

# **Preparing your RTP Dossier**

## **Guidelines for SJSU Faculty**

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**I - Introduction**

**A. What is your dossier?**

Your dossier is your professional portfolio. It is your opportunity to summarize and communicate clearly to those who need and want to know, who you are and what you do, professionally.

While university guidelines dictate the general content of the dossier, you have the major responsibility for, and control over its preparation. Assembling a dossier can be onerous, when the task is left to the last minute, or when it is approached with disdain, suspicion, learned helplessness, or other negative emotions. Alternatively, the process can be much more useful and uplifting when approached from a more positive direction.

Creating your dossier is your chance to reflect on your strengths and pat yourself on the back for your accomplishments, to think seriously about your professional trajectory, and to set yourself goals.

**B. Who will read your dossier?**

Generally, your dossier will be read very carefully by the following individuals and committees: your Department Chair, your Department Personnel Committee, your Dean, your College Personnel Committee, the University Personnel Committee, AVP for Faculty Affairs, the Provost and the President. You will need to consider your readers' needs as you prepare and assemble your materials.

- Assume that, as your dossier moves through these levels of review, your audience will most likely be less and less familiar with the details of your discipline, although they will have an increasingly broad perspective on the range of faculty across the campus.
- Assume everyone reading your dossier has your best interest at heart. They know the standards you will need to meet to for retention, tenure and promotion. The feedback they provide for you along the way is intended to help you succeed in meeting those standards.
- Assume everyone reading your dossier will be reading many, many dossiers. (The members of your college Personnel Committee and your dean will probably need to review 15 or more dossiers each year; University Personnel committee members and the administrators beyond them will likely be reviewing on the order of 50 dossiers each year.) The more clearly and concisely you can present yourself, the better.

**C. What should you keep in mind as you prepare your dossier?**

Preparing a dossier can be a challenge because you will need to attend to both the “big picture” and the minutia. Additionally, it can be hard to continually bear the readers' needs in mind. The following suggestions are intended to help you put together a dossier that puts you and your accomplishments in the most favorable light.

- Be meticulous, pay attention to detail. Make sure materials are inserted in the appropriate section; make sure materials are photocopied so that words are not cut off; put pages in the correct order and orientation; be sure the Dossier Index corresponds exactly to the dossier content.
- Follow instructions. Faculty Affairs will have provided you with dossier section dividers and guidelines about what belongs in each section. If you stray from these guidelines, there is a good chance that readers will have a hard time finding what they need to find. If you have questions, ask.

- Provide advance organizers for your readers. Personal statements summarizing your teaching philosophy, your research and scholarship, and/or any professional accomplishments you would like to highlight are helpful. So are statements regarding the manner in which you have addressed concerns raised during prior reviews. These should be inserted at the beginnings of the appropriate sections.
- Be succinct. Avoid redundancy. Place material in one section of the dossier only. Cross-referencing is OK. Select documentation carefully. If you have made a presentation at a professional conference, a photocopy of the program cover and the page where your presentation is highlighted are sufficient. You do not need to include the entire program book. Be selective about teaching materials (see section 1.A.3). Again, if you have questions, ask.
- Readers can only consider materials included in the dossier, so make sure you include everything you want readers to know about you and your work. Obviously, it can be difficult to be succinct and thorough at the same time. If you have questions, ask.
- Provide readers with some background about the significance of your professional contributions. For example, you might provide information about the constituencies of the professional organizations where you present your work or assume leadership roles. If possible, you might indicate, as appropriate, how selective journals where you publish your work are.
- Wherever possible, provide an evaluation of your work. It is assumed that publications that have appeared in refereed journals have been evaluated positively, so you do not need to include additional evaluations of this work (reviewers' comments, etc.). Peer reviews of manuscripts in progress are helpful. Letters attesting to the quality of your professional contributions are more helpful than non-specific thank-yous. Survey data from appropriate constituencies in the field commenting on the nature and effectiveness of your work with them are helpful. If you want suggestions of ways to secure such evaluations, just ask.
- If you were granted probationary credit with your appointment, be sure you document your accomplishments and contributions during the period of time covered by your probationary credit. That year/those years count as part of your probationary period.

**D. How should you get started?**

The following are recommended steps for getting started on the process of preparing your dossier.

- Attend any faculty orientation and dossier preparations workshops offered by Faculty Affairs. There, you will receive the official dossier dividers, and you will have the opportunity to examine dossiers that various readers have found exemplary in one way or another. The Center for Faculty Development and CFA also have sessions on dossier preparation and RTP.
- Check to see if your College keeps exemplary dossiers available for faculty to examine. They may be more helpful than ones from across campus.
- Read the University ARTP policy document carefully. This document spells out the performance expectations for faculty at the assistant, associate and full professor ranks. It also spells out the performance expectations for promotion and tenure.
- Ascertain what sort of review will be required of you, and when your materials will be due. Generally, during the first year at SJSU, candidates for retention need only submit a very brief summary of achievements, one which is much less complex than the full RTP dossier. This summary is usually due some time in the middle of Spring semester. Faculty in their 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> probationary years as well as

tenured faculty seeking promotion will be required to submit their dossiers near the beginning of Fall semester. You generally have a week between when your dossier is due and when it is “closed.” (During the “in between” week, your dossier will need to be in your Chair’s office, but you can continue to add materials or make changes. During this week if not before, you and your Chair should look through the entire portfolio carefully, to make sure everything is in order. While there is a process to “late-add” material, only material not available by the initial closing date can be considered for late-addition.) Faculty who have been granted probationary credit upon appointment should confirm the review schedule expected of them with their department chair.

- Become aware of what you will be *required* to include in your dossier. University policy requires that you include copies of your initial appointment letter, a statement from your chair describing your assignment, a description of any RTP guideline amendments your department or college may have adopted, any prior SJSU RTP reviews, a vitae, and an index to the dossier. It may take a while to secure copies of all of these documents, so start early. Probationary faculty must include a minimum of two statistical student evaluations and two peer evaluations of their teaching effectiveness per year. Your department and/or college may have additional policies and requirements; be sure to learn what they are and follow them. (As far as teaching evaluations are concerned, “more is better”, and evaluations across the entire range of one’s teaching assignment is required.)
- Make photocopies of all documents you plan to include in your dossier. As a general rule of thumb, do not relinquish originals. Once the closing date passes, you will not have access to your dossier or its contents until the completion of the RTP cycle, in the summer.

## **II. Assistance to expect from your department chair**

Your chair is in a unique position to assist you. He or she knows the nature of your academic assignment, and where it fits in the context of your department. He or she should also be familiar with your research and scholarship, and with your professional contributions. At the very least, your chair should be close enough to your particular discipline to appreciate the significance of your contributions, and to be able to help you figure out how best to present yourself. Expect him or her to assist you with the following:

- Your chair must write a description of your academic assignment; you will need a new one each year your dossier goes forward for review.
- Your chair will assist you in securing evaluations of your teaching effectiveness, by facilitating arrangements for peer observations and student statistical evaluations.
- Your chair will review your first full dossier with you prior to the closing date, to help ensure that the document is complete and that it accurately reflects your professional contributions.
- Your chair can also help you understand the expectations of the individuals and committees who will be reviewing your materials.

## **III. Recommendations Regarding the Contents of the Dossier, Section by Section**

The dossier dividers you receive from Faculty Affairs list the material you are expected to include in your dossier, and prescribe the order in which you should include it. For the most part, these instructions are quite straight-forward. What follows are some general recommendations intended to supplement and clarify the Faculty Affairs guidelines. If you still have questions, ask.

### *Yellow Tab (1): Preparation of the Dossier*

Read the statement from Faculty Affairs concerning preparation of the dossier. You do not need to insert anything here.

*Orange Tab (2): Retention and Tenure Recommendation Form*

Complete the top part of the Retention and Tenure form. Leave it in your dossier. Readers and committees will record their votes on this form as it moves through the process. They will also include their summaries and evaluations. You will receive a new yellow form and new reviews each time you and your dossier are reviewed for Retention and Tenure. Arrange this section in reverse chronological order (most recent reviews in top).

*Red Tab (3): Promotion Recommendation Form*

Complete the top part of the Promotion form. Leave it in your dossier. Readers and committees will record their votes on this form as it moves through the process. They will also include their summaries and evaluations. You will receive a new blue form and new reviews each time you and your dossier are reviewed for promotion. Arrange this section in reverse chronological order (most recent reviews in top).

*Pink Tab (4): Letter of Appointment, All Prior Evaluations (Years 1 through 5); Chair's Descriptions and Analyses; College and Department RTP Guidelines (if any); Comprehensive Vitae; Indices*

Your letter of appointment, each of your yearly probationary evaluations, including the first, third and fifth year "mini" reviews with their accompanying Annual Summary of Achievements (written by the candidate), your Curriculum Vitae (CV) submitted in each of the years of your dossier submission, all prior indices (and your current index) must be placed in this section. These items should be added **in reverse chronological order**.

- 1) Letter of appointment
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> Year Annual Summary of Achievements and Annual Evaluations by Department RTP Committee/Chair/Dean
- 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Front Materials (Chair's Description & Analysis/Evaluations by Department RTP Committee/Chair/Dean/Provost/CV/Index)
- 4) 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Annual Summary of Achievements and Annual Evaluations by Department RTP Committee/Chair/Dean
- 5) 4<sup>th</sup> Year Front Materials (Chair's Description & Analysis/Evaluations by Department RTP Committee/Chair/Dean/URT Committee/Provost/CV/Index)
- 6) 5<sup>th</sup> Year Annual Summary of Achievements and Annual Evaluations by Department RTP Committee/Chair/Dean
- 7) 6<sup>th</sup> Year Front Materials (Chair's Description & Analysis/CV/Index – evaluations will be added by reviewing committees and administrators)
- 8) College or Department RTP Guidelines (if any)

If you have any questions about what belongs in this section, be sure to ask. Tab 4 provides all of the prior reviews, both "mini" reviews and dossier reviews, Chair's Descriptions & Analyses, CVs, indices and College or Department RTP Guidelines in order to provide context for the current, cumulative review of your retention, tenure and/or promotion application.

*Magenta Tab (5): I.A Effectiveness in Academic Assignment: Teaching Effectiveness*

This section is where you will document your teaching effectiveness. You must provide documentation about what you teach and how, and how well you teach it. You must also provide information about any assigned time you have received.

It is a good idea to have a personal statement at the beginning of this section, to guide the reader to highlights and particular accomplishments you wish them to notice. Perhaps you teach a particularly broad array of classes, or you have developed a lot of significant new curriculum, or you have successfully addressed obstacles to your teaching effectiveness. This would be the place to highlight these aspects of your record.

Follow the instructions for the six sub-sections to this portion of your dossier. Your chair will assist you if you need help securing peer evaluations and/or summaries.

*Be judicious* in your choice of “Selected course materials” (item #3) to include in your dossier. Wherever possible, have a colleague evaluate these materials.

*Purple Tab (6): I.B Effectiveness in Academic Assignment: Service to Students and the University*

This section is where you will provide documentation (and evaluation) concerning the remainder of your assigned-time (your non-teaching service to the university community), including work you do advising, supervising and mentoring students in a variety of ways, as well as work you do on committees, and any administrative responsibilities you have. Again, a personal statement here might provide a welcome road-map for the reader.

This is one of the sections of the dossier where faculty tend to have difficulty communicating the significance of their contributions in this arena. Follow instructions for the six sub-sections to this portion of your dossier. Take care to describe clearly and succinctly what you see as the nature and quality of your non-teaching service to the University community. Avoid duplication and provide evaluations(s). If you have questions, ask.

*Blue Tab (7): II A Scholarly, Professional or Artistic Activities: Scholarly or Artistic Activities During the Period Under Review*

This is the section where you need to communicate what your research, scholarship or artistic activity is all about, and where you will document the impact of your work in these domains. A personal statement is essential here. Spelling out names of professional organization and other acronyms is essential. Providing enough background about the journals, publishers or other professional venues where your work is disseminated is essential.

Wherever you have collaborated (with SJSU colleagues, with colleagues from other institutions, with students, etc.), be sure to make clear to specific nature of your contribution. This is especially important for multiply authored publications or presentations, or for grants made to more than one Principle Investigator.

Be clear what work was done prior to your arrival at SJSU (or to the probationary period delineated in your appointment papers).

Some Colleges have supplemented the University Guidelines with their own, to assist faculty and RTP committees in assessing “non-traditional” forms of scholarship which can be “counted” here. If this applies to your college, read the guidelines carefully before deciding whether to place a particular professional activity in this section or in the next section (Tab 8, described below).

For work in progress, document the progress achieved to date, and wherever possible, secure a collegial evaluation of the status and significance of that work.

*Aqua Tab (8): II B Scholarly, Professional or Artistic Activities: Professional Contributions and Activities*

Be selective here. Do not throw in everything but the kitchen sink. Include only those activities which reflect a true professional contribution, that is, one which is related to your discipline, and which draws on your professional knowledge and skills. Most of the fine deeds you perform as a citizen of your personal community probably do not belong here. Most likely, your work coaching Little League, or sitting on neighborhood boards will not meet the criteria for inclusion. If you have questions, ask.

For most faculty, extensive professional contributions will not make up for a dearth of research and scholarly activity. If, however, you wish to establish that “the scope of your professional achievement is so compelling that it constitutes your major contribution in this section of your dossier,” you will need to secure comprehensive documentation of the nature and quality of your work, from impartial colleagues. You may need to secure the assistance of your Chair, to collect information from appropriate individuals in the field, etc.

Materials added during the open period (if any) will be placed in this section of your dossier. You will receive a copy of all materials that are placed in your dossier; you will have 10 days to provide a response or rebuttal.

#### **IV. Performance Expectations for retention, tenure and promotion**

##### **A. General expectations**

The University RTP policy document (S98-8) provides guidelines for performance expectations for retention and tenure (pp. 10-11) as well as for appointment at the rank of Assistant Professor, and for promotion to Associate Professor and Professor (pp. 12-13). Read these carefully.

Normally, as candidates advance from one rank to the next, they are expected to demonstrate increasing effectiveness in their teaching, and leadership in their contributions to the broader University community. They are also expected to demonstrate increasing and continued development and growth in their area of scholarly and professional expertise. Faculty appointed at the Associate Professor level are expected to be performing at a higher level than their Assistant Professor colleagues, as it is assumed that their professional accomplishments which warranted their appointment as the higher rank to begin with, will also have prepared them to ‘hit the ground running’ right away.

The guidelines intentionally avoid specifying numbers of articles, or presentations, or grant dollars, or student ratings.

- Generally, improvements in teaching ratings, and success in addressing any concerns that were raised in previous reviews constitute “increasing effectiveness” in teaching effectiveness.

- Generally, chairing committees as opposed to simply serving on them, and taking the lead in various tasks associated with furthering the mission and goals of the department, the college and the University, constitute evidence of ‘increasing leadership’.
- Generally, evidence of a continuing ‘pipeline’, from, for example securing funds, to designing and then completing projects, to making presentations at professional conferences, and then publishing those findings in refereed journals, constitutes evidence of increasing achievement and continuing activity in one’s profession.

It is assumed that faculty will pursue a course of scholarly and professional activity of their own choosing, and that they may pursue more than one line of interest simultaneously or in succession. It is important, therefore, that the dossier provide a clear picture of the candidate’s focus and trajectory. Personal statements, as well as letters of support from colleagues and other experts in the field can assist readers in recognizing the substance of the candidate’s body work.

**B. How should you decide when to request tenure or promotion?**

The University RTP policy document (S98-8) specifies the normative timeline for tenure and promotion. Candidates are normally reviewed for tenure during their sixth probationary year. Each year of probationary credit awarded at initial appointment counts toward those six years. Assistant Professors are normally considered for promotion to Associate Professor when at the same time as they are being considered for tenure. Associate Professors are not normally considered for promotion to Professor until they have completed at least four years in rank. Candidates may request consideration for tenure or promotion ahead of schedule. But such “early” awards are very infrequent, and require evidence of an outstanding record of teaching and service and scholarship (p. 11).