

Preparing Your RTP Dossier Under S98-8

A Handbook for Faculty

Version A:

For use with hard-copy dossiers

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and the Office of Faculty Affairs
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This handbook is aligned with the “old” University RTP policy, S98-8. **Faculty hired prior to Fall 2016** will have the **option** of continuing to follow the standards and criteria for the S98-8 or they may elect to use S15-8. **Faculty hired in Fall 2016** will follow the standards and criteria established by the new policy (S15-8) – **S98-8, and the guidance included in this handbook DOES NOT apply to them.**

NB: ALL candidates, regardless of year of appointment, will follow the new schedule of evaluations established in University Policy S15-7. Starting in 2016-17, full dossier reviews will occur in years 3 and 6, and other years if required by the Provost in the previous evaluation cycle. (We call this “3 + 6.”) This means that a probationary faculty member may elect to stay with S98-8 for standards and criteria, but would nevertheless still be on the “3 + 6” schedule.

Candidates for retention, tenure, and/or promotion should review this handbook for information and advice on how to assemble their dossiers and how best to present their case to the reviewing committees. Candidates should also gather information and advice from their department chair and from their department RTP committee. The Director of the Center for Faculty Development and the AVP for Faculty Affairs are also information resources.

This guide describes the arrangement and format of dossiers that will be prepared in hard copy. A separate handbook will be provided for use with digital dossiers.

I - Introduction

A. What is the 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 your accomplishments, to think seriously about your professional trajectory, and to set yourself goals.

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 of work.

B. Who will read my dossier?

Your dossier will be read very carefully by the following individuals and committees: your department chair, your department RTP committee, your dean, your college RTP committee, the university RTP committee, and the Provost. You will need to consider your readers' different academic backgrounds and areas of expertise 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 RTP committee and your dean will probably need to review 20 or more dossiers each year; University RTP committee members and the Provost might read 100.) The more clearly and concisely you can present yourself, the better.

C. What should be the focus of my 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’ varying 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.
- 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.
- 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. While it can be difficult to be succinct and thorough at the same time, you must try to do both.
- 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. You should indicate, as appropriate, how selective journals are where you publish your work.
- Wherever possible, provide an evaluation of your work. Published reviews of your book or peer reviews of manuscripts-in-progress are helpful. 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.). Letters attesting to the quality of your professional contributions are more helpful than general thank-yous. 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. Such contributions often need some additional explanation to be fully comprehended. Student evaluations in particular might need some explanatory matter, since the questions asked may differ from those in our own SOTEs.

D. Where do I start?

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 and the Center for Faculty Development. The official dossier dividers are available at the Office of Faculty Affairs.
- Check to see if your College keeps exemplary dossiers available for faculty to examine. They may be more helpful than ones from a different discipline.
- Read the University policy S98-8 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. Faculty Affairs publishes the RTP calendar with all deadlines and distributes it early in the year.
- Faculty in their 3rd and 6th probationary years as well as tenured faculty seeking promotion will be required to submit a full dossier. (Other probationary faculty may have been directed to submit a full dossier for review in years other than the 3rd and 6th.) Faculty who have been granted probationary credit upon appointment should confirm with Faculty Affairs the review schedule expected of them.
- The full dossiers are due to the department early in fall semester. You generally have a week between when your dossier is submitted and when it is “closed.” During the “in between” week, your dossier will need to remain 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. If it was available before closing and yet you did not include it, you will not be permitted to insert it later via late-add.
- In any year that a probationary candidate is not undergoing a full dossier review, s/he will be subject to a much briefer evaluation. Those candidates need only submit a summary of achievements that covers only the year preceding the review. This summary--officially called the Annual Summary of Achievements and nicknamed “the mini-review”-- is usually due in the middle of spring semester.
- 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 academic assignment, a copy of any RTP guidelines your department may have adopted, any prior SJSU RTP reviews, a comprehensive curriculum vitae, and an index to the current dossier. It may take a while to secure copies of all of

these documents, so start early. Over the course of the last few years, the Academic Senate has revised campus policies about the number of student and peer reviews of one's teaching that must be conducted each year and included in the dossier. Requirements also vary depending on the faculty member's rank.

- 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.

E. What assistance will I get from my 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 understand how best to present yourself via your dossier. 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 full dossier with you prior to the closing date, to help ensure that the portfolio 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.

II. Arrangement and Contents of the Dossier, Section by Section, under S98-8

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 that material. What follows are some general recommendations intended to supplement and clarify the Faculty Affairs directions. If you have questions, ask.

Tab 1: Declaration of Intent

Sign and date the Declaration of Intent form before placing it behind Tab 1. This form is where you indicate to all reviewers that you wish to be reviewed under the criteria and standards of University policy [S98-8](#).

Tab 2: Preparation of the Dossier

Read the statement from Faculty Affairs concerning preparation of the dossier. Insert the “Dossier Check-in Cover Sheet” in this section, filling in the top section, as appropriate.

Tab 3: Retention, Tenure Recommendation Promotion Recommendation Forms

For candidates seeking retention or tenure, download a copy of the [Retention and Tenure Recommendation Form](#). Complete the top portion. Print it out on YELLOW paper.

For candidates seeking promotion, download a copy of the [Promotion Recommendation Form](#). Complete the top portion. Print it out on BLUE paper.

As the Dossier moves through the levels of review, Department, Chair (if not on the departmental committee), College and University level reviews as well as candidate responses/rebuttals should be inserted after these forms.

Tab 4: Context for the review: Required supporting documents

- **Chair’s Description of Academic Assignment**
- **Department RTP Guidelines (if any)**
- **Tenure-clock stop (if applicable)**
- **Comprehensive Curriculum Vitae**
- **Current Dossier Index**
- **Letter of Appointment**
- **Required prior evaluations**
 - **for probationary candidates, this means all evaluations during Years 1-5**
 - **for tenured faculty, this means the last successful promotion review (if any) AND all reviews since, which might include Post-Tenure Reviews**

The documents in this section provide readers a framework to view your work at SJSU, since your initial appointment or last promotion (as appropriate). The Chair’s Description of Academic

Assignment should accurately describe your current position and responsibilities. It must be dated and signed. Many, but not all, departments have developed their own RTP guidelines to supplement those adopted by the entire campus. These documents provide important information for the reader about assessing professional emphases and/or accomplishments that may be distinctive to your area. Your CV provides readers with a thorough perspective on your professional history. The current Dossier Index serves as a detailed Table of Contents for your dossier. The materials pertaining to your prior reviews (including the Dossier Index and CV from those years' submissions) will permit readers to reconstruct your progress since your initial appointment/last promotion as well as any guidance or feedback you have received. Your letter of appointment will serve to document your starting point as a probationary faculty member at SJSU.

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.

Tab 6: *I.B Effectiveness in Academic Assignment: Service to Students & 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. If you have questions, ask.

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.

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.

Tab 9: Additional Material Added during Open Period

List, in order of appearance in this section all materials provided by the chair, by evaluating committees and administrators relating to evaluation not provided by the candidate and candidate's response, if any.

Tab 10: Reserved for Late-Add Materials

All materials submitted by the candidate and approved for inclusion by the Late-Add committee will be inserted into the dossier under Tab10.

III. Performance Expectations for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion under S98-8

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.

B. How should I 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 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 (See section IV.B.3 of S98-8, Promotion to Professor).