

Trekking toward Tenure: What Pre-tenure Faculty Want on the Journey

Cathy Ann Trower and Anne Gallagher

Abstract

Utilizing empirical data from an online satisfaction survey of over ten thousand full-time, pre-tenure (tenure-track) faculty members at 120 institutions, as well as qualitative data from interviews with seventy-three faculty and administrators at six research universities, this paper highlights the most important factors in the success and satisfaction of early career faculty: clarity of tenure policies and practices; resources for professional development; a culture of collegiality, collaboration, and community; and support for work-life integration.

For American higher education to retain its global competitiveness, it must have a vital, engaged faculty. Among the professoriate, pre-tenure faculty are the future of our institutions, especially now that the academic Baby Boomers ascendant in the 1960s and 1970s seek full or phased retirement. Yet the academy was not built on the workplace qualities valued by “Generation X” (born 1964–1980)—collaboration, clarity, flexibility, and transparency, to name a few—and many doctorate recipients are opting for the promise of the private sector, of government, or of colleges and universities that are taking the lead with innovative workplace strategies designed with today’s teacher-scholars in mind.

This paper showcases the key themes about what early career faculty want, as discovered through interviews with seventy-three faculty and administrators at six research universities that participated in the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) (Gallagher and Trower 2008). In addition, we present quantitative data snippets from the COACHE database on the job satisfaction of over ten thousand pre-tenure faculty members at more than 120 institutions (COACHE 2008).

COACHE’s purpose is fourfold: (1) to make the academy a more equitable and appealing place for new faculty to work in order to ensure that academic institutions attract the best and brightest scholars and teachers; (2) to increase the recruitment, retention, status, success, and satisfaction of women and minority faculty members; (3) to provoke discussions on campuses about faculty recruitment and retention and the use of COACHE data; and (4) to facilitate the spread of ideas and promising practices in the area of faculty development.

The Collaborative is most interested in learning what pre-tenure faculty have to say. Conducting interviews with pre-tenure faculty members at six of our member sites reinforced and enlivened the data that we have collected through our survey of the

work satisfaction of full-time, tenure-track faculty at these institutions and dozens of others. During these interviews, we asked early-career faculty to explain what factors most influence their satisfaction in the workplace and who could do what to improve most their prospects for achieving tenure. We were curious as to which of these factors would most affect these pre-tenure faculty members' decisions to stay at their current institution, and whether they consider their institution a great place to work. We also asked questions about the level of interest senior faculty members have taken in their development and success and about the culture of their department. After speaking with tenure-track and newly tenured faculty in different disciplines from across the six universities we visited, many themes emerged that echoed from campus to campus.

This paper summarizes what pre-tenure faculty members said they need most in order to succeed on the path to tenure at their institutions, and the obstacles they face during the pre-tenure period.

What Pre-Tenure Faculty Want

The Big Two Resources: Time and Money

The lack of time and financial resources—and the concomitant anxieties—were recurrent themes in our conversations with early-career faculty. Survey results show that, of sixteen policies, “travel funds” rated second highest in terms of importance to junior faculty success (4.59 on a 5-point scale); only “an upper limit on teaching assignments” rated higher (4.61). “Paid or unpaid research leave” also rated high in importance (4.33), coming in fourth. “An upper limit on committee assignments” ranked as fifth most important (4.36).

Time

Time is perhaps the most valuable commodity for pre-tenure faculty members and time management may be their single greatest challenge. They describe a daily struggle to learn how to divide their time between research, teaching, and service obligations, and how to balance those activities with their lives outside of work. Questions like, “How should I best utilize my time? What will ‘count’ toward tenure? How much is enough? How will I know?” remain unanswered for many pre-tenure faculty and are the source of great stress, uncertainty, and angst.

Pre-tenure faculty identified a number of common time challenges as barriers to their success, including (1) having a heavy teaching/advising load, especially during the first and second years; (2) being overburdened with committee work and other service obligations; (3) having too much administrative work; and (4) being unsure about what to turn down. In the words of one young scholar, “As a junior faculty member, you basically have to say ‘yes’ to everything all of the time.”

In terms of time, pre-tenure faculty members say they would really benefit from a semester or full year of research leave during the probationary period; and for many,

parental leave for the birth or adoption of each child. One senior faculty member said, “Time is most important ... whether that’s leave time or enough time during the regular semester to do your writing and research—the things you need to do to get tenure, or enough time to actually have a human life.”

Pre-tenure faculty members also desire a reduced teaching load while on tenure-track and, ideally, protection from service. One young faculty member expressed it this way:

My Chair was active in protecting me from extensive service assignments, both in the unit, at the college, and at the university level. She said to place the blame on her by saying, ‘My Chair won’t agree to this.’ She gave me very specific cues that she understood some of the structural vulnerabilities I could face moving through [the tenure process]; she was willing to do something about it.

A dean said:

The support system is really important. There are things you can do administratively like making sure that Chairs are talking to their junior faculty, aware of issues that they may have, that they are ready to help them get leave—extra leave if necessary—if it’s parental leave or other kinds of exceptional leave that they need, summer support ... whatever additional resources that we can bring to bear. These tend to be resources of time; they’re more important than anything else. [As Dean] you’ve got to work through your Chairs to make sure that junior faculty, especially women and minorities, understand that they have resources available to them and that we want them to succeed.

Money

Financial resources and the support they provide were also atop the list of what early-career faculty members feel they most need to succeed on the tenure-track. Pre-tenure faculty identified a number of common money challenges as barriers to success: (1) lack of financial resources; (2) lack of training resources; (3) tight, unpredictable, or inequitable funding; and (4) lack of funding for graduate students and teaching assistants. Said one Chair:

Getting a junior faculty member up and going is a very expensive proposition in terms of many different kinds of resources—not just dollars. You want to make sure that if you bring someone to campus—after you’ve searched carefully and you think this person is a winner—they have what they need to succeed. You don’t want to coddle them ... but you want to make sure that they don’t fail for want of competitive resources.

Pre-tenure faculty expressed a desire for funds to support research endeavors, to travel, and to subsidize childcare while attending professional conferences; and they wanted high quality graduate assistants. Said one pre-tenure faculty member:

If I have a really good idea for something to do and I need some sort of support from the administration—whether it’s cost-sharing or space or something of that sort—if I can make a compelling case, then I get a very positive response. I know that I can go to my department Chair, or go to the Dean, and they will come together to help make something happen.

Start-up packages, while not the rule in all disciplines, are extremely important to pre-tenure faculty; in some fields (e.g., science, engineering), they may be the determining factor in job acceptance and, ultimately, success. One pre-tenure scientist said:

I don’t mean to be crass or mercenary, but it takes a lot of money to get a scientist up and running; without it, you’re lost before you begin. I had three offers from prestigious universities and I accepted the one with the best start-up package. I am not so naïve to think that I could succeed without that boost. Some of my friends from grad school accepted less in start-up, instead opting for a nice location and other lifestyle reasons, but they’re regretting it. A nice location is no substitute for success and it takes money to get tenure, period.

Said a pre-tenure faculty member in the humanities:

Large start-up packages are not the norm in my field, but I had two offers—one university provided me with a computer, some travel funds, part of an administrative person’s time, and summers off; the other didn’t. I took the offer with resources.

The Tenure and Promotion Process

The COACHE survey measures several aspects of clarity: tenure process (deadlines, steps, and levels of approval), criteria (what is measured), standards (where the bar is), and body of evidence (what goes into the portfolio). Faculty expressed the least clarity with tenure standards (3.26 on a 5-point scale) and the most clarity about the tenure process (3.71).

Clarity, Reasonableness, Equity

Not one pre-tenure faculty member with whom we spoke failed to mention the need for a clearly defined, reasonable, *and* equitable path to tenure when asked what would aid in their professional success. Interviews certainly brought the quantitative data to life as pre-tenure faculty identified a number of common barriers to their success: vague and inconsistent tenure and promotion guidelines and uncertainty about how much money to bring in, where to publish, how many articles or books were needed, and which committees counted. Regarding the standards, one pre-tenure faculty member said, “You never really know where the bar is. I feel like the bar has been raised, which is fine, but at the same time, you don’t really know where that is.”

Tenure-track faculty want a clearly delineated tenure process and clear and specific answers from their Chair, mentor, and other senior colleagues about tenure

requirements as they pertain to that academic field or department. Ideally, they would like a written contract or memorandum of understanding (providing quantification and transparency—“if I do this, I will get tenure”), but most realize that having such a contract is unlikely at most institutions. Said one, “It would be great just to have someone to specify what one should be doing; just set up some kind of a timeline, so that you have a sense of ... ‘oh, I should apply for a grant at the end of my first year, if I’m wanting to do this and that’ ... and also just to say, ‘well, that’s not possible in an institution because you need to have been here for a year and a half.’”

Said a sympathetic Dean, “The faculty policy manual states what the expectations are: ‘excellence in scholarship’ and ‘excellence in teaching,’ and ‘service’ which is left pretty open. But of course it’s the scholarship part that people would like to be more contractual and I completely understand when junior faculty say that it isn’t transparent. Often what they’re looking for isn’t just quantification but also information about where to publish. ‘If I write five articles and if I put two in top-tier journals, three in mid-tier journals, will I get tenure?’ They would like a contract and I completely understand the impetus for that, but it isn’t possible.”

Junior faculty would also like reasonable tenure expectations; they do not expect the path to tenure to be a “walk in the park,” but neither should it be “archery in the dark.” They want guidance as to what to do and what NOT to do to succeed in achieving tenure within their particular department—such as priorities; timeline; standards; where to publish; how best to use time; and grantsmanship. They would like acknowledgment by their Chair and department colleagues of major milestones and, ideally, celebration of those milestones.

One Chair takes a direct approach: “I think you need to be extremely direct, so I tell them straight out, ‘You shouldn’t do that; you should do this’ and I ask them, ‘How’s that book coming?’ I’ll say, ‘Stop overseeing so many independent studies. Stop doing so many new courses. You’ve done eight courses in three years; that’s enough. Focus on something else.’ My sense is that some past Chairs were not attentive enough to junior faculty and left things too much to chance.”

Still another proactive Chair said, “Pre-tenure faculty members want to know how to use their time, and how to gauge requests about whether to publish in this venue or that, whether to do this project or that. I actually have them do a three and five year plan. I say, ‘What do you want to do? What are your goals for the next level? And how would you do it?’ I suggest that they create a time-table and then we talk about it; this process sometimes makes people think—‘okay, well, I’m probably not going to be able to write that book in this time period *and* do that.’ A lot of it’s just about time management and making informed choices. And advice about the process, I actually walk through it with them; I read their fellowship applications and their grant proposals in draft form.”

Consistent Feedback

Many tenure-track faculty report getting very little feedback, or receiving mixed messages from different people, regarding their progress toward tenure. Among the lowest scores on the COACHE survey is agreement with the statement, “I have received consistent messages from tenured colleagues about tenure requirements” (2.96). Said one pre-tenure faculty member, “It’s very difficult to get straight answers—some people seem to want to hedge their bets with junior colleagues; they’re kind of noncommittal. At other times, someone will tell you straight out, ‘You need 3 articles in top-tier journals’ but someone else will say you need 4 and someone else will say a book trumps articles. So what are you supposed to do?” And a full professor remarked, “I’ve talked to many junior faculty members who have gotten wildly divergent messages from faculty in their own department about expectations for promotion to associate.”

Said a Dean, “Junior faculty members always worry about what the expectations are. They don’t have a reservoir of information to draw from; some information that they have—which is mostly anecdotal—is helpful but some of it’s actually unhelpful, because it’s based more on people’s perceptions and fears than on reality. So, we hold sessions where we meet with all junior faculty members to talk about career pathways, pathways towards tenure, and our expectations of their teaching, of their service, of their research. We explain the process so they can understand what they are getting into.”

An Open Dialogue about Expectations

Holding public forums where pre-tenure faculty members can legitimately ask questions is a great idea because we heard in interviews that many departments have a culture or tradition where pre-tenure faculty members feel they are not supposed to ask questions, where things are not written down, and where tenured faculty members say, “I did it this way; so should you.” Said a senior faculty member who rose through the ranks at her institution, “There is this pervasive and consistent prevailing attitude—a message that you are given all through your junior faculty years—about how you are not supposed to ask questions about expectations or requirements. You are just supposed to know. Ideally, we want an environment where junior faculty members can ask whatever they want.” Another said, “The thing that scares me is the ‘should’ rule—you ‘should’ know how to get tenure here. You’re just supposed to somehow know.”

Professional Development

In learning how to manage their time, find the resources they need, and navigate the tenure process, new faculty seek guidance, both informally—through interactions with peers and senior colleagues—and formally—through training sessions, campus resource centers, and mentoring programs. Some institutions have built-in support systems for early-career faculty while others have yet to provide crucial access to training and professional development for academics new to the faculty ranks.

On the professional development front, pre-tenure faculty identified a number of common challenges as barriers to success:

- No guidance and mentorship from department chairs and senior faculty, due to their lack of experience or unwillingness
- Uncertainty about how to run a lab, manage a research program, and obtain outside funding
- Little teaching experience and a lot of learning on the job
- Fear of taking intellectual risks; fear of failure
- Pressure to be visible and make a name for oneself in one's discipline
- Uncertainty about navigating university politics and departmental factions

Said one pre-tenure faculty member, "I don't have a lot of information on strategy. Maybe it sounds silly, but I'm working on a book project (which isn't terribly common for the sciences, particularly pre-tenure), so I can't figure out from a letter-writing perspective whether that's a good thing or a bad thing.... I know a lot of people in this field, maybe too many. Maybe I don't have people who are far enough away to be letter-writers ... so it's not really clear to me what the strategy is."

A senior faculty member noted, "I know there are departments that can be snake pits ... deeply dysfunctional places where people hate each other. A real issue for junior faculty can arise if there's a falling out or there are problems among the senior faculty when they come up for tenure. If it's very political, they don't know how to position themselves to avoid fallout from that."

Research

In terms of professional development around research activity and scholarship, pre-tenure faculty members say they would like: (1) assistance identifying sources for grant funding and grant-writing; (2) training in starting and managing a lab; (3) space, equipment, and administrative support; and (4) opportunities to present their scholarship to senior departmental colleagues and outside scholars in their field.

A pre-tenure faculty member described a particularly positive experience: "Every senior faculty member has gone out of his or her own way to help me ... to make me feel like they're on my side. They read my work. They give me feedback. Right now my Chair is actively petitioning the University Press to get my book published! They're very involved. And the department decided to launch an inaugural Distinguished Lecture Series and let me choose and contact the person—someone important in my field; they said, 'you stand to gain the most from this, so why don't you use this as an opportunity to get to know the people who will probably be writing your letters?'"

Teaching

As far as teaching goes, pre-tenure faculty members would like: (1) A teaching resource center; (2) opportunities to team-teach with senior colleagues in department;

and (3) feedback on pedagogy from experienced teachers.

I completely understood what I needed to do for research—I got that training in grad school, but I really struggled with teaching. It’s not as easy as it looks! My first semester student evaluations were terrible and I was miserable. Fortunately, we have a wonderful teaching and learning center where I could get help. And my Chair was helpful, too; she offered to watch me and give me some pointers and also let me observe her while she taught. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Engagement and “Fit”

As far as fostering intellectual engagement and fit, they would like opportunities to “build bridges”—to form interdepartmental working or research groups and plan conferences with scholars outside the department, school, and university, and across fields.

The key for me is community. Longer term, I want the right sort of intellectual community where I can grow ... where I can make a contribution and where I can be appreciated.... I expect that ... if one is more established professionally, it would be easier to take initiative in reaching out and building bridges, and that’s really what I want to do.... It’s not so easy if you don’t have tenure [and] if you live 20 miles away [from campus] and you’ve got to go home at four o’clock to collect a small child from daycare. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Becoming Known in the Field

In terms of learning how to market themselves in their fields (e.g., to advance their reputations as academics), pre-tenure faculty members would like to know how to (1) raise ‘intellectual visibility’ in their department and field; (2) develop relationships with experts in their field; (3) ensure a deep pool of outside letter-writers; (4) solicit and navigate outside offers; and (5) negotiate salary increases and extra research or travel funds.

A senior administrator noted, “When I’ve gone to talk to the women faculty ... about how to maximize their opportunities to prepare themselves for the tenure process ... it’s always interesting to me how unclear it is to many of them what they should be doing. But the fact is they need to be out giving papers and talks and at conferences in order to get their work out there so that there will be people who can write on their behalf rather than just staying secluded and writing in private.... We’re going to have to ask for a lot of letters when it comes to tenure time.”

Said a senior faculty member who rose through the ranks at her institution, “I learned with this case that failed in our department that it wasn’t really that people didn’t like the candidate, but she wasn’t an outgoing person and they didn’t really feel like they knew her. They weren’t really that invested in her; they weren’t pulling for her. It is a subtle thing, but when people are that invested in you and you are really broadly well-

liked and your contribution to the department is really recognized it just adds that little bit of ... people pay a little bit more attention, they look a little bit harder, they always tend to see the positive side of the letter that says negative and positive things. So I think it has a subtle effect, but it can be enough to swing things one way or another.”

Mentoring, Moral Support, Collegiality, and Collaboration

COACHE survey results reveal that mentoring—both formal and informal (see text box below)—is important to pre-tenure faculty. Informal mentoring ranked third on the list of 16 policies we measure on a 5-point scale of importance (4.44), but received a 3.56 in terms of effectiveness. Formal mentoring is much less important, scoring 3.97, and was still less effective (2.90).

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring provides a process by which protégés are matched with a mentor or team of mentors. Some formal mentoring programs specify goals, train mentors and mentees, and measure outcomes; others are much looser. Some reward mentors (through course release, awards, or a stipend); others do not. Formal mentoring implies an expectation to coach and be coached, to advise and be advised. Because the matches are made formally, they must also be monitored to ensure that they are proceeding smoothly and, if not, there should be an option to opt out. In academe, given the rewards of maintaining positive professional and personal relationships, this can be tricky. That is why some institutions rely on a team approach, taking some of the pressure off a sole, one-on-one relationship, but also, in the process, diminishing the accountability.

Informal Mentoring

An informal mentor is one who advises or coaches others without being part of a formal program; informal mentoring “just happens.” Informal mentoring may occur alongside formal mentoring; however, it is not sufficient for several reasons. First, not everyone will receive it. Oftentimes, those who are in a minority may not be selected as protégés by, and may not seek out the advice of, members of the majority. If a mentor does not materialize, junior faculty may be too embarrassed to ask for one. Second, informal mentoring cannot be monitored. Without oversight, there can be no accountability and no organizational learning from successes and failures. Third, many pre-tenure faculty members have come to expect formal mentoring and prefer to work at institutions that provide it. After all, formal mentoring can be explicitly connected to the strategic objectives of the department, with established goals and measurable outcomes; open access for everyone; strategic pairing or teaming; and mentor training. Through mentoring, leaders can have a positive impact on culture, both by modeling espoused behavior to senior colleagues and by directly influencing those that will soon (we hope) join them.

Mentoring

Pre-tenure faculty are no different than most others when it comes to needing support from people they trust on the job as well as institutional support in other forms (time, money, resources). But they do differ in what they want from a mentor. Some say they do not want or need a mentor at all; the choice is acutely personal. It follows that “one size” of mentoring does *not* fit all.

According to JoAnn Moody (2004), the best mentors provide “psychological support as well as instrumental assistance.” She noted: “Instrumental mentoring occurs when senior colleagues take the time to critique the scholarly work of junior faculty, nominate them for career-enhancing awards, include them in valuable networks and circles, collaborate with them on research or teaching projects, and arrange for them to Chair conference sessions or submit invited manuscripts.” David Thomas (2001) distinguished between mentoring that was basically “instructional” (helps build skills) and that which is more “developmental” (helps explain experiences and feelings). For our purposes, we define effective mentoring as that which is instructional, developmental, psychological, and instrumental. Effective mentoring occurs over time, is personal in nature, and is reciprocal (Johnson 2007).

One of the challenges most commonly mentioned by pre-tenure faculty was isolation resulting from the following:

1. The lack of colleagues in a particular sub-field within department

It can be pretty isolating when you’re the only one—the only woman, the only pre-tenure faculty member in your department, the only African American ... whatever your particular ‘only’ is. Sometimes you just want someone like you to talk to.

2. The lack of other pre-tenure faculty members in the college or in the department

I think there’s sometimes an implicit assumption made that because you’ve chosen the academic life of the mind that you don’t mind being alone with those thoughts ... and a lot of new faculty don’t really care for that much autonomy.

3. A culture where “everyone is so busy”

Most people are just busy doing their own thing. It’s not that they don’t like us, it’s just that they’re busy, and don’t notice so much. But some of them are interested, and encouraging us, that sort of thing. I get the feeling, at least in my case, particularly, because this is such a traditional department, they don’t always quite know how to relate to us; there aren’t always conversation hooks between what I do and what they’re doing.

4. Not knowing how to navigate inter-departmental politics; not sure with whom to align oneself as a pre-tenure person if there are factions within the department

One thing no one talks about when you're interviewing is what the department is really like—who's at odds with whom, what bad blood there is, historical disagreements that play themselves out in strange ways. I wish someone had warned me about that.

5. The lack of freedom to express opinions, especially ones that might conflict with those of the senior faculty in one's department

You learn pretty quickly to tread lightly at department meetings so as to not step on any toes; after all, the senior faculty members have your fate in their hands and it would be pretty stupid to alienate one or more of them.

In terms of mentoring, what do pre-tenure faculty members say they want?

1. A Chair who is demonstrably invested in their success.

My Chair has taken time to set up meetings with me throughout the term, just to talk about whatever it is that I have questions about; if I don't know how things work in the university, all of the committees, and how all of these committees fit together, and what I should prioritize. She's been really helpful for me in saying, "This is your first year; you shouldn't worry about doing this. Focus on your own work, but here's something that you *should* do." (Pre-tenure faculty member)

2. An open door for informal conversations to occur, along with a license to ask "stupid" questions.

Our department has informal mentoring, not assigned mentors. I'd almost call it open-door policy where you can ask them a quick question or sit down and they'll talk with you. One of the things people see that I do versus what the other guy didn't do is ask questions, because it's embarrassing to ask questions; but at the same time I think it's potentially more embarrassing not to succeed. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

One of the problems is figuring out whether an issue you are having is actually an issue that you can raise with someone. And clearly that is easier with a mentor where it is supposed to be confidential.... Whereas, if I go to any senior colleague, I am much more vulnerable if the person feels I'm wasting his or her time with stupid questions. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Culture of Support

Pre-tenure faculty, tenured faculty, and administrators alike spoke about mentoring in terms of a broader goal of creating a climate of support and success for all faculty. Creating a departmental culture where pre-tenure faculty feel respected, that their ideas and contributions are valued, and where they can succeed figures heavily into the satisfaction equation and is essential to workplace well-being.

Pre-tenure faculty members would like to feel supported, respected, and valued for their contributions:

I definitely feel the support of my colleagues. I feel the support when they stop by and ask how I'm doing ... they could just walk past my door. They come and drop by and say hello or they give me equipment or supplies. There's actually been a lot of that that goes on here. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Chairs and administrators were especially articulate in describing this "culture of support and success" for pre-tenure faculty. The messages are:

1. "We have a shared responsibility for faculty success."

It's about establishing, across the campus, a culture of success and in the departments where everybody sees that they have a shared responsibility and a shared success if the junior faculty member does well. (Vice President for Faculty Affairs)

2. "We want pre-tenure faculty to succeed here."

You have to overcome the idea that it's an adversarial relationship (between the pre-tenure faculty and the institution) ... that they have to fight against the institution to succeed. When I talk to junior faculty, I make it clear—we want you to get tenure. We don't hire people who we don't want to tenure. There has to be the clear message that we're giving to junior faculty that, first, we want them to succeed, and second, what can we do to help them succeed? (Dean)

I think that it's really important to get quality junior people convinced that they have a future here and I say that 'you should be part of the department from the day you start here, and we want you to be your best' ... with the idea that 'you have a future beyond your junior years.' I think our goal is to convince people they should come with the idea that if they do well they'll stay. If they want to stay, we'll want them to stay. (Chair)

We start with the assumption that we believe in you, you're going to get tenure. It's not promised, but we will do our part and assume that you will do your part. We all teach the same load so in terms of what we do in the department, except for the distribution of administrative tasks, there is no

distinction (between junior and senior faculty). New junior people teach a graduate course every year, senior people teach a graduate course every year, and no one teaches more than one graduate course a year. (Chair)

3. “We value and respect our faculty.”

There’s so much criticism in academe. We need to be especially sure to let junior faculty members know that they are valued and respected members of the department. (Chair)

Absolutely, the most critical factor is the culture that we have; the fact that people feel welcome; they feel they’re involved; they feel like their colleagues care about them, and about their research and their scholarship; that they feel really engaged in the culture that we create, and if they start in that culture, and grow through it, they really buy into it, and we have been largely, extremely successful in retaining faculty that have been courted by other institutions. (Chair)

Collegiality and Collaboration

These two go hand-in-hand and are essential ingredients for a satisfying and successful experience for pre-tenure faculty. The COACHE survey includes nine climate measures; mean scores for those seven most directly related to collegiality are provided in the table below and listed from highest to lowest score (on a 1–5 scale, where 5 is “very satisfied” and 1 is “very dissatisfied”).

Satisfaction with ...	Mean
Amount of personal interaction with other pre-tenure colleagues	4.00
Amount of professional interaction with other pre-tenure colleagues	3.87
How well you fit (e.g., your sense of belonging, your comfort level) in your department	3.81
Amount of personal interaction with tenured colleagues.....	3.70
Interest senior faculty take in your professional development.....	3.53
Amount of professional interaction with tenured colleagues.....	3.49
Opportunities to collaborate with tenured colleagues	3.35

As you can see, pre-tenure faculty are least satisfied with their opportunities to collaborate with tenured colleagues, the amount of professional interaction they have with tenured colleagues, and the interest senior faculty take in their professional development.

Much of this has been discussed above in the context of mentoring and creating a culture of support, but a few more voices are illustrative:

I have several good collaborations with tenured faculty and one of them was our dean; he’s been very supportive of my work. The dean is very good about

sending out ‘request for proposals’ announcements for grants saying, ‘This is what money is available if you choose to participate, and here’s all the information you need.’ (Pre-tenure faculty member)

[My institution] is very entrepreneurial, so there are very low boundaries to doing things, to reaching across disciplines ... the structure that makes that easy ... there are independent labs ... this helps foster a situation where it’s understood that you can interact with students and colleagues from different departments. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

One of the things that continues to arise in what they’re looking for is a collegial environment, where there are people that can help mentor them, and an environment that allows and encourages collaboration between faculty and that’s one of the key things that they all seem to mention ... that’s one of the things that we offer that not every place has. (Chair)

Work-Life Integration

Because of their overloaded plates and constant pressure to perform, many pre-tenure faculty members struggle to integrate work and life outside of work. Some of the lowest scores on the COACHE survey concern work and family life. Men and women alike express low satisfaction with their ability to balance professional time with personal or family time; mean scores on this dimension are 2.97 and 2.60, respectively.

While there are no simple solutions or quick fixes, and faculty members accept that academic work is challenging and in many respects without boundaries, they strive to find a healthy balance between the demands at work and those at home.

Parenting

One simple practice to help parents is to keep meetings scheduled between 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We changed department meetings to Fridays at noon and served lunch. I was surprised by how pleased the junior faculty members—and even some of the senior faculty members—were with that change. A small thing like that made a huge difference because people with kids felt more a part of the department and more faculty attended the meetings. (Chair)

Nevertheless, it can still be very difficult for women on the tenure track. There is a great deal of uncertainty about how getting pregnant prior to tenure (and maybe even more than once!) will be perceived by one’s senior colleagues. One young mother spoke to the subtlety of the situation as follows:

I feel respected; we don’t have any misogynists in the department, but there is a dynamic that I can’t quite put my finger on. There’s a subtle nuance, a kind of ‘you’re less serious,’ you know ... now you are consumed with a baby and

maybe not going to publish as much. Yeah, that is very real. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Another pre-tenure woman said she asked about maternity leave early in her pregnancy, but feared that pressing the matter would negatively impact her tenure case:

I said, ‘What’s the maternity leave?’ and they said, ‘We don’t know. We’ll work it out and get back to you.’ I then had this negotiation with them, which lasted about five months. When I was nine months pregnant, they basically told me that I was getting less maternity leave than they’d agreed to give me when I was four months pregnant. I was nine months pregnant and could have gone into labor any second and I was thinking, ‘I’m happy here, but this isn’t right.’ I think just having another woman here before or having a senior colleague would have really helped ... if I had a senior colleague who actually had also had a kid. Because essentially, if I make too much of a fuss, it *will* affect my chance of getting tenure. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Spousal/Partner Hiring and Dual-Career Couples

Regardless of whether pre-tenure faculty members decide to have children, those who are married to other academics expressed gratitude for spousal hiring programs where both can be employed on tenure-track lines.

What sets us apart in recruiting is that we’ve had great success hiring dual career couples, including those with children. There are several excellent institutions in the area so both can find tenure-track jobs, and this is also the kind of place where it’s possible to manage careers and families—the transaction costs of getting to school, getting to work, and hauling the kids around are a lot less than in a major city. Families can juggle things better here. (Chair)

My husband is also an academic and we have two young children. We’ve been on the job market a couple of times trying to find jobs in the same or nearby institutions but have never managed to find two tenure track positions—always one tenure track, plus maybe a lectureship. Here, by chance, my department had an opening for someone in my husband’s area. I was the winning candidate in my field, and my husband’s area of expertise was in this very area where they’d been searching for the past couple of years before; so, they invited him and also offered him a tenure track position. That definitely swayed our decision to come here, and we hope to make it a long and happy association. We’re very grateful that both of us have tenure-track employment at the same place; it’s almost unheard of for young scholars, fresh out of graduate school. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Dual career partners, with children, expressed appreciation about their department's assistance and understanding as those couples juggled the multiple demands placed on them:

My husband and I stagger our teaching; one semester his teaching days will be Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and mine will be Tuesday and Thursday. In the event that one of our children is sick, one of us can always be home. Our department has been fine with that; we love that flexibility. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

My department has been very supportive. I have three kids—two are school age and one is in pre-school. My colleagues know I have to get home to get the kids on the bus, take them places.... As long as I get the job done here, it's all fine. I also have a very supportive husband so we negotiate who has to go get one when they're sick. I think I'm much harder on myself than my colleagues are ... in terms of expectations to balance work and motherhood ... so it hasn't been a problem for me so far. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

However, one partner in a dual career situation expressed frustration about the seemingly impossible expectations made on both parents:

My husband is in another department here and it just seems unfair that there are so many things that we're both required to do that require childcare in the evenings or weekends. We have to both be at graduate student recruiting events, and sometimes they are two weekends in a row, so you need childcare for two days. It seems like there should be some support for this. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

Childcare

One looming issue on all campuses we visited was childcare—the lack of affordable, quality, on-campus childcare. Many want it; few have it.

If there's one thing pre-tenure faculty members constantly ask us about, it's childcare: Who provides it? Where? How much? Does the university subsidize it? How long is the waiting list? And we just don't have any good answers. This is not an easy problem to solve. (Provost)

If I had a magic wand and could fix one thing that would help us attract, recruit, and retain junior faculty members it would be childcare. It's the great leveler—no single institution of which I'm aware has solved this problem fully, satisfactorily ... or even partially. Sure, we have daycare, but it is inadequate and it doesn't handle sick children. (Dean)

Several of those interviewed felt that the lack of adequate childcare affects women much more so than men:

I believe that a major reason for the paucity of female full professors rests with the issue of getting tenure during the childbearing years; so we can either do away with tenure as we know it (an idea I support) or settle childcare issues once and for all. (Chair)

Work-life balance is a big issue, especially for women. There are so many women with doctorates who are finding that, for a lot of complicated reasons, the structure does not support the choices they need to make about eldercare and childcare and there still aren't many remedies. (Pre-tenure faculty member)

When other women ask me how I managed to have children and make full professor, I was able to say, 'Because I have a stay-at-home husband.' If not for that, I'm not sure how I would have been able to do it all. (Senior faculty member)

Conclusion

The bottom line for us is that the times have changed. The people have changed. New faculty bring new expectations and values to the workplace. What worked many years ago no longer works as well. Early career faculty do not expect the trek to tenure to be easy; to the contrary, those with whom we spoke want achieving tenure to mean something and they want to have meaning in their lives. Their wishes are not unrealistic and actually seem only fair and smart; they want (1) the time and resources to do really good work and be successful teacher-scholars; (2) a clear, reasonable, and equitable path to tenure; (3) encouragement and support from good colleagues as well as professional development opportunities; and last but not least, (4) the ability to lead a life that integrates work and life outside of work in a way that works for them.

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Author Information

Cathy Ann Trower, Ph.D., a national expert on faculty work-life, including faculty diversity and generational issues, faculty in STEM disciplines and health professions, interdisciplinary work, and employment trends, is Research Director at COACHE, where she has served for twelve years. Prior to this, she was Director of Graduate Business Programs at Johns Hopkins University while completing her doctorate in Higher Education Administration at the University of Maryland. She has authored numerous papers, chapters, and case studies.

E-mail: Cathy_Trower@harvard.edu

Telephone: 617-496-9344

Fax: 617-496-9350

Anne Gallagher, M.Ed., is Assistant Director at COACHE, where she is responsible for marketing, communication, business development, and member outreach. Prior to joining the COACHE team two years ago, upon completion of her master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, she served as a communications specialist for the Boston-based law firm of Mintz Levin.

E-mail: annesgallagher@gmail.com

Telephone: 617-384-7873

Fax: 617-496-9350

Address for both:

COACHE

Harvard Graduate School of Education

8 Story Street, 5th Floor

Cambridge, MA 02138