Integrating teaching, scholarship, and service

The recent shape of the academic market has created an environment in which universities historically oriented toward teaching increasingly hire tenure-track faculty with strong scholarly potential. Active research contributes vitally to teaching, and we and our students benefit from this change. Nevertheless, the higher teaching loads at universities such as ours place tremendous pressures on faculty in terms of higher promotion and tenure expectations. We feel pulled in opposite directions between scholarship and teaching—and then how do we make time for community, university, and departmental service?

Match your scholarship and your teaching.
Write proposals for conference papers that shape your text and topic selection for courses wherein the teaching shapes your writing of the conference paper—and subsequent revision for journal articles.

Help students help you.
Coordinate your teaching, university service, and scholarship in labor-saving ways: hand pick your most advanced and dedicated students and offer them an independent study in which they will function as your research or teaching assistant. Seek CURS funding to compensate them financially and make the work as valuable for them as possible, but design and implement independent studies so that students are contributing directly and in concrete ways to your research and/or teaching effectiveness.

Plan your travel.
Are there conferences at or near an archive vital to your research or near a peer or mentor with whom you can collaborate or consult? Submit TAPS grant proposals well in advance of the deadlines (TEC meeting prior to use of funds, particularly conference dates), and plan on presenting in at least one conference each year. Plan attendance within the funding limitations: a maximum of $1500 TAPS, possibly $500 departmental.

Maintain professional contacts.
Maintain regular contact with colleagues at other institutions with whom you can compare notes and strategies for professional advancement and coordinate co-publication opportunities. Join professional groups. Dues and entry fees are expensive, but worth it. Stay active in your field and work at building a local, regional, and perhaps even national reputation.

Enter as many contests and competitions as possible, and submit papers widely. Google competitions in your field and submit work. International juried competitions are best, followed by national, regional, state, and local. Regularly check a disciplinary listserv to stay current on topics, conferences, and calls for proposals.

Develop meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with other faculty, both in your department and out. Attend campus events when possible, but don’t feel that you have to go to everything.

Reach out to the community. It is easy to get attention in the Upstate area as a faculty member of USC Upstate. Publicize everything. It makes everyone look good.

Familiarize yourself with the financial opportunities to fund your research and their due dates: CURS, TAPS, SARS, divisional funds, and federal grants.

For service, volunteer carefully.
Don’t waste time that does not contribute meaningfully to your career, research, personal life, or general happiness—don’t confuse being busy with being productive. When volunteering, choose events that are one-time only and require virtually no preparation but demonstrate your expertise and collegiality for administration, faculty, staff, and students; request a letter acknowledging your participation to include in your file. Undertake committee and other service obligations based on your interest, availability, expertise, and experience.

Document your work.
Regularly update your CV with your professional contributions. Rather than try to remember everything you have done over the past months, make a record of meetings, papers given, volunteer activities, and accomplishments as they happen. Keep copies of letters and promotional materials documenting your efforts.

Plan for the promotion and tenure process.
Organize your CV in terms of teaching, scholarship, and service. Ensure that your teaching produces valuable learning experiences for students and positive Student Opinion Polls. Produce innovative, effective teaching tools that can be documented outside of the classroom (slideshows, handouts, etc.). Present regularly at conferences, and use those conference papers as drafts of publication submissions. Always have an article or grant submission out for review and another in progress. Ensure that your scholarly and creative activities are sustained and ongoing and produce a quality and quantity of peer-reviewed, publicly-available work in line with your unit criteria and disciplinary expectations and limitations. Allow your service to the university, college, division, students, community, and profession to grow over time.

Use your first-year review as a brief entry into the expectations of the Peer Review Committee. Focus your efforts on preparing a substantive Third Year Review, and use that process as practice for the subsequent Promotion and Tenure Review. That is, follow P&T guidelines in the preparation of your Third Year Review files. Finally, work with your ranking administrator in submitting and responding to Annual Reviews.

Spend time developing a clearer structure and vision for your teaching, scholarship, and service so that parts contribute to larger wholes.
New faculty checklist.
Always attend the Fast Track series; these are extremely helpful and a good way to meet other faculty that you may not see on a regular basis.

Develop a several year plan for your teaching and scholarly work organized by semester. Regularly update that plan as you accomplish or defer your goals.

Try and schedule classes in chunks of time. Try and one day off each week that you dedicate to scholarly and creative activities.

Don't teach more than one class in the summer unless you have to. Use that time to work and recharge.

Take advantage of desk copies and get free books.

Don't overlook the Spartanburg Public Library.

Seek out opinions and even mentors outside your own department. Ask questions about their experiences.

Use your time during office hours to get work done. However, make sure you are available during your office hours for students. Complaints from your students about your availability are not good. Leave an open door during your office hours, but close it at other times if necessary.

Enforce a strict attendance policy in your classes so you can have leverage with students who do not follow it. Have students sign a sheet that states they have read and understand your syllabus.

Use the school's channels to create and promote events that benefit your profession and research.

Create opportunities for yourself and use your skills for service.

Keep up with local events. Read the local news websites, newspapers, and tabloids, and make professional connections.

Publicize everything. It makes everyone look good.

The College of Arts and Sciences presents its program for new faculty:

FAST TRACK

University of South Carolina Upstate