

# Promotion to the Next Level

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# Session Plan

- Start with: What is on your mind? What are you interested in doing and discussing?
- Stephanie's story and advice
- Activity
- Ellen's story and advice
- Activity
- Q&A



# Stephanie's Personal Path

- St. John's College, B.A. (1977)
- Univ. of Michigan, M.S., Ph.D. (1982, 1985)
- Teknowledge Corp (1985-1988)
- Center for Nonlinear Studies, Los Alamos Nat. Lab.
  - Director's Fellow, (1988-1990)
- University of New Mexico (1990 – 2017)
  - Assistant Professor (1990 – 1994); Assoc (1994-1999)
  - Full Professor (1999 – present)
  - Dept. Chair (2006 – 2011)
- Arizona State University (2017 – present)
- Other activities
  - Sabbatical leave: MIT AI Lab (1996 – 1997)
  - Santa Fe Institute: Interim VP Academic Affairs (1999 – 2000)
  - Sabbatical leave: SFI (2003 – 2006)



# My Approach to Academia

- Training through
  - Tenure and promotion are waypoints not goals
- The vow
  - Move on when bitterness sets in
  - Avoid bitterness so I don't have to move
- Joy
  - Only serious obligation is to tax payers and students
  - Faculty position is a tremendous opportunity
  - Run to work and smile
- Never make the mistake of thinking you are irreplaceable



# Post-Tenure Pitfalls

- **Failure to thrive**
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> round of funding
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> round of graduate students
  - Existential dilemmas
- **Expected to be a grownup**
  - Extra service load
  - No mentors in sight
- **The myth that anything else counts besides research**



# Promotion Packets

- **Research maturity**
  - Intellectual leadership and vision. Technical depth
  - Stable funding and student pipeline
  - Impact beyond narrow specialty
- **Leadership**
  - Committee and program Chairmanships, Editorships
  - Nominating others for awards
  - Curriculum development
  - Mentoring
- **Teaching**
  - Scope, excellence
- **Service: Look for intrinsic merit, not volume**



# Growing a Research Group

- 5-10 students is qualitatively different from 3-4
  - Face time is not all it's cracked up to be
  - 1-1 meetings vs. group sessions
  - Culture matters
- No time to program
- Leadership through intellectual vision and many informal encounters
- Write grants every year



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# Random Thoughts

- Take sabbaticals
- Decide who you are and take it seriously
- Avoid administration for as long as possible
  - Credibility
  - Hard to go back
  - **We need more female superstars!**





# Participatory Exercise I

- Spend five minutes making a list of the strengths of your record vis a vis promotion
- Pair up and share your lists
- Share back to the group



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# Ellen's (Odd) Story

- Tenured in 1999
- Assistant Dean for Space (new building)
- Interim Dean (six months in 2002)
- Associate Dean for Research, Space, Grad
- Promoted to Full Professor in 2004
- Also, two girls (1998, 2001), one awesome husband



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# My Qualifications

- Interim Dean during third year review process
- Chair of Computer Science from 2005-2012
- Currently Promotion and Tenure Chair for the College of Computing, incl. representing at Institute level with the dean
- Read and written many full professor letters



# How I Think About Promotion

- Relatively narrow and well-defined path to Associate Professor with Tenure
- Can be multiple paths to Full Professor
- But...local norms matter a lot
- And...there is one sure path



# The Sure Path

- Continued strong publications
- Continued strong funding
- PC chair for conference in your area
- Perhaps a seminal (“why now?”) event – examples:
  - PC chair for top conference
  - Leading large funding award
  - Breakthrough result
  - Credible threat to leave



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# Local Norms Really Matter

- There are places that ask “why now”
- There are places where everyone who remains productive is promoted after N years
- There are places where promotion recognizes significant contributions internally, even if not research
- There are places where you can languish at Associate Professor
- You need mentors at this level



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# Another (Radical?) View

- Tenure gives you freedom
- Do the service that matters to you
- Re-balance your time (towards teaching, towards different kinds of writing, towards making things happen internally, towards family, towards new areas)
- Don't worry about promotion to Full



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# Participatory Exercise II

- Spend a few minutes identifying two things you would like to work on to strengthen your case for promotion
- Pair up and help your partner narrow to one
- Make a plan for next week, next month, and next year to make progress on your one choice
- What will you stop doing; what will change; what will you start doing?





# Other Important Stuff

- Quality over quantity
- Deep thinking about diversity activities
- Types of leadership



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# Magic Wand Thought Exercise

- If you had a magic wand that made you a chaired distinguished full professor, what would you do?
- You should spend X% of your time on this. Discuss what is X.



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