Professional Development Patterns Among Pre-tenure Faculty
(based on D. Olsen and M.D. Sorcinelli’s article, The pre-tenure years: A longitudinal perspective, New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 50, Summer 1992)

In 1986, a large public research university began a longitudinal study of one cohort of new faculty, using both the interview and questionnaire formats. Over a five-year period, pre-tenure, faculty members tended to show the following changes.
Changes Over Time
Changes Over Time

In Teaching
Changes Over Time

In Teaching

- Time spent in teaching preparation **declines** as the professor becomes more efficient and experienced.
Changes Over Time

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- Time spent in teaching preparation **declines** as the professor becomes more efficient and experienced.
- Time spent with undergraduates **remains fairly constant**, while time with graduate students tends to **increase**.
Changes Over Time

In Teaching

- Time spent in teaching preparation **declines** as the professor becomes more efficient and experienced.
- Time spent with undergraduates **remains fairly constant**, while time with graduate students tends to **increase**.
- Teaching tends to be a **personally satisfying** experience for many new professors and **less stressful** than establishing a research career, though some frustrations are normal.
Changes Over Time, cont.

In Research
In Research

- Time spent on research steadily increases.
In Research

- Time spent on research steadily increases.
- Stress about research productivity and support tends to heighten as the tenure review year approaches.
Changes Over Time, cont.

In Research

- Time spent on research steadily **increases**.
- Stress about research productivity and support **tends to heighten** as the tenure review year approaches.

In Service
In Research

- Time spent on research steadily increases.
- Stress about research productivity and support tends to heighten as the tenure review year approaches.

In Service

- Participation in service ideally is quite limited in the first few years, and begins to increase as the tenure review nears.
Sources of Stress Common to Pre-tenure Faculty
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(based on M.D. Sorcinelli’s article, New and Junior Faculty Stress: Research and Responses, New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 50, Summer 1992)
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1. Not enough time
   a. learning many new things all at once
   b. difficulty balancing teaching and research
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   b. difficulty balancing teaching and research
   c. difficulty juggling pressures for publication
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2. Inadequate feedback, recognition, and reward
   a. unclear criteria for evaluating research, teaching and service
   b. inadequate university recognition for contributions
   c. insufficient financial rewards
3 Lack of clarity regarding tenure requirements
Sources of Stress Common to Pre-tenure Faculty, cont.

3 Lack of clarity regarding tenure requirements

4 Unrealistic personal expectations (self-imposed pressure to do everything perfectly and all at once)
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5. Lack of collegiality in the academic unit, and unrealistic expectations regarding the amount of support that senior faculty will provide
Sources of Stress Common to Pre-tenure Faculty, cont.

3 Lack of clarity regarding tenure requirements

4 Unrealistic personal expectations (self-imposed pressure to do everything perfectly and all at once)

5 Lack of collegiality in the academic unit, and unrealistic expectations regarding the amount of support that senior faculty will provide

6 Difficulty finding a balance between work and life outside of work
Coping Strategies and Characteristics of Successful Faculty
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1 Prioritize to identify the value of various projects (determining "crucial" vs. "back burner" projects)
Coping Strategies and Characteristics of Successful Faculty

1. **Prioritize** to identify the value of various projects (determining "crucial" vs. "back burner" projects)
2. **Set realistic goals** as a first step towards reaching the ideal
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4. Know and capitalize on one’s own prime time
5. Find alternative workspace to avoid interruptions for portions of your work
6 Initiate relaxation exercises to restore energy
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7 Change work style to enhance a sense of well being
Coping Strategies and Characteristics of Successful Faculty, cont.

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7 Change work style to enhance a sense of well being
8 Cultivate a coping philosophy to overcome pressure
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6. Initiate relaxation exercises to restore energy
7. Change work style to enhance a sense of well being
8. Cultivate a coping philosophy to overcome pressure
9. Seek social support on and off campus
10. Reward yourself for working hard at a demanding career
11. Seek out advice and social support from a variety of colleagues (including feedback about quality and quantity of activity)
Coping Strategies and Characteristics of Successful Faculty, cont.

6 Initiate relaxation exercises to restore energy
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8 Cultivate a coping philosophy to overcome pressure
9 Seek social support on and off campus
10 Reward yourself for working hard at a demanding career
11 Seek out advice and social support from a variety of colleagues (including feedback about quality and quantity of activity)

(Some people offer much wiser advice than others do, and sometimes excellent advice can be found outside the department)
12 Establish effective habits of research and writing early in the career (those who don’t, seldom do later in a career)
Coping Strategies and Characteristics of Successful Faculty, cont.

12 Establish effective habits of research and writing early in the career (those who don’t, seldom do later in a career)

13 Stay involved in your scholarly/creative community, but avoid whenever possible political fights, turf battles
12 Establish effective habits of research and writing early in the career (those who don’t, seldom do later in a career)

13 Stay involved in your scholarly/creative community, but avoid whenever possible political fights, turf battles

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The next three slides are borrowed from a February 14, 2013, presentation given at the UI by Kerry Ann Rockquemore, PhD, President, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, www.FacultyDiversity.org
The tenure-track is stressful for ALL junior faculty due to:

- Varying degrees of preparation for ALL aspects of job
- Minimal feedback and support
- Unclear criteria for promotion & tenure
- Ever-escalating expectations for research and funding
- Need to front-load research portfolio
- Long probationary period (6 years) followed by a series of high-stakes, yet anonymous votes
In addition, under-represented faculty commonly describe:

- Struggling to find time for research given diversity requests
- Experiencing emotional exhaustion from differential classroom dynamics
- Managing visibility, invisibility and belonging
- Loneliness and lack of collegial acceptance (mentors but not sponsors)
COMMON OUTCOMES

All of this can lead to…

- A negative impact on productivity (years 1-3)
- Engaging in *self-isolation* as a protective defense mechanism
- Emotional exhaustion and anxiety
- Stress-related illness
- Strained relationships
- Thoughts of leaving the academy
The Building of Several Universes
1. Family and friends (part of support system)
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2. Life at the UI (department, CLAS, other colleges)
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3. Professional Universe (within and without your specific discipline or area of research)
The Building of Several Universes

1. Family and friends (part of support system)
2. Life at the UI (department, CLAS, other colleges)
3. Professional Universe (within and without your specific discipline or area of research)
4. Recreational Activities (part of keeping in good physical and mental health)
5 The Fifth Universe (e.g., sports, TV celebs, charities, PTO, jet set, news from abroad)
The Building of Several Universes, cont.

5 The Fifth Universe (e.g., sports, TV celebs, charities, PTO, jet set, news from abroad)

- soccer (EPL, La Liga, Serie A, Bundesliga, Eredivisie, Ligue 1, Primera División, Brasileirao, Liga Mexicana, MLS, Champions League)
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