

# ***What's it Like to be a Professor?***

***REU  
July 7, 2009***

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## **Motivation for this talk**

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- 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?

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Research

Teaching

"Service"



## Teaching

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- 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

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- 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”?

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- 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

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



## “Service”

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- 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

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- 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?

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- Promotion and Tenure
  - Enter as “Assistant Professor”
  - 3 Year Review (Dept. faculty, dean, provost, president)
    - usually just for feedback
  - Tenure Review (during 6<sup>th</sup> 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.)

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- 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?

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- 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

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### ● 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...

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- 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?

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- 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...

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- 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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