

Dear Mary S.,

One possible strategy is to bake some cookies for the next department meeting, which you attend in a knockout *Mad Men*-style dress. Would some crinoline and an apron be taking it too far? Given the possibility that some members of the department may be gluten intolerant, perhaps that's not such a good idea, after all.

Tenure is a stressful process under any circumstance. All our neuroses come to the fore as what we've been striving for, the Holy Grail of academia, is finally decided. A normal level of anxiety about such an important professional hurdle is made even worse when you add to the mix the antagonism of some members of your department. It is a sad statement that even in this day and age there are young scholars whose work does not get the respect it deserves because gender and women's studies issues are still considered by some somehow less—less important, less serious, or less worthy of scholarly investigation.

There are no guarantees in the tenure process, which can sometimes be murky and subjective, so you've got to protect yourself and think strategically. First, I urge you to begin documenting any statements by your colleagues, whether spoken or by email, that suggest hostility to women's and gender studies. Lay the groundwork for an appeal by being able to suggest that any negative evaluation of your scholarship is grounded in a rejection of the whole disciplinary enterprise, rather than the quality of your particular work. Second, you need to go on the job market in your tenure year. Even if you think your case is a slam dunk, it doesn't hurt to be prepared for things to go very wrong. The job search might come to naught, but it is good to have options if need be. Finally, while baking cookies might be taking it too far, make sure that you're being a good citizen of the department and a pleasant colleague that they will want to have around for years to come. You can speak your mind freely *after* they've signed off on tenure. Then you will be in a position to smooth the way for the scholars, women and men, who come after you.

In comradeship,
Aleksandra