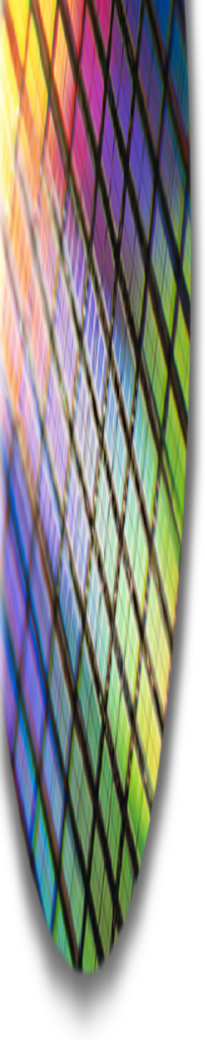


ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN
FACULTY AND STAFF ASSOCIATION

My Top 5 Pieces of Advice on Promotion and Tenure

David Z. Pan
Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering
The University of Texas at Austin
http://www.cerc.utexas.edu/utda

Disclaimer

- The “advice” in this talk is only from my personal experience/observation
- It is not official rule from UT
- Please use your own judgment if it applies to you

About Me

- BS in (Geo)Physics, Peking University,1992
- MS in Atmospheric Sciences, UCLA, 1994
- MS in Computer Science, UCLA, 1998
- PhD in Computer Science, UCLA, 2000
- Research Staff Member, IBM Watson, 2000-2003
- Assistant Professor, UT-ECE, 2003-2008
- Associate Professor, UT-ECE, 2008-2013
- Professor, UT-ECE, 2013-
- Engineering Foundation Endowed Professor, 2014-

PhD → Professor

- Permanent hair Damage
- Pizza hut Driver
- Professorship? hah! Dream on!
  - A tenure-track position at a major research university like UT often gets hundreds of applicants

Congrats! Your Dream Comes True!

How Do you Like your Job?

- I have worked in both academia and industry
- Assistant Professor is one of the most challenging jobs, but still so many PhDs want it ☺
  - Tenure clock is typically 6 years

So Many Balls to Juggle

- Teaching, research (publications, funding), student advising (undergrad, grad), services (university and outside – committees, editorial boards, proposal panels), impacts (invited talks/ keynotes, advisory boards/consulting)…
- Faculty role in a research university
  - CXO: CEO, CTO, CFO, …,
- Still, you need to have
  - Balance of work/life
  - Quality time (family/friends)
  - Quiet time (fellowship…)
  - Exercise…

Mission Impossible?

Good News:

The majority of tenure-track faculty have made it!

So, you can too!

Tip 1: Start from the END in Mind

- Know what is expected
  - Promotion Dossier Guidelines and Checklist
- What consists of your promotion dossier?
  - CV: Use the template similar to what the promotion package wants; update it periodically and see where to improve
  - Teaching Statement (peer evaluation helpful)
  - Research Statement (5 Most Significant Works)
  - Advising Statement (both undergrad and grad)
  - Service Statement
  - Honors Statement
  - Reference Letters (4-6 letters; could be 10)

Tip 1: Start from the END in Mind

- Different department/colleges may have different "unspoken" rules
- You need to be very clear about that from the beginning (consult with your mentor/dept. chair)
- E.g., in College of Engineering, we need to graduate 1 PhD student before tenure (preferable 1.0 sole-advised, not 2 x 0.5 – co-advised)
  - Thus, you should get 1-2 PhD students ASAP
  - Really nurture them, be nice to them ☺, so that they don't quit
- In some departments, publish a book

Tip 2: Time Management 4D

- We all have just 24 hours a day!
- You cannot be perfect in everything (well, maybe not even perfect in anything)
- **Discipline** in time allocation: priority, teaching vs. research vs. others
- **Do it: If others cannot do it**
- **Delegate it: Ask your students for help (paper review, drawing figures, order group meeting food…)**
- **Dump it: You need to learn how to say NO**

Tip 3: Hone your Communication Skills

- Communication is VERY important
- Keep your department chair, mentor, and senior faculty in your area (your champions) informed, on both good news and bad news
  - They really want to see you succeed
- Networking/communication/collaboration
  - Nowadays, more collaborative/interdisciplinary research projects (NSF, MURI, Centers, etc.)
  - For engineering/applied science, industry collaboration & feedbacks are crucial to have real impacts!
  - Potential letter writers: senior faculty in other top schools (make sure your work is known to them)
  - Giving good talks can impress people ☺

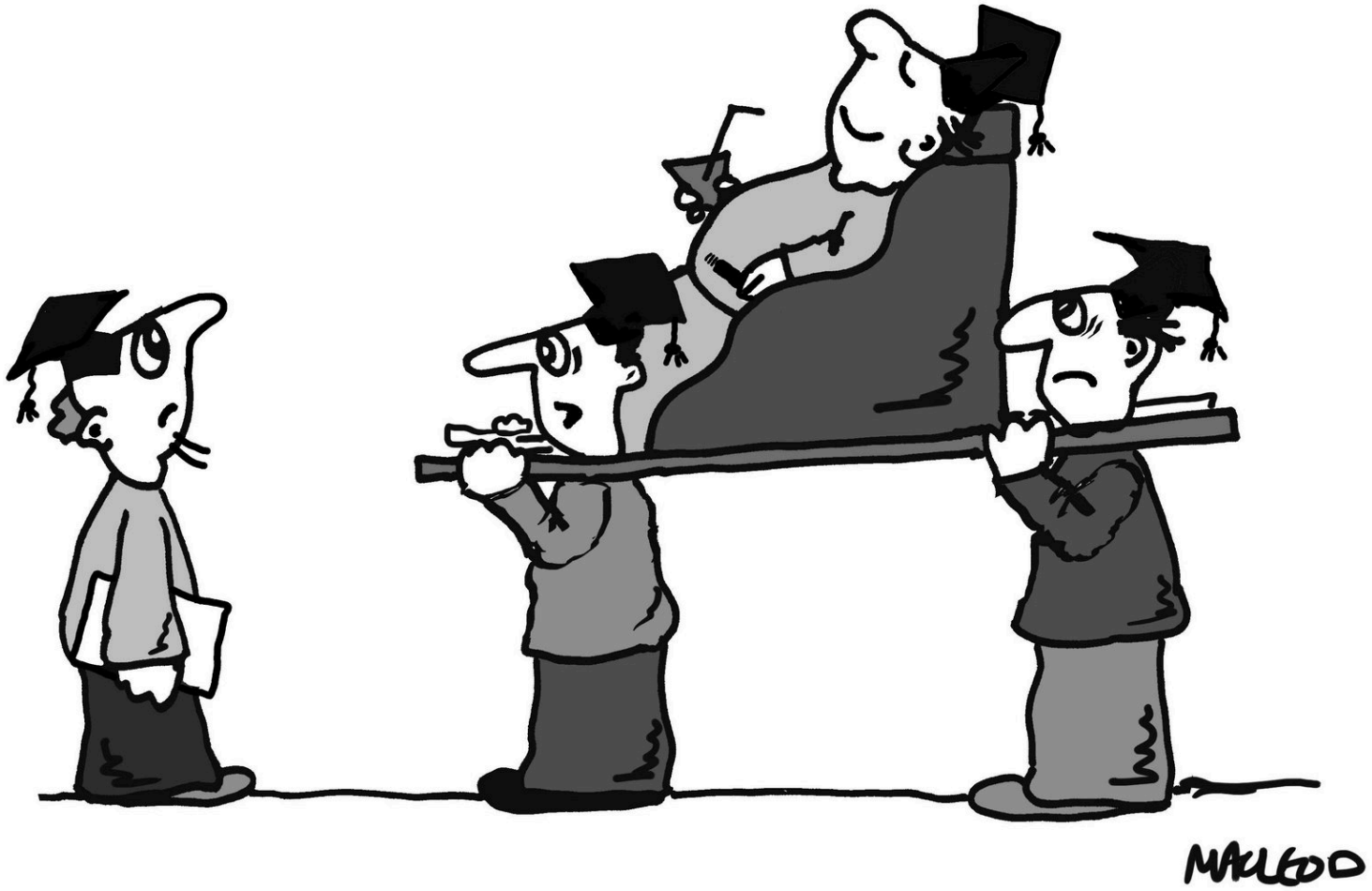
Tip 4: Quality, NOT Quantity

- *Publish or perish* at the right place!
  - Focus on the impact and quality
  - NOT (just) the quantity
- Remember you will need to single out 5 most important publications and send them to your reference (some of them you may not know and they will read)
- It is also true for services and funding: quality, not (just) quantity

Tip 5: Take it Easy

- Relax… Remember most people have made it!
- You can make it too!
- Do what you are supposed to do and don't worry
- For example of funding, rejection is the norm
  - E.g., NSF success rate may be 10%
  - You just have to keep trying, other sources, etc. (lots of luck involved)
- Balance work and life
- Tenure is NOT everything

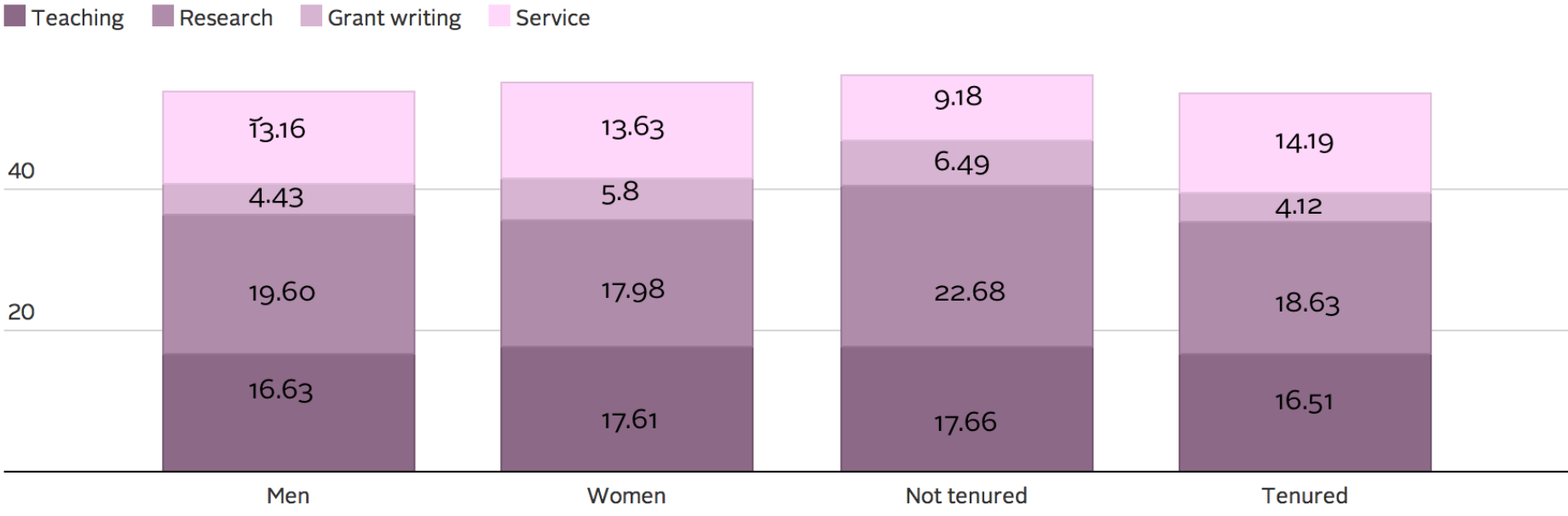
Life after Tenure like This?



"He's been pretty much insisting on this ever since he got tenure."

Nope!

Weekly work hours by faculty at top science/engeering departments, by work activity



Source: Link, Swann, and Bozeman, 2008

* Getting tenure adds 5 hours of ~~bureaucratic nonsense~~ service duties to science professors' weeks (per D. Matthews)
* Tenured professors still work hard because they enjoy their work!

Tip 5: Take it Easy

- Even not promoted, it is not the end of the world
- Cherish your family, friends, …
- You could be successful elsewhere
- It is all about "fit"

- **David E. Shaw**
  - **PhD in 1980, Assistant Prof. at Columbia Univ.**
  - **1986, didn't get tenure (as I heard of)**
  - **1986, joined Morgan Stanley**
  - **1988, started "D. E. Shaw & Co" (hedge fund)**
  - **Forbes 2008 estimated his wealth at $2.5B**
  - **Founded D. E. Shaw Research in 2001: devote his time on computational biochemistry**
  - **NAE in 2012, NAS in 2014, …**

Promotion & Tenure

Yes, you can!

Thank you!

Questions?