

Maintaining Momentum After Tenure, or Avoiding the “Now What?” Syndrome

Assorted Viewpoints Assembled by

Sheila Hemami

School of Electrical & Computer Engineering
Cornell University

Areas to Consider

- The standard 3:
 - Research
 - Teaching
 - Service
- Planning the sabbatic leave
- The other part of your life (you do have an other part of your life, don't you?)

Research

- Research momentum is relatively easy to maintain.
- Shifting research areas:
 - I shifted in my 3rd-to-4th years from the thesis area to the next area.
 - Sabbatic leave is also useful for a shift.
- “I...had no problem maintaining research momentum...because research is the single most appealing task of my day...” Paulette Clancy, ChemE chair at Cornell.

Teaching

- Momentum is easy to maintain if you're excited about what you're doing.
- Design a new class, or
- Redesign the same-old-class that your department has been teaching for the last 50 years.
- Be proactive about your teaching assignments.

Service

- Service requirements go UP after tenure.
- Be proactive, not reactive: identify areas in which you want to contribute and notify the authorities.
- Take a leadership course if your university offers it.

Planning Sabbatic Leave

- Other people suggested things like:
 - Write proposals in a new area
 - Go elsewhere and learn something new, meet new people, do cool things (“going elsewhere” requires planning)

My Sabbatic Leave

- What I wanted to do: see previous slide.
- What I actually did:
 - Through minimal planning I got 2 1-semester non-teaching positions;
 - I worked a lot with my graduate students;
 - But I also vegetated a lot because I was completely exhausted.
- Result: I was ready to work when I got back. My sabbatical was a huge success!

They can't fire you anymore, so...

- Think about rebalancing your life commitments with academic progress (e.g., partner, children, non-work-related interests).

Does your kid/dog/plant recognize you?

- Consider “am I happy?” and adjust accordingly (but please don't retire on the job...)