The Transition from Grad Student to Professor:

Lessons from My First Three Years

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About Me

- Ph.D. in linguistics from USC
- Assistant Professor in English Department at Boise State University since Fall 2009
- Teaching load 2–3, all undergrads
- Director, BSU Linguistics Lab
- Faculty-in-Residence, Arts & Humanities Residential College
I'm an optimistic person and I thrive on being a part of a community.

I'm at my dream job and I have phenomenal colleagues and supervisors, and awesome students!
What’s Expected of You?

- Make sure you know where to find the guidelines for the evaluation process for tenure and promotion and keep track of changes in the policy.

- 3 areas of evaluation: research, teaching, service

- Anything not written from your negotiations should be in a Memorandum of understanding from your chair or dean.
Set Personal Goals

- Try to set some personal goals in your professional and personal life.
- Find ways to hold yourself accountable for achieving these goals.
  - Set deadlines for milestones
  - Join peer-mentoring groups
Prioritize

Once you know what matters, you can make sure that you DO what matters.

Don’t put off doing projects that require long hours.

Get involved in projects that you can be passionate about.

Learn to say no.
Intentional Choices

- How would you like students to address you?

- Where do you plan to do most of your work? What do you need from your official work space?

- What are going to be your policies for different in-class scenarios? What about workload policies?

- Will you add students and colleagues to your social network?
Keep Track of Everything You Do

- Update your CV regularly.
- Keep anything that can serve as evidence of excellence in research, teaching, and service.
- Try to keep track of the amount of time you spend on different tasks and projects.
- Back up EVERYTHING!
Web Presence

- Make sure that at least your basic profile is up as soon as possible.
- Be aware of the sorts of things that are out there associated with your name.
- If you have time, set up your own professional website.
Join list-serves and stay on top of the latest developments related to your field.

Find out which office deals with external funding.

Set aside time to work on your research.

Think of ways of incorporating where you are into your research.
Setting up a Lab

- Extremely time consuming, but absolutely worth it!
- Get advice from mentors at USC, and from colleagues at your new institution.
- Find out policies about ordering, purchasing, disposing of lab materials.
- Lab assistants/coordinators/managers?
- Visit others’ labs and adjust yours.
Teaching

- Make sure to set time aside to prepare your classes.
- Try to keep track of what goes well and what doesn’t for the next time you teach it.
- Use student feedback to help guide changes.
- Attend workshops on different teaching topics.
Get to know your students
Be a Community Member

- Operate under the assumption that your colleagues selected you because they liked you and want you to do well.

- Attend new faculty orientations – you’ll get to know colleagues from other departments across campus.

- Make sure to ask for help when you need it.
When in Rome...

- What are some of the campus traditions that you can be a part of?
- What do folks do in your new city/town?
- Obtain professional-looking weather-appropriate attire.
- Find people who like the things you like.
The Role of Mentors in Your Life

- There are lots of new things you’ve never done before.
- Keep in touch with mentors from grad school.
- Seek out mentors at your new institution.
- When branching out into new territory, seek those who are prominent there.
Take Care of Yourself

- You can’t do your job well if you don’t take care of yourself.

- Engage in stress-reducing activities that you enjoy.

- Learn where your boundaries are and pay attention to them.
Recommended Reading:

*Life on the Tenure Track: Lessons from the First Year*
by James M. Lang
Have fun, and good luck!

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