

## About the Author

Dr. Joseph McRae Mellichamp is Emeritus Professor of Management Science in the Manderson Graduate School of Business at the University of Alabama where he served as a faculty member from 1969 to 1994. He is also International Faculty Representative for Christian Leadership Ministries.

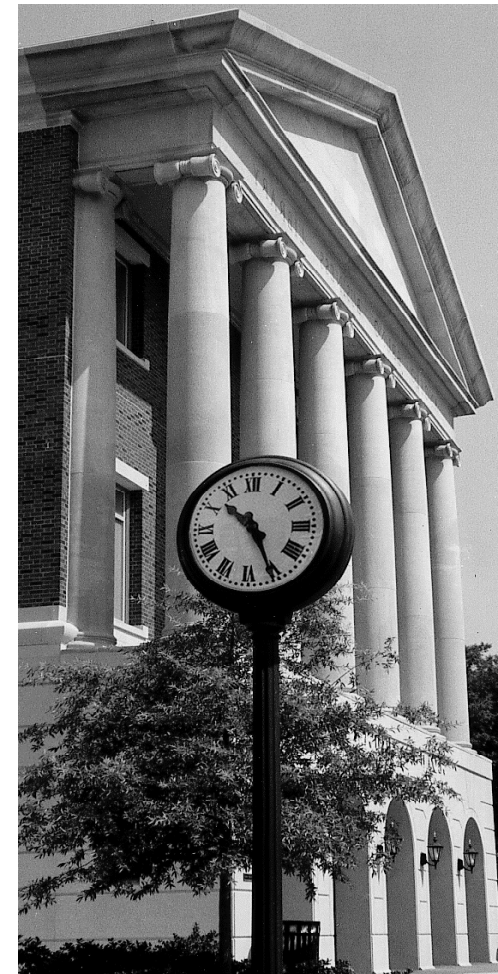
Dr. Mellichamp received the Ph.D. in Engineering Management from Clemson University and the Bachelor of Industrial Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. He also was a Visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dr. Mellichamp has published refereed articles in such journals as *The Harvard Business Review*, *Management Science*, *Decision Sciences*, *Expert Systems*, *Interfaces*, *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, *The Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing*, *Simulation*, and *IEEE Networks*. He was principal investigator for contract research projects totaling over \$1.25 million and served as a consultant for AT&T, General Motors, N.A.S.A. (The Space Shuttle Program), and the U.S. Army (Strategic Defense Initiative).

In addition, Mellichamp and his wife Peggy have been Associate Staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ since 1972 and he helped to found Christian Leadership Ministries which now networks over 10,000 Christian professors and staff on hundreds of university campuses in the U.S. and abroad. Mellichamp helped to develop many of the ministry strategies and materials used within Christian Leadership Ministries and he and his wife Peggy have spoken both professionally and from a ministry perspective to faculty, faculty wives, and student groups on over 100 campuses in the U.S. and abroad. Dr. Mellichamp also founded the Christian Faculty Fellowship at the University of Alabama and directed the group for twenty years.

For additional information, please contact:

# How to Make Tenure



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# HOW TO MAKE TENURE

by

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became a big joke in the department. I got no votes, which made me happy. People realized that I did more than my share of committee work for the department and for the college, and they appreciated the fact that I was trying to focus the major part of my efforts on research.

Do make sure that you have a reputation for doing your fair share—and be careful saying “no” if you don’t yet have tenure.

Avoid politics like the plague! You need to know what is going on around you in the department and the college, but you don’t need to involve yourself in politics. Let others take care of that—and there are always plenty of people who enjoy that.

Unless you want to make a career in university administration, avoid it. Many young professors get some administrative title which sounds nice, but the outcome is that it side-tracks them from their main focus, which should be doing research.

Exploitation—universities sometimes misuse young professors. I know of a young professor who dedicated two or three years to helping his department become accredited. However, when he came up for tenure, they said, “Thank you, we really appreciate all your hard work on the accrediting task. But you really haven’t done any research so you need to begin looking for another job.”

## **Assess Your Motives**

Well, there you have it. Some practical suggestions that you won’t find in your faculty handbook or hear at your institution’s tenure seminar. Finally, before we sign off, one last question. What is your motive for wishing to make tenure? Is it merely a mark of success, or is it part of a lifestyle of integrated excellence you’re striving for in every area? Reflect on what the important things are in your life. If tenure is your “be-all, end-all” goal in life, you’ll be sadly disappointed when you achieve it. Many things are more important, such as your relationship with your Creator, family, friends, and community. All of these areas are important. So make sure that you consider every part of your life and define success in each area. Then strive for it!

We would be happy to discuss these issues with you further, and to help you in any way possible. Just contact my friends at the address or phone number listed below. I wish you success!

Here are two of the questions I had from the work/career area of my accountability checklist:

1. Are you achieving your research and teaching goals?
2. What is your reputation within the university? Nationally?

### **Some Things You Ought To Do**

As we wind this discussion down, here are several things you ought to focus on from the positive side.

As much as you possibly can, specialize your teaching and your research. If you can get a teaching situation for which you have one preparation for five years, that's great. You need to zealously watch how many preparations you have to make, and at what level (undergrad v. grad courses).

Learn to manage your doctoral students. I established a guideline in working with students: "I will work with you, but one thing I will require before you get a Ph.D. under my supervision is that we're going to get at least one, and possibly more, refereed journal articles out of your research." The students appreciated the fact that when they finished their degree they had a couple of published articles, and it compensated me for the time I invested in working with them.

Organize your workspace. Many professors are terribly disorganized. They're constantly searching through stacks of paper on their desk for some paper they desperately need, now. Develop a simple file system that maps your curriculum vita. Office studies have shown that the average worker spends thirty minutes a day searching for items on or around the workspace! Is this you?

Year after year evaluate how you're doing, and ask yourself the hard question: "Am I doing the kinds of things I know I have to do in order to make tenure?" Why or why not?

Start now to develop your dossier for promotion and tenure. Examine recent dossiers which have been submitted. Start gathering material NOW. You'll need letters evaluating your research. You'll need letters from students who have taken your classes. Don't wait! And when you do put it all together, make sure it is organized and presents a clear, crisp visual image. Looks do matter.

### **Some Things to Avoid**

Here are a couple of things on the negative side to avoid as you negotiate the tenure process:

Committee work—do your share and no more. Once in our department we had a committee for which the faculty elected representatives. I sent out a memo offering \$10 to anyone who wouldn't vote for me as their representative! It

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About twelve years ago, I became concerned over the number of young assistant professors who were not successfully navigating the tenure process. I saw a number of really talented people who experienced what for an academic is major failure—yet was preventable. They were not approaching the tenure process in the right way, they did not have a good strategy for negotiating the process, they were misallocating their time and effort, and I thought perhaps some good fatherly advice from an older professor could be beneficial. When universities do offer seminars on how to make tenure, they really don't address the kinds of things I think are helpful to young professors. They cover information from the faculty handbook, but they can't say some of the hard things that I wanted to say; things which really need to be said.

Before we launch ahead, let me tell you about my qualifications for speaking on tenure issues. For twenty years I was a member of my departmental tenure committee, serving as chairman on several occasions. I was also appointed as a representative from my department to the college promotion and tenure committee on about five occasions for a year each time, and served one term as chairman of the college committee. I also served for two years as chairman of my department. So I've seen the tenure process from several different perspectives. I know what goes on in promotion and tenure deliberations. Based on those experiences, I've summarized here some suggestions which I think you will find helpful.

First, a simple word of caution. No one is going to be looking out for you as you work toward tenure. The obligation is on you to manage your experience through the promotion and tenure process. When a young assistant professor does not make tenure, it's too late to point the finger at senior professors in the department, or at university administrators, and complain, "You didn't tell me this," or, "I didn't understand that." No one is going to do these things for you; no one is even going to check to make sure that you're doing them for yourself. So the things I'm advising you to do are things for which you, and you alone, are responsible.

### **Understand the Process**

#### ***Gather the Relevant Materials***

Begin understanding the tenure process by gathering the relevant materials. These typically include your university's *faculty handbook*, and perhaps some *departmental or college guidelines* which supplement the university's faculty handbook. You need to become thoroughly familiar with

what is contained in these materials. Years ago, before the earth's crust hardened, I was a Boy Scout; we each had a copy of the *Boy Scout Manual*. We carried it around everywhere, and we used to memorize the requirements for advancing from rank to rank. This is what I'm advising you to do. Make sure that you thoroughly understand the written materials in your university's faculty handbook, and that you understand any supplemental guidelines from your department or college. Typically, these additional requirements will be more rigorous than the university's guidelines. They may point you in a slightly different direction or emphasize some things which are not in the general guidelines.

### ***Interview Colleagues***

Not many deans have open door policies with their faculty, but if you can gain an opportunity to interview your dean, by all means do so. Your department chairman certainly should welcome the opportunity to sit down with you from time to time to talk about how you're doing and what the expectations are, and you certainly should avail yourself of this opportunity. Talk with senior professors in the department about the tenure process; what it was like in the past, what it's like now, and how you fit into that scenario. Talk with some recently-tenured professors, either in your department or in your college. They are great sources of information.

Let me share an example that will underscore why talking to a lot of people is useful. A number of years ago, I served on an external review committee of a department in another college of the university. As I looked over the vitas of the departmental faculty, I was frankly shocked at the lack of focus on scholarly research—there were senior professors, for example, who had large amounts of funding from external sources with virtually no refereed publications. Moreover, the department chairman was unbelievably naive vis-a-vis the university's research expectations. Some time later, in doing a Tenure Seminar, one of the attendees came up after the talk and identified himself as an untenured member of this same department. He had been at the university for a few years and had gotten bad advice from his department chairman and from the senior professors in the department and he was afraid, based on what I had covered in the seminar, he would not be able to earn tenure. Fortunately the story has a happy ending, because he immediately refocused his strategy along the lines I proposed and was able to succeed. Another year or two and he would certainly have failed—not at the department level, but when his situation was reviewed at the college level.

### ***Assess Your Specific Situation***

Evaluate the stated requirements for promotion and tenure which are listed in the various materials you've collected. One question new professors

As you think about your long term aspirations, it may be helpful to imagine yourself at your 85th birthday party; what would you like to have accomplished in these areas? What would you like for people to say about you at that celebration?

Let me share with you the life goals I followed during my career in academia for my research and my teaching:

### ***Research***

Long Range Goal. To develop a national/international reputation in complex system design using: (1) Digital Simulation Methods and (2) Knowledge Based Systems.

#### Short Range Goals

1. Refereed journal articles: Two per year.
2. National/International conference presentations: One per year.

### ***Teaching***

Long Range Goal. To maintain a university-wide reputation as an excellent teacher.

#### Short Range Goals

1. Teaching evaluations: Above 4.0 in each course.
2. Student interaction: To be available to students.

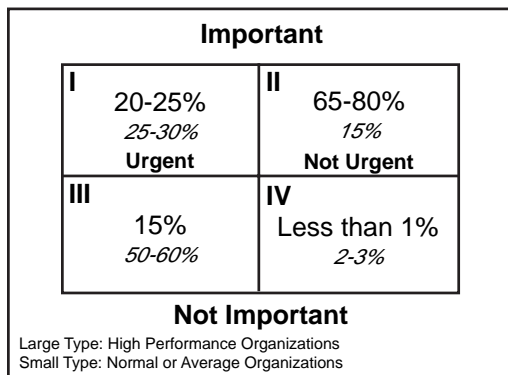
As I consistently accomplished my short term goals in teaching and research year after year, I accomplished my long term aspiration in both areas. I recommend that you write out specific long term and short term goals for each area of your life.

Once you have done this, go beyond having a nice, organized set of goals tucked away in a file folder somewhere, which is what many people do after completing this exercise.

### **Be Accountable**

Develop an accountability checklist. Give the checklist to one or more people along with your permission for them to hold you accountable for the things you have said are important in your life. Choose several individuals for this; perhaps one in the professional area of your life and another in the other areas. Go to a senior professor in your department. Chat with him or her, describing specifically what you would like to accomplish this year. Explain that you'd appreciate it if several times during the year he or she could check to see if you are on track.

performers spend a huge percent of their time in Quadrant II (around 75) and a small percent (15) in Quadrant III. For average performers, the situation is exactly reversed. They spend only 15 percent of their time in Quadrant II and a large percent (60) responding to urgency in Quadrant III.



The message here is clear. You should be spending a large percentage of your time at the university doing research related Quadrant II tasks. If you are at a research university, nearly three fourths of your time. You ought to spend very little time, perhaps 10 percent, doing Quadrant III activities—the urgent, but not important stuff. Guard against doing unnecessary service activities. Do your service work cheerfully and well, you want to be a good faculty citizen. Finally, if you maintain a Quadrant II focus, you should be able to limit your Quadrant I (primarily teaching) activity to around 20 percent.

### Establish Your Goals

You need to establish goals, not just for your academic endeavors, but for your whole life. Your goals should be specific and they should be written. I have found it helpful to structure goals in terms of long term aspirations and short term tasks or activities to be undertaken daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly in order to achieve the long term desires. Here are my suggested areas for which you ought to have written goals:

- Professional.
- Marriage/Family (if applicable).
- Personal Growth.
- Financial.
- Physical.
- Spiritual.
- Social.

always ask is, “How many publications is it going to take for me to make tenure?” The bad news is that you’re never going to be able to “turn to page ten” in your handbook and see exactly how many publications are expected for promotion. The good news is that if you talk to enough people, you’ll be able to discover the magnitude of that number. And if that number is say ten, don’t go up for tenure “on the bubble”; have twelve—allow yourself some slack.

Get a clear understanding of the tenure process at your institution. Typically it involves at least a departmental promotion and tenure committee which meets on an annual basis. There will be a college-wide committee as well.

From your very first year at the university you should be getting good feedback, especially from your departmental committee. It is *your* responsibility to make sure that you get very specific feedback. If you just get some nice pat-on-the-back, “feel good” information, you need to go to your department chairman and say, “I appreciate the nice sentiment, but it’s not really pointing me to specific things I need to be doing.”

Evaluate your colleagues—how much support will you be able to get from them? Do they *want* you to succeed in the tenure process? If not, then it will change how you go through the process. In my department, we only hired individuals whom we wanted to succeed, so we worked very closely with them to ensure that they did. Unfortunately this is not the case everywhere.

### Define the Target

When defining your target, realize that there are two extremes on the tenure spectrum. At state and private *research* universities, it is expected that professors do scholarly research and publish their results, that is, “publish or perish” is not just a catchy phrase. A secondary expectation at research institutions is that professors be solid classroom teachers. The other extreme is the liberal arts college. Quality teaching is the requirement in such institutions, with the secondary expectation of some research. Most colleges or universities will fit somewhere on this continuum.

I am now going to give you a strategy which, in my experience, will work regardless of where your institution lies on this spectrum. This is what I would recommend to any young assistant professor, regardless of his or her situation. We typically speak of a professor’s job in terms of teaching, research, and service, so I would like to address these, in a little different order.

### Service

My recommendation for you in the area of service is that you cheerfully do 1/n th of the departmental service load. If there are ten professors in your

department, then you should cheerfully do 1/10 th of the departmental service work.

Your department chairman will probably not automatically assign you your fair share of the work. You are the person who must make sure that that's what you're doing—no more, no less. Keep your eyes and ears open concerning how much others in your department are doing, and if you feel that you are being taken advantage of, then diplomatically go to your department chairman and see if you can get some relief.

I was at a Big Ten university several years ago doing a Tenure Seminar and at the conclusion of the talk a young engineering professor came up and related the following story. She said she was on the elevator in her building when one of the senior professors in her department (I'll call him Dr. Brown) got on complaining about how many students he was having to advise. She asked how many advisees he had. Upon learning that he had fifty (she had well over 100), she went immediately to see the department head. "Dr. Green," she said, "I'm really concerned that I'm not having the time I need to devote to my research and I think I may be spending more time advising students than I should. Could you check to see if my advising load is comparable to other professors in the department?" "Sure," he replied reaching for his advising folder. "Let's see . . . Oh, you are right. You have over 100 advisees. We need to do something about this. Here, Dr. Brown only has fifty. I'll give him forty of yours. That should help." What a funny story—that really makes the point!

No one has ever earned tenure by being a hero in the area of service. If you overdo it here to the detriment of your teaching and research, you will most assuredly not earn tenure. So, just do your share, no more.

## Teaching

Here is my advice in the area of teaching—and this may come as a shock: strive to be the very best teacher you can, but do this within the constraints of a *reasonable* expenditure of time and effort. Your students deserve your best efforts as a teacher. But know this, teaching can be a black hole! You can spend all of your time redoing lecture notes, preparing illustrations or homework exercises, developing good test questions, etc. There is always something else that you would like to do. Restrain yourself.

Don't try to win any teaching awards while you're in the promotion and tenure process. You can eventually revise your lecture notes every semester, if necessary to become a better teacher, but the time to do this is after you've made tenure.

a research project. Drafting a manuscript. Planning a grant proposal. These are all Quadrant II activities. On the other hand, most teaching activities tend to be Quadrant I activities. Important and urgent. Completing the lecture notes for today's class. Preparing an exam for Friday. Explaining material to the student who popped by your office two hours before the test. Finally, many service activities tend to be Quadrant III activities. Committee meetings, phone calls, etc.

Short of working an eighty hour week, what is a person to do? Here are Covey's general guidelines for managing activities in each of the quadrants:

Quadrant I Expend the energy necessary to handle.

Quadrant II Emphasize Quadrant II activities.

Quadrant III Eliminate most of these activities.

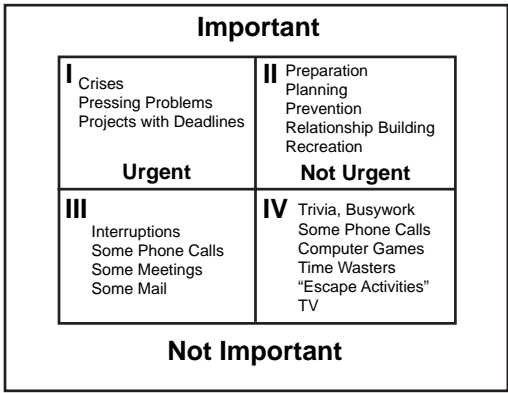
Quadrant IV Eliminate all of these activities.

A couple of comments and we are ready to move on. Do you see that Quadrant II activities can migrate into Quadrant I? Suppose you have a grant proposal that must be submitted by January 1. On September 30, this is clearly a Quadrant II activity; on December 10, it has become urgent, the pressure is on and it is definitely a Quadrant I deal. Notice that Quadrant I and II activities can degenerate into Quadrant III and IV activities. Suppose a student comes in to ask about class material—Quadrant I. But after you have answered his questions, if he hangs around for 30 minutes talking about the big game on Saturday, things have taken a turn toward Quadrant III. Suppose you play an occasional game of Solitaire on your computer to relieve the tension and stress—Quadrant II recreation. But if you play 10 games of Solitaire, you have dropped into Quadrant IV!

One other point. We do many Quadrant III activities, not necessarily because they are important to the accomplishment of our academic objectives, but because we want to be a team player and a good faculty citizen. Committee work, helping a faculty colleague on a research problem, helping the departmental secretary pack up an item of equipment for shipping—these are all Quadrant III activities that we do for the common good.

Here's an interesting question for you. What percentage of your time would you estimate you spend in each quadrant? In your professional life? In your personal life? The percentages for "average" and "effective" people shown in the diagram on the following page will probably surprise you.

Notice that there is very little difference between high performers and average people when considering Quadrants I and IV. High performers spend about 25% of their time in Quadrant I, average performers about 30%. High performers waste about 1% of their time on Quadrant IV activities, average performers about 3%. The real story is the difference between the percent of time spent in Quadrant II versus the percent spent in Quadrant III. High



Plotting importance on the vertical axis and urgency on the horizontal axis gives the four quadrants that Covey calls Quadrants I, II, III, and IV. Quadrant I includes those activities that are both important and urgent; generally, important crisis activities, pressing problems, or projects with deadlines. Preparing and submitting a grant proposal by Friday at 5:00 p.m. is certainly a Quadrant I activity; so is getting your child who broke her arm in a playground accident to the emergency room. Quadrant II includes important, not urgent activities such as planning, recreation, relationship building, etc. Reading interesting and relevant articles from a professional journal is a Quadrant II activity; so is exercising at the university health center several times a week. Quadrant III includes not important, urgent activities; while Quadrant IV consists of not important, not urgent activities. Covey's general activities that fall in Quadrants III and IV are shown in the diagram above. You might wish to think of some specific examples of Quadrant III and IV activities from your work life and from your home or family life.

Now, the names Covey uses for the four quadrants are very interesting. He calls Quadrant I the Quadrant of Necessity—one must accomplish Quadrant I activities. If your child breaks her arm, you don't debate whether to act or not, you get the child to the emergency room. Covey calls Quadrant II the Quadrant of Quality; these activities are almost always vitally important to our success in the various areas of life. Quadrant III is called the Quadrant of Deception; many people allow the urgency of Quadrant III tasks to deceive them into thinking the activities are important. Remember importance and urgency are independent attributes. Finally, he calls Quadrant IV the Quadrant of Waste. These activities are not profitable in any sense.

"Okay, so what does all this have to do with tenure?" you ask. Good question. I'm glad you asked. If you think about it, most research activities tend to be Quadrant II activities. Very, very important to earning tenure, but not a lot of pressure to focus on them. Reading professional journals. Planning

**Research**

Do your share of the service, try to be an excellent teacher (the students deserve this), and then take everything else that is left—all of your energy, all of your time—and devote it to the area of research. Focus primarily on research which will lead to refereed journal articles in the best journals in your field.

In your research, try to develop a balanced portfolio of publications. You should have both co-authored and sole-authored research publications. If all of your articles are co-authored, it may raise some concerns in promotion and tenure committees. Have a balance between top journals and second tier journals. If you try to have all your articles published in just the very best journals, unless you are truly exceptional, you probably won't succeed. A mix of articles in the best journals, plus some in second tier journals, is usually acceptable. Talk to your colleagues for their opinions about the best journals in your field, you should be able to come up with a list of several journals that you will want to target.

Once, when I was serving on the college committee, a young professor came up for tenure with nine articles in his portfolio. All were co-authored with his department chairman, and all of them were published in one journal, of which his department chair was the editor! This is not a balanced portfolio; it is not good strategy either.

A number of years ago I put together a score sheet for activities which count toward making tenure, using a zero to ten point scale. This is for illustrative purposes only. I constructed this tongue in cheek—no one would seriously follow this, and certainly no one would ever run a promotion and tenure process based on a score sheet (at least I hope not!). But I've done this to let you know what you're up against.

**What Things Count**

Activity	"Point Count"
<b>Service</b>	
Committees:	
Departmental . . . . .	0
College . . . . .	0
University . . . . .	0
Professional Organizations:	
Officer . . . . .	1
Committee member . . . . .	0

Professional Journals:		
Editor	1	
Advisory/Technical Board	0	
Reviewer	0	
<b>Teaching</b>		
Curriculum Duties:		
Curriculum planning	0	
New course development	0	
Development of materials	0	
Advising Duties:		
Undergraduate students	0	
Graduate students	0	
Examining Duties:		
Preparation and grading of Master's/Ph.D. exams	0	
Teaching:		0
Research University: 3-6 hours per semester		
Other Institutions: 9-12 hours per semester		
<b>Research</b>		
Refereed Journal Articles	6-10	
Non-Refereed Journal Articles		
Academic Journals	2	
Trade Publications	0	
Books (Research), Monographs	8	
Conference proceedings		
Refereed	3	
Non-Refereed	1	
Conference Presentations	0.2	
Supervision of Graduate Students	0.1	
Research Contracts and Grants	\$	

Do you get the picture? At most universities and colleges, the thing that really counts toward tenure, and promotion, is refereed publications. Professors are expected to teach well and to do all the things that go along with teaching—new course development, curriculum development, advising students, grading, etc. Professors are also expected to serve—to serve on various committees, to serve the community, to serve professional organizations, etc. These activities are just a part of being a good faculty citizen. And since the expectation is that all professors do these things and do them well, they don't really count toward tenure and promotion.

Now, a couple of important caveats should be slipped in here. If you are in a department that emphasizes funded research as in engineering, medicine, the hard sciences, etc., you may have a funding hurdle to achieve before earning tenure; that is you may have to write and submit proposals to funding agencies to generate funding to support your research (graduate students, equipment, travel, etc.). This will have to be factored in, but you need to think in terms of generating refereed journal articles as a major outcome of your funding. Also, you may be in an area such as literature or history where you must publish a book in order to earn tenure; this will, of course, need to be considered and should lessen your focus (hopefully) on refereed journal articles. Finally, if you are in an area, such as fine arts, in which art works, concerts, or compositions are the primary measure of performance, substitute whatever that is for "refereed journal articles" in the preceding discussion.

Here are some quotes from senior professors that reinforce the ideas we have just considered. "Publish or perish" is a proverb that academicians take seriously. If you do not publish your work for the rest of the community to evaluate, then you have no business in academia (and if you don't already have tenure, you will be banished)." (Michael J. Behe, Professor of Biochemistry, Lehigh University) "Journal articles get you tenure, books get you a chair." (Earl Grinols, Professor of Economics, University of Illinois)

### Activity Management

Let me reinforce this with some material from Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Stephen R. Covey. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1989). In his book, Covey presents what he calls an activity classification scheme [see the diagram on the following page]. Note that Covey uses the attributes of *importance* and *urgency* to form a two-way classification for activities. Important activities are those, which if accomplished, will help us to accomplish our life goals. Urgent activities are those that either have an imminent deadline or are on someone else's agenda, for instance our boss or spouse. Importance and urgency are independent attributes; important activities may or may not be urgent, and unimportant activities may or may not be urgent.