As I am writing this, I am simultaneously working on finalizing my substantial retention dossier. I do not claim to be an expert on the policies and procedures to the extent of the seasoned faculty members who, after all, have the experience of not only preparing their own dossier, but also reviewing the dossiers of others while serving on committees. In this article, I simply would like to share my experience from the perspective of a retention candidate. I hope that my advice will make the retention process more productive and less stressful for others in the early years of their career.

As newly appointed faculty begin to fulfill the responsibilities that our letter of appointment charges us with, we must prioritize our time and resources on a daily basis. Since we are dealing with a myriad of various tasks while meeting tight deadlines, we sometimes put the process of assembling a comprehensive dossier on hold. After all, the deadline for submitting the retention dossier is two years away.

The title of this article emphasizes my key advice to anyone in the early stages of their career. Retention is not a deadline—not just a collection of carefully put together documents. I encourage you to think of retention as a journey. And the more productive you are throughout this journey, the better chance you will have to be successfully retained.

Most newly appointed faculty have a plan of action—the direction in which they would like to take their professional activities. From the point of view of having a productive journey to retention, the faculty must ensure that their professional activities fulfill the responsibilities specified in their letter of appointment while meeting and/or exceeding the criteria detailed in their Role, Scope, Criteria, Standards, and Procedures document.

The second step I would recommend that you take immediately upon being hired is to identify a faculty in your department as your mentor. Most senior faculty members are more than happy to share their experiences and wisdom with new colleagues. If there are other faculty in your department that are going through the retention process, joining forces will create a mutually beneficial partnership.

Most institutions offer regular information sessions or seminars for tenure-track faculty dedicated to the retention, promotion, and tenure process. I highly recommend that you attend these sessions every time they are offered. You criteria, you will want a strategic plan of activities that will evidence of effort or excellence, it requires you to stay very specific distribution. It is not always easy, though absolutely necessary, to keep a good balance among the types of tasks according to your appointment. Keep in mind that your position description has been written to address the needs of your university, college, department, and clientele. This seems like a needless statement, but it is very easy to get overwhelmed or distracted. So, if you come by a particular project that you are excited to be a part of, you need to make sure that the amount of effort and time it requires will not compromise your primary objectives.

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