What's it Like to be a Professor?

REU
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Motivation for this talk

- People don’t know what professors do
- You can’t expect to want to do something, if you don’t know what it involves
- **Goal:** Let you know what a professor does
- Maybe this is the right career path for you!!
What are my job responsibilities?

- Research
- Teaching
- “Service”

Teaching

- I teach three classes per year
  - Usually a graduate class
  - Other faculty teach more (up to 2-3 per semester)

- This is the part of the job that undergrads see
  - plan course
  - prepare class
  - lecture
  - office hours
  - work with TA, grading, etc.
Research

- Research is my primary job responsibility
  
  - Publish research papers: “Publish or Perish”
  - Get Research Grants: $$$
  - “Advise” graduate students
    - direct PhD theses
    - direct Masters projects and theses

What is “Research”?*

- Research is *not*
  - going to the library to look up books and articles that others have written

- Research *is*
  - writing those books and articles

- To do that, you need to have
  - ideas, expertise, knowledge of what’s been done, etc.

- *not as hard as it sounds or seems*
Research Activities

- Travel to conferences
- Read papers
- Meet people
- Write grant proposals
- Get graduate students to do the work
- Write papers

“Service”

- Meetings, meetings and more meetings
- Committees, committees and more committees
  - “The Committee on Committees, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee is charged with filling vacancies on …. Committees”
- Department service
  - Constant review of curriculum (grad and undergrad)
  - Faculty interviewing and hiring
  - Student admission (grad and undergrad)
  - PhD and MS exams, student reviews
  - TA assignments
  - Student course-work advising
School and University Service

• Intercollegiate Athletics Board
• University Library Committee
• Watson school committees
  • Library
  • Undergrad, grad, etc.
  • Many, many more….

  • it’s always something, and it all adds up

When and How am I evaluated?

• Promotion and Tenure
  • Enter as “Assistant Professor”
  • 3 Year Review (Dept. faculty, dean, provost, president)
    • usually just for feedback
  • Tenure Review (during 6th year)
    • primary evaluation that officially “matters”
    • Dept. faculty, external evaluators, dean, university committee, provost, president, (more?)
  • Tenure! and “Associate Professor”
  • May never be formally evaluated again!
When and How am I evaluated? (cont.)

- Importance of Evaluation Criteria
  - Research
    - publications (quantity, quality)
    - grants ($$$ so far, potential for more!)
    - graduate students (PhD primarily)
  - Teaching
    - student evaluations
    - faculty evaluations
  - Service

Do I have a “boss”? Who is it?

- Department chair
  - course assignments
  - committee assignments
  - office space

- But for other things (research direction, evaluation, punching a “time clock”, etc.), no real “boss”
Pros and Cons

• **PROS**
  - Students
  - Flexibility
  - No “boss”
  - You decide what to work on
  - Tenure
  - Summer / Winter “break”
  - some prestige

• **CONS**
  - Students
  - Long hours (sometimes)
  - You’re the boss
  - You have to find something to work on
  - Getting Tenure
  - Break from teaching only
  - misunderstood

You might be a Professor if...

• you *genuinely like* being a student
  - as a professor, you have to *keep learning!*
• you’re pretty good at explaining things to people (and you like it)
  - you can learn to “lecture”
• you *really like* some particular subject
• you want to choose your own problems to work on
How do you get to be a Professor?

- Graduate School
  - Need a PhD to teach or do independent research
  - PhD = 4+ years of labor at slave wages
    - no guarantees of graduation
    - (but it’s fun!)
- Possible Post-Doc (depends on discipline)
- Interview trail… “job talk”
- Assistant professor…

Your Next Step…

- Graduate School
  - I have lots of advice on applying to graduate school
    - (Professors are full of advice)
  - Beyond the scope of this talk
  - You can do other things with a graduate degree as well
  - Good way to “postpone” entering the real world
    - but beware, graduate school is different…
Questions....

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