

2010



ANITA BORG INSTITUTE  
FOR WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY



Association for  
Computing Machinery

# For the Love of Teaching: Experiences of Undergraduate Liberal Arts College Faculty

Valerie Barr, Union College

Andrea Danyluk, Williams College

Andrea Lawrence, Spelman College

Catherine McGeoch, Amherst College

Tia Newhall, Swarthmore College

Ann Smith, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Ellen Spertus, Mills College

Ellen Walker, Hiram College

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# Panel Format

- Brief Introduction to the Panelists
- Main Topic Presentations
  - Deciding whether you would want to work at a liberal arts college  
(Ellen Walker, Cathy McGeoch, Valerie Barr)
  - Getting the Job  
(Tia Newhall, Ellen Spertus)
  - Succeeding at the job  
(Andrea Lawrence, Andrea Danyluk, Ann Smith)
- Questions & Discussion

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# Ellen Walker

- *Current Position:* Professor and Chair of Computer Science, Hiram College
- *Education:* Sc.B. Computer Science, Brown University 1981. MS, Ph.D. Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon University, 1989
- *Family:* Husband (CS prof at RI), no children
- *Why LAC:* Impact on students, wide range of courses taught, collaboration beyond my discipline, mentoring efforts are valued

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# Cathy McGeoch

- *Current Position:* Professor and Chair of Computer Science, Amherst College
- *Education:* BS Math & Computer Science, Butler Univ 1981. MS, PhD Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon Univ. 1987
- *Family:* One husband (also in my department), 2 boys (both born pre-tenure).
- *Why LAC:* 2-body problem + lifestyle + freedom to follow my research interests.

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# Valerie Barr

- *Current Position:* Professor and Chair of Computer Science, Union College
- *Education:* BA Math, Mount Holyoke College 1977. MS, Computer Science, NYU 1979; Ph.D. Computer Science, Rutgers University, 1996
- *Family:* Partner (also an academic), 1 daughter (born while working on Ph.D.)
- *Why LAC:* Opportunity to really impact students, work in interdisciplinary ways, flexibility (academic and lifestyle).

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# Tia Newhall

- *Current Position:* Associate Professor of Computer Science, Swarthmore College
- *Education:* BS-SED Math Univ. of Wisconsin, 1986; Ph.D. CS, Univ. of Wisconsin, 1999
- *Family:* Partner (non-academic)
- *Why LAC:*
  - Perfect mix of teaching and research
  - Challenging, exciting, lots of flexibility & breadth
  - Very rewarding working closely with undergrads

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# Ellen Spertus

- *Current Position:*
  - Associate Professor of Computer Science, Mills College
  - Research Scientist, Google
- *Education:* SB ('90), SM ('92), PhD ('98), CS, MIT
- *Family:* Spouse (non-academic CS) and baby
- *Why LAC:*
  - Rewards what I value
  - More female- and family-friendly than research universities
  - Small class sizes

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# Ann Smith

Education: B.A. English Literature (Ohio Wesleyan)  
B.S. , M.S. CS (Michigan Tech University)

Work: Michigan Tech (instructor 5 years)

I.B.M. in Rochester, MN. (programmer 5 years)

Saint Mary's (15 years) Chair, Faculty Chair, P&T

Family: Partner to Joan Francioni

Loryn born (1976), Karyn born (1976) & Grandma!

Saint Mary's : private, Catholic, Selective

1,400 undergraduate students

22-24 Teaching Credits per Year

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# Andrea Danyluk

Education: B.A. (1984) Vassar College

M.S. (1986), Ph.D. (1992) Columbia University

Work: NYNEX Science and Technology (1990-94)

Williams College (since 1994) [Dean, Chair, etc.]

Family: Married Andrew (1984)

Stephan born (1992), Katya born (1994)

Williams College: private, highly selective

2,200 undergraduate students

3 courses + labs/year + high research expectations

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# Andrea Lawrence

Education: BS (1970), Purdue University

MS (1985) Atlanta University, Ph.D. (1993) Georgia  
Institute of Technology

Attended Spelman (women, HBCU) 3 years

Work: Cincinnati Public Schools

Spelman College (since 1983), Chair several terms,  
Faculty Council, various committees

Spelman College: private, Historically Black

2,300 undergraduate women

Teaching load: 6 courses per year

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# Deciding ...

- Note there is considerable variation in LA Colleges' teaching and research expectations.  
*Ask, don't assume!*
- *Small departments:* You must be willing to teach outside your specialty; no grad student TA's or staff to do the grunt work; lack of research ``group" can be problematic for some; you may be the only person who works in your area.
- Typical pay scale is less than RI.

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# Deciding ...

- Research expectations (generally):
  - Same quality as RI's, slower pace. Work with undergraduates is encouraged.
  - Reasonably generous sabbatical leave policy; no teaching in summers.
  - Travel, research support varies. (*Ask!*)
  - No pressure to get grant money, but it is welcomed.
  - ``Isolation" means you have to be a self-starter in finding research projects.

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# Deciding ...

- Teaching expectations (generally):
  - Better really like teaching!
  - Weak teaching cannot be compensated for by strong research.
  - Teach more than at RI's.
  - Significant advising responsibilities.
  - Educational development work counts, but not always quite as much as research.
  - Mentoring beyond the classroom is highly valued.

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# Deciding ...

- Internal service expectations (generally):
  - Department level:
    - curriculum development, advising, chair
  - College level – low impact:
    - admissions events, advisory committees (library, admissions, academic computing)
  - College level – time sinks:
    - search, reappointment and tenure committees, academic affairs committee.

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# Deciding ...

- External service expectations (generally):
  - Program committees
  - Conference and journal reviewing
  - External tenure reviews
  - External department reviews

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# Typical academic search process

- Written application ~200 candidates
- Phone interview ~5-10 candidates
- On-campus interview ~3-7 candidates
- Receiving, selecting, and negotiating offer(s)

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# Purpose of written application

- Make the school want you
- Show that you really want to work there
  - liberal arts colleges
  - that school in particular
- Show that you're likely to succeed

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# Components of written application

- Cover Letter
- Research statement
- Teaching statement
- CV
- Letters of reference

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# On-campus interview

Will you be a good colleague?

Small dept, we work very closely together

Potential to be an excellent teacher?

Job talk: can you explain your research to undergrads,  
get them excited about your work

Potential to be a successful, active researcher?

How you can conduct research in our environment  
Provide research opportunities for our students?

How can you contribute to/complement dept?

Courses you can teach/develop

Other: research collaborations, outreach, ...

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# Succeeding at the Job – Tenure

Timeline and Process

Criteria and Evidence (\*Big Three\*)

TEACHING \* RESEARCH \* SERVICE

Expectations and Balance of Big Three

Different levels of all 3 areas from R1 schools

→ Figure out ways to overlap the 3 areas

Wide range across non-R1 schools

→ Be informed (written & unwritten guidelines)

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# Succeeding at the Job – Tenure

## Be Proactive and Self-Promoting (yikes)

Read faculty handbook

Seek and then listen to advice (many sources)

Make colleagues and administration aware of your work (being considered “nice” isn’t enough)

Remember, reviewers are human (don’t make enemies, be collegial)

Don’t panic or be defensive about critique (use to document improvement)

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# Succeeding at the Job: Life Balance?

Balance is necessary/healthy

It won't "just happen"

Our work can fill all the time we have; need to carve out time for a life

Flexibility and time constraints at LACs

More scheduled teaching time than at R1s

Higher expectations for student contact hours

Heightened emphasis on collegiality in small departments.

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# Succeeding at the Job: Children?

Succeeding at tenure and having children are not incompatible.

Some factors affecting “the right time” differ between LACs and research universities:

R1s: pressure to get funding early

LACs: pressure for a strong teaching trajectory

Understand college policies on parenting leaves and the tenure clock.

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# Options for Finding a Mentor

Senior faculty member at your institution

Extend graduate school connections

Approach others in your research area or at similar institutions

Join relevant professional organizations

Attend conferences

Remember: one mentor may not be the answer

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# Getting Help with Teaching or Research

One resource -- faculty at your institution

Approach those who publish in your area

Seek summer research opportunities in other institutions, industry, or government

Look for partners at another nearby institution or in a related discipline

Network and collaborate with people in your area

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# Important Factors in Getting Tenure

Understanding the culture of your institution

Distinguish yourself by the quality of your work in teaching, research, and service

Find the right balance between teaching and research

Become known by peers both inside and outside your institution

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# Role of Department, Administration, and College Committee in Tenure Process

Become known as an active contributor in  
the department

Find some school wide committee

Seek some funded project

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