

APA DIVISION 15 PRESENTS

# ▶ ONE TIP

*MARCH 2019 ISSUE:*  
"CONGRATULATIONS ON LANDING A TENURE-  
TRACK JOB!"

By Prof. Michelle Perry

---

**Clearly, if you have a tenure-track job,**

congratulations are in order! But, as soon as you accept this position (after appropriate celebrations, of course!), your most important task will be to earn tenure.

The best way to earn tenure is to give everyone who contributes to preparing your case a slam-dunk, no-brainer case where it is clear that you've done exactly what your institution is looking for. Of course, what that means at your institution and for your particular position may not be the same as it is somewhere else, but there are some things to make sure you understand, as early as possible, in your pre-tenure years.

## 1. Know what counts towards tenure:

- a. *Grant funding*: Do you need to have received funding? Does it matter if funding is from a foundation or from a federal agency?
- b. *Publications*: How many? Which journals? How many with students? How many with you as first author?
- c. *Teaching*: Is it okay if you're improving or are you expected to reach a certain threshold in your evaluations? Does it matter how many students sign up for your classes? How many master's or doctoral students you advise?

## 2. Pay attention to expectations and to your contract, especially in terms of your division of duties.

- a. If you are expected to be devoting 40% of your time to *research*, make sure you are doing that. In a 50-hour work week, that means 20 hours of your week will be spent on research. This is realistic, but it can be a struggle to accomplish that.
- b. When it comes to *teaching*, find ways to become more efficient that also make you more effective. I found, for example, that requiring a peer review on papers made the papers better (and thus easier to grade), but also provided a valuable and authentic experience for students (both in giving and in receiving critiques). This worked for me; you may need to be creative to find out what works for you.
- c. Avoid onerous *service*. For example, do your best to stay off of the

space committee as an assistant professor: everybody wants more space and you will certainly disappoint colleagues when you don't give them resources they believe they need.

## 3. Hold onto the joy that brought you here in the first place.

- a. *Do research that excites you*. Others will detect your passion and it is infectious. And if you don't think your work is fabulous, why expect others to think differently?
- b. *Craft a research plan with attainable goals* for the short (semester) and long term (up to 3 years). Although it is occasionally wise to follow an unexpected thread that appears in the fabric of your data, don't pull at something that takes you away from the core of your work. If it doesn't fit in your research plan, you'll have difficulty explaining why you went down that road, so if it doesn't fit in your research statement, keep it on the back burner until after tenure.
- c. *Do research that excites you* (I know I already said it, but it was worth repeating).

Getting tenure is an amazing privilege, and I believe I have been able to take risks in my work that have paid off because of the security that tenure affords, which is one of the brilliant benefits of tenure. So, do yourself — and your tenure committee and your external evaluators — a favor: make your case a slam dunk.



## MICHELLE PERRY IS A PROFESSOR OF

Educational Psychology and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, and Chair of the Developmental Sciences Division of Educational Psychology. Her current research examines how teachers learn from videos in an online professional development website (funded by the NSF) and how students underrepresented in STEM navigate online courses in ways that lead to successful outcomes (funded by the IES). She served as Chair of the Department of Educational Psychology for 7 years and currently serves on the College P&T committee. She also teaches a doctoral capstone seminar, based on the Carnegie Foundation's Initiative on Preparing Future Faculty.

## ONE TIP IS PUBLISHED

bi-monthly by the Membership Committee of APA Division 15 (Educational Psychology). In One Tip, senior scholars tell their stories and share insights for junior scholars.

If you would like to contribute a piece, please contact Division 15 Membership Committee Chair, Serena Shim at [sshim@bsu.edu](mailto:sshim@bsu.edu).