

Summary

What can Associate Professors do to chart their path to Full Professor?

- Discuss the path to Full Professor with your Mentor/Chair/Dean early after promotion to Associate Professor
- Make the discussion about career path part of each annual review.
- Acknowledge the presence of “bumps” in the road and seek help in identifying solutions

References and Resources

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Resources for Associate Professors

Scholarship on the path to Full Professor

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What issues confront Associate Professors on the path to Full Professor?

For many Associate Professors their research, teaching and professional practice paths are clear, and the major issue is finding time for the additional service commitments required of Associate Professors. However, for other faculty there may be bumps in the road. Understanding and discussing these bumps with a supportive Mentor/Chair/Dean can help a faculty member stay on track for successful and timely promotion to Full Professor. These materials aim to provide discussion topics and guidance on ideas that Associate Professors may employ to help achieve promotion to Full Professor.



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What do we know about the path to promotion to Full Professor?

Evaluations of factors associated with successful and timely promotion to Full Professor have only received attention in recent years, because traditionally institutions have placed greater emphasis on promotion from assistant to Associate Professor. Further, much of the data available relates to mid-career faculty, a group that contains Associate and Full Professors¹⁻⁵.



What bumps in the road can confront the scholarship of an Associate Professors?

- *Stagnation of a research area*
- *Increased interest in other areas of the Position Responsibility Statement*

Stagnation of a research area

One challenge that faces some faculty is a dramatic change in the viability of their research area. This can occur for many reasons such as changes in funding agency priorities or program elimination. Some faculty may even be a victim of their own success, if their prior work resulted in solutions to prior research questions. Regardless of the cause, if you find yourself in this situation you should openly discuss the situation with your Mentor/Chair/Dean.

Those discussions should include discussing how to identify new areas of funding or new areas of retraining. Unfortunately, the current approach to a lagging research area may be to encourage the faculty member to take on greater teaching or extension responsibilities. However, this approach potentially establishes a path that makes timely and successful promotion to Full Professor less likely. Further, this may not be your career goal.

While it is important to be open to changing focus, consider this option carefully and have an open and frank discussion about options for revitalization.

What can Associate Professors do if they feel their an area of scholarship has stagnated?

- If you are finding that your area of research is stagnating, make time in annual reviews to discuss this with your department chair.
- Actively consider prior to those discussions, what steps you could realistically take to revitalize an area of scholarship. Consider mid-career awards, sabbatical, and workshops as ways to make new contacts and develop new skills.
- Be aware that changes made may have an impact on the time to promotion to Full Professor, especially if it means becoming competitive for federal funding in a new area.

Increased interest in other areas of the Position Responsibilities Statement

Another challenge that faces some faculty is a desire to change the focus of their position as their academic career matures. As you become more recognized for your expertise, you may wish to play a larger role in teaching, extension/professional practice or service to the institution.

Changing focus mid-career presents special challenges for timely and successful promotion to Full Professor as one basis for promotion to Full Professor is national or international reputation. It may be difficult to achieve the promotion standard in a new area in the same time period that would have been the case if you stayed in the same area of scholarship. Discuss with your department chair the impact that changes in focus may have on the timeline to promotion to Full Professor. Also, you may not be as familiar with how to document scholarship in the area of increased emphasis, so discuss this with a mentor/chair. It may even be necessary to seek out additional mentors to provide guidance in the new focus area.

What can mentors do to help Associate Professors who are interested in significantly changing the distribution of effort in their PRS?

Some faculty may have a genuine desire to refocus their position responsibility, as they grow in their career. Most frequently this is a desire to increase the amount of extension or teaching. It is important to be aware that if a faculty member does make significant shifts in responsibility, this may slow down the path to promotion to Full Professor. Ensure there is an open and realistic discussion with your department chair about the impact this change may have on time to promotion to Full Professor.