surprised if your committee load increases dramatically in years three or four. Find out the acceptable standard, and talk to your chair if you find your committee load is too heavy; he or she may not be aware of everything you are doing. Women, Aboriginal faculty, and faculty of colour are often asked to do more than their share of committee work in order to meet university equity criteria or diversify the line-up. You do not want to be a casualty of this structural inequity. But if you are not doing any committee work, you should talk to your chair. Service will be an important part of your tenure file, and you do not want to be delayed or rejected for tenure because you have not done this type of work.

Daily Life Inside and Outside the Department

When you arrive in your new department, you will need to learn about the departmental culture. You may encounter a formal or informal division of acquisition money for the library; use your share to suggest materials. Departmental policies about long-distance phone calls vary, but whatever the rules, don't run up big department phone bills for private calls.

The office staff of your department may help you with photocopying for large courses, ordering course texts and other small matters, but in general, you will be expected to do

your own secretarial work. Many universities are short-staffed; learn how to make your requests as easy as possible on the staff. Under no circumstances should any faculty member expect support staff to handle private business. Remember that the office staff are professionals. They are your colleagues, not your servants.

New faculty are often assigned a mentor, who will take you out for lunch, answer questions, and generally serve as a source of advice. This can be extremely helpful, but feel free to approach other colleagues as well. Everyone knows how difficult it can be to start a new position, and most colleagues are happy to give you any help they can. But be aware that faculty may differ widely in their views about the department or how to advance your career. Some are relentlessly upbeat, while others are bitter. Whatever their thinking, you will not necessarily have the same experience. The department might have changed considerably since they were hired. Take your time getting to know new colleagues, and then you can better weigh their advice.

As a new faculty member you may face a busy social life, or you may be ignored. There are ritual events, such as a president's reception and departmental cocktail parties, and possibly dinner invitations. Find out how to dress for these events, they may be more formal – or informal – than you expect! As for dinner invitations from colleagues, you should try to reciprocate once you feel settled in, but, again, take your time. You will soon find out whether you have joined a department where dinner parties are regular occasions or rare events.

It may be hard to maintain your privacy during your first year. As a newcomer, you may arouse curiosity, especially if you seem “different” from the departmental norm. Colleagues will ask both professional and personal questions, so be prepared, and try to handle questions you find intrusive with as much professional aplomb as possible. Your novelty as a newcomer will wear off, and first-year stresses will abate, so just try to weather the storm. You can decide for yourself whether, when, and how to reveal details about your private life, and take time to let collegial friendships unfold. After all, you may be in the department for the next thirty years.

Of course, everyone faces different challenges. A person who grew up in the province where they now work might adjust more easily than someone who had to move across the country, a married couple might “fit in” to a relatively conservative community more easily than a GLBT faculty member, or a single mother. Some new faculty members have disabilities or the additional challenge of a chronic illness; others have to care for – or support – sick or aging family members. If you have young children or are in a long-distance relationship, you will have to perform a difficult juggling act and might find it extremely difficult to make department meetings. Being the only person of colour in a mostly white department, university, and town will bring it own challenges, especially if you come from a different country and culture. The community might be so small that everyone knows who you are, you might have to deal with insensitive or racist comments, or your white colleagues might be shy about talking with you for fear of saying something inappropriate – with the result that you are neglected and marginalized. Individual professors differ in their sensitivity and consciousness of these issues, and

departments differ in how (and how much) they will accommodate your needs. Take time to find a trustworthy friend in whom you can confide. Do your work, stand your ground, make any necessary requests, and, if you feel comfortable doing so, educate your colleagues about your situation.

Some junior colleagues may be surprised to learn that, despite the large number of women historians and institutional supports for women's studies, gender inequities persist. Academic sexism takes many forms, from the subtle to the serious. Many women find it annoying, for example, when students say their male professors are brilliant and address them as "Dr.," but describe women faculty as "nice" (or maybe "biased") and call them "Miss" or use their first names. But when such attitudes show up on teaching evaluations and other job performance measures, their impact can be severe. Gender bias can also emerge in service assignments, as when female colleagues are "encouraged" to do extra committee work because they are seen as particularly sympathetic to student needs, or because a committee needs more female representation. It can also appear in assessments of your scholarship. Research on beauty culture or mothering, for example, may be treated as less "significant" than political economy and thus may be undervalued by readers of grant applications and tenure files. Any woman who has found herself belittled or embarrassed in public by an arrogant male colleague – or who is assumed to be lacking commitment to university service or her scholarship because she is juggling childrearing and career – would chafe at the notion that sexism is a thing of the past. There are few formal procedures for dealing with these issues, but talking about them can help. Get moral support and suggestions for coping strategies from trusted colleagues and old friends from graduate school. Above all, do your best to keep a frustrating situation from damaging your morale or sense of self-worth. If you are subjected to overt discrimination, sexual harassment, or assault, contact your chair, dean, faculty association, and/or university equity officer. Familiarize yourself with the appropriate procedures, and know your rights.

You may not be at the university or in the city of your dreams. You may be far from home and separated from loved ones. You may be worried that you are not suited to life in a big city – or small town. You may be a GLBT faculty member living in a city or town that offers no alternative social and cultural life. Fortunately, academic life does not require a twelve month residence; you can socialize at conferences and spend summers and holidays in another town. But if your situation is untenable, remember that you do have options. You can look for another job, and even give up a tenure-track position in order to return to a more conducive environment. You can work as a sessional while you look for another job, or you can leave academia entirely. Some academics have made this decision and are happier for it. But we also suggest that you not make any decision hastily.

Try to approach your new locale with an open mind. Do not make derogatory comments about the place to your new colleagues, who may love where they live and work. Take advantage of what the local community has to offer. You may be surprised. Consider joining a campus group for women, LGBT, or international faculty – or starting one if one doesn't exist. Make an effort to meet people from outside of the university. Sign

up for a sports league or exercise class, invite new friends to accompany you to films and concerts, join a book club, find a place of worship. Is there a food bank you can volunteer at? Enjoy the outdoors – go cycling or take long walks. Make the best of your new environment, and you will be more content.

Advancement

As a teacher and colleague, you will find yourself constantly providing services, advice, and support to students and other members of the academic community. This is an important part of academic life, and many professors give generously of their time. But you must also learn what counts towards advancement in your position. Learn what colleagues did to get tenure, but don't obsess over trying to figure out what precisely is appropriate behaviour. Speak when you have something to say, figure out when it's important to fight and when it is wiser to let something go, and build your credibility as a responsible professional. Be yourself. You do not have to hide your politics or religion, or pretend to be what you think your colleagues want you to be. But you do have to do your homework by getting to know your colleagues, participating actively in searches, attending departmental meetings, and completing committee work and other tasks. All of these activities will not only help you with tenure and promotion, but also help your chances of winning when it's time to fight for a principle or job candidate that really matters to you. Take time in making friends and allies in the department. There is no rush.

In all likelihood, your university requires faculty members to achieve success in the usual trio: teaching, research, and service. It sounds obvious, but learn what is specifically meant by that policy. If teaching and research matter more than service when it comes to tenure, then how much professional service is enough? For the research category, do you need a published book or a book in the review process, or will articles in respected journals and scholarly volumes be enough? Will you also need to show evidence of a new project beyond the thesis? Publications take time, so you need to know the answers to these questions and pace yourself accordingly.

Increasingly, universities expect you to bring in research grants. Find out whether or not this is expected at your institution. Do your research when you apply for one of these. Attend seminars on how to apply for SSHRC Standard Research Grants and other funding, and ask colleagues for advice. Also consider what is best for you. If you are working on turning your dissertation into a book, and applying for research monies would be a distraction, you might want to delay a year or two. On the other hand, few funding applications are successful on their first attempt, so it is wise to start applying early.

At some schools, publishing a textbook (or other teaching materials) counts in the teaching category; in others, it counts as research. Some institutions emphasize student enrolments while others look for consistently favourable evaluations by students and faculty. Others want to see that you have supervised graduate students. Learn what aspect of teaching is important for tenure.

Service is a vague category. In addition to committee work, it may also apply to activities external to the university, such as volunteer work with historical or heritage organizations, consulting contracts, attendance at professional meetings, speeches at Rotary clubs or seniors' groups, and so on. Some schools define service as work done for the wider professional community, while others are concerned with the portion of your time devoted to administration within your own department and university. Think carefully about what tasks you are required to do, and what you want to take on. As a faculty member you will be asked to peer review manuscripts, write book reviews, organize conferences, edit special collections, write textbooks, give public talks, do media interviews, and get involved with national and international organizations. Although it is flattering to be asked to do these things, and many of them are interesting and fun, the requests can pile up and become overwhelming. Organizing conferences and writing textbooks, in particular, can be an enormous amount of work. Think carefully about which tasks you have time for; and choose the ones that are most enjoyable for you. Practice saying, "No!" You will not be able to accomplish anything effectively if you are completely exhausted.

Get into the habit of keeping records, and build up a tenure file. Keep class grade lists, course outlines, notes from students and colleagues, and teaching evaluations, if available. Keep copies of anything you write for publication, public presentation, or institutional business, as well as reviews of your work. Inform your chair of all your accomplishments. Many departments have faculty activity sheets or yearly reports. Be sure to record *all* your accomplishments: publications, student supervision, guest speaking engagements, media appearances, work-in-progress, research grants, and prizes or other academic honours. In short, never allow yourself to suffer an incomplete departmental evaluation because you are not well-organized. Requirements for tenure and promotion, and the interpretation of those requirements, can change, so find out the current expectations.

Tenure

Tenure is meant to protect academic freedom and integrity in the university, but it also provides professors with a degree of job security that few other citizens in our society enjoy. Tenure is not a fundamental right that follows from landing a tenure-track job. You must earn it, and to do so you will have to satisfy the particular requirements of your institution. Tenure requirements vary little from university to university across North America, although Canadians hear fewer "horror stories" than US colleagues about well-published faculty turned down for tenure. Generally, Canadian universities review you for tenure after a probationary period that ranges from four to six years. There may be an interim progress report a few years before you come up for tenure; this will give you constructive feedback on your progress and let you know what you need to do.

Tenure review is a lengthy process, and you will be painfully aware of being evaluated. Try not to let it get you down. The best way to get through the tenure process is to be

prepared. You will be required to provide comprehensive files on all your work and accomplishments for several committees and the dean. Be very clear about expectations and keep complete records. Expect it to take weeks, even months, to compile your files: you may have to track down your published articles and reviews of your work, rummage through your office for student letters that praised your course, assemble students' course evaluations, and so on. You will need to discuss your work in progress. You may need to compose a statement on your approach to teaching and perhaps one on your research profile. Many Canadian and most American universities solicit letters evaluating your scholarship from external reviewers as well as departmental colleagues. You may or may not be able to influence who is asked, and in the end you may only be given a verbal or written summary of what was written. At other universities, the tenure-review process is entirely internal.

Our advice about knowing what is expected of you, and knowing your rights, applies especially to tenure. Most tenure requirements include a combination of teaching, research, and service, but in most locales, a strong publication record is the most effective way of securing tenure. Prepare yourself, and ask for plenty of advice. Your chair should be helpful and informed about university guidelines. An appeals committee, if you need it, usually can do little more than determine whether the proper procedures were followed. If you believe that you were denied tenure because of discrimination, you will have to prove it. We still hear of cases where poor teaching evaluations caused by student prejudice, or a scholarly assessor's bias against a certain field of study, appeared to affect a tenure decision. A more common problem, however, is that tenure expectations were not made clear, and so the candidate failed to meet them. You will have to present a convincing case to support your claim that you have indeed met the established tenure standards. Most colleges and universities have quasi-judicial procedures for adjudicating tenure and hearing grievances, and "T&P" policies and procedures are usually written down. New faculty should receive a copy of the rules – read them! Make sure that you know what you are supposed to do, and if you feel you are being treated unfairly, get help. Do not let anger, embarrassment, or profound disappointment prevent you from filing a grievance if you think that you have been wronged. It is your right.

Promotion

Most institutions rank tenure-track faculty members as assistant, associate, or full professor. At many North American universities, tenure and promotion to associate professor status go hand in hand, but some institutions treat these as distinct phases. Promotion to full professor usually occurs more slowly and will require you to have an impressive publishing profile, including two monographs. Large research-oriented universities may also demand that your work has received some international attention, but do not worry about this stipulation. It does not mean that you must be known around the world, but, rather, that you have published in international journals, presented at international conferences, and that scholars in appropriate fields have come to know and respect your work. Promotion may or may not bring a higher salary, but it does bring

more prestige inside and outside your institution, and often new responsibilities.

Once again, find out the criteria for promotion at your university, and know your options should you be denied promotion to any rank. This is especially important for pre-tenured faculty, who may be too busy writing lectures and preparing classes to take the time out to read university guidelines, talk with colleagues, and attend workshops. The key is to learn the ropes sooner rather than later, and in as painless a fashion as possible.

Being a Historian

When you become a tenured history professor, you have secured a highly desirable job that comes with considerable status and autonomy, and a remarkable degree of security. You have entered into a privileged life as a successful academic with the opportunity and resources to participate in conferences around the world, to engage in intellectual debate with scholars you respect, and with the right to devote yourself to intellectual endeavours that have always excited you. Comparatively few people have the luxury of living as a full-time intellectual. As you find yourself stressed and overcommitted, juggling too many projects and committees, supervising too many students, and marking big batches of essays or exams, it is easy to forget your good fortune. You have privilege and prestige inside and outside the university. Enjoy your lot in life, even while you fight for better pay and working conditions, juggle your personal and professional lives, and remain sensitive to those who do not have such secure careers. Enjoy the rewards of being a practising historian.