PART I.
COMMENTARY ON PAPERS #1 TO #6
Overviews of becoming a new professor, teaching, and learning

WE SUGGEST NEW FACULTY READ THIS PART FIRST.

New professors are typically faced with the daunting tasks of moving to a new university, finding a place to live and settling into a new community, developing and teaching courses—often for the first time—setting up their research laboratory, recruiting new graduate students, and adjusting to their new role as a professor. Fortunately help is available.

In the first paper Phil Wankat starts by asking new professors to carefully consider their goals and priorities before he describes the promotion and tenure (P&T) process at most universities. Efficiency strategies are briefly (and efficiently) covered concluding with the suggestion that professors aim for an average of about 55 hours of work a week. Then the three areas of interest for P&T—teaching, research and service—are discussed. Part of research and sometimes teaching is writing papers, and paper #1 offers a few tips for doing so efficiently. Although not included here, Rich Felder and Rebecca Brent cover efficiently writing papers in considerably more detail: “How to Write Anything,” CEE, 42(3), 139 (Summer 2008).

Don Visco’s paper (#2) is unique in that it is the only paper commissioned for this collection. This paper encourages new faculty to apply the skills they have honed during their graduate and post-doctoral career to their initial teaching responsibilities. Teaching Tips are very practical, one-page papers on some aspect of improving teaching. Since the focus of CEE is improving teaching and student learning, papers #1 and #2 are the only articles in this collection that discuss research.

The third paper is a Teaching Tip written by Lisa Bullard. Lisa’s paper provides eight short suggestions that will help all professors improve their courses. The fourth and fifth papers are part of the regular Random Thoughts column written by Rich Felder and Rebecca Brent. These are the first two of the six Random Thoughts columns that we have selected for this collection. The column has the advantages of being short (most columns are two pages) and very readable. The fourth paper discusses a rational procedure for preparing a new course, and the fifth paper summarizes principles of learning and provides teaching strategies that will satisfy these principles. The original source that this paper summarizes is Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., & Norman, M.K., How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles For Smart Teaching, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (2010).

The sixth and last paper in Part I, also by Rich Felder, is the first Random Thoughts column that appeared in CEE. Rich introduces the Imposter Syndrome, which is well known in psychology. Although this syndrome is introduced in the context of students in the column, we have included it here because many new faculty members also experience it. “I fooled them as an undergraduate, I fooled them as a graduate student, I fooled them in my postdoc, but now I am in the ‘big time’ and they will find out that I am a fraud and do not know how to teach or do research on my own.” Rich discusses methods to overcome these negative thoughts.