

# Preparing Your RTP Dossier Under **S15-8**

## A Handbook for Faculty

Version A:

For use with hard-copy dossiers

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**Prepared by the Center for Faculty Development  
and the Office of Faculty Affairs  
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## Preparing your RTP dossier under S15-8

**This handbook is aligned with the new University RTP policy, S15-8. Faculty hired to start in in Fall 2016 will follow the standards and criteria established by the new policy. Faculty hired prior to Fall 2016 will have the option of continuing to follow the standards and criteria for the previous policy (S98-8) or they may elect to use S15-8.**

*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 academic and professional portfolio. It is your opportunity to summarize and communicate clearly to those who need and want to understand your professional achievements.

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.

We assume 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 assessing 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.

- As your dossier moves through these levels of review, assume that 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 that everyone reading your dossier has your best interest at heart. They know the standards you will need to meet 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 that 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 continually to 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 or printed 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 instructions about what belongs in each section. If you stray from these directions, 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. You do not need to include the entire program book.
- Readers cannot consider materials outside 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 the 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. Letters attesting to the quality of your professional contributions are more helpful than general thank-you notes. 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. 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 S15-8 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.) 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 S15-8

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 S15-8.

### ***Tab 2: Preparation and Submission of the Dossier***

Insert the “Dossier Check-in Cover Sheet” in this section, filling in the top section, as appropriate.

### ***Tab 3: Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Forms***

Download a copy of the [Retention Recommendation Form](#), the [Tenure Recommendation Form](#), and/or the [Promotion Recommendation Form](#), as appropriate to your case. Complete the top portion. As the Dossier moves through the levels of review, Department, Chair (if not on the departmental committee), College and University level reviews for retention as well as candidate responses/rebuttals should be inserted after the form.

### ***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 through 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: Your Narrative Statement***

This is your opportunity to state your overall case for your retention, tenure, or promotion. You should explain your philosophy, agenda, and accomplishments in all three areas of review as well as any areas of overlap or synergy between the three areas. The narrative statement shall be limited to no more than 2000 words.

Your narrative statement should cite evidence to support your case by referring to specific documents included elsewhere in the dossier.

- Teaching faculty should construct statements explaining their teaching philosophies and their strategies for achieving student learning, citing appropriate course materials, evaluations, or assessment data to document their increasing effectiveness as teachers.
- Non-teaching faculty should take the opportunity to cite the appropriate evidence that documents their growing effectiveness in their academic assignment.
- You should explain your scholarly or artistic or professional growth by showing how your work shows a continuity or development and progresses to culminating achievements. The narrative should aim to show a pattern of achievement, whether it is a consistent pattern over time or a pattern that arcs upward.
- You should detail your service activities and responsibilities, and link the explanation to specific examples of successfully completed assignments.
- Finally, you should, wherever possible, explain how accomplishments in one category may have supported growth and development in the other two. For example, if you include your students in your research, you should indicate how that also benefits student learning. Or if you do extensive student service activities, you might indicate how this helps inform your teaching.

### ***Tab 6: Effectiveness in Academic Assignment***

For teaching faculty, 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 (which helps to explain how many courses you have taught each semester). You should include:

- Student evaluations. University Policy F12-6 establishes the requirements for student evaluations of teaching and for direct observations by faculty peers. All student evaluations conducted during the period of review are to be included in the dossier. (Policy F12-6 does permit faculty to exclude the survey result from one course per

Academic Year from their periodic evaluation, provided that they teach at least 15 units of courses during that Academic Year.

- Peer observations. All direct observations conducted by faculty peers during the period of review are to be included in the dossier.
- Course syllabi
- Other teaching materials

For faculty whose primary assignment is not teaching, this is the section where you will document your effectiveness in your academic assignment. Counselors and librarians will do so in conformity with their departmental guidelines. Chairs, coordinators, and others will provide appropriate documentation and evaluation of this portion of their assignment.

***Tab 7: II. Scholarly/Artistic/Professional Achievement***

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. Provide clean copies of the final versions of all documents.

Spelling out names of professional organizations and other acronyms is essential. Providing enough background about the journals, publishers, or other professional venues where your work is disseminated is also essential. How

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 multi-authored publications or presentations, or for grants made to more than one Principal Investigator.

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: III. Service***

This section is where you will provide documentation (and evaluation) concerning 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.

This is one of the sections of the dossier where faculty sometimes have difficulty communicating the significance of their contributions in this arena. Take care to describe clearly and succinctly what you see as the nature and quality of your non-teaching service to the University community.

Your service in your professional and disciplinary organizations is also to be documented here.

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 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.

The policy S15-8 gives specific suggestions for categorizing and organizing service areas:

*2.4.2.1 Service to students. Advising, mentoring, and participating in activities to enhance student success that are not subsumed in teaching or the primary academic assignment.*

*2.4.2.2 Service to the University. Participation in the Academic Senate and its committees, search and review committees, program coordinators and part-time department chairs, leadership in the California Faculty Association, membership in the Academic Senate of the CSU, work on system-wide committees and task forces, administrative activities (to the extent that such assignments are not the primary academic assignment), and participation in campus organizations and clubs of benefit to faculty or students.*

*2.4.2.3 Service to the Community. Participation in public interest groups sponsored by or affiliated with the University; Service in the local, state, national, or global communities as a representative of SJSU.*

*2.4.2.4 Service to the Profession/Discipline (see also Professional Achievement.) Consulting, service on editorial boards or as editor of a professional journal or newsletter; adjudicator, reviewer for publishers or other agencies and associations. Public lectures, newspaper editorials, television or radio analysis, honors and awards. Active participation or leadership in disciplinary or professional associations; organizing panels, activities or workshops. Serving in accreditation or other discipline-based review capacities. Service to K-14 educational segments.*

#### Tab 9: Additional Materials Added During Open Period

Additional materials Necessary to Evaluate Candidate's Performance During the Period Under Review: List, in order of appearance in this sections, materials provided by the chair, by evaluating committees, and/or administrators related to the evaluation not provided by the candidate. Include candidate's response, if any.

#### Tab 10: Reserved for Late Add Materials

Additional materials provided by the candidate and approved by the Late Add Committee.

### III. Performance Expectations for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion under S15-8

#### A. General Expectations

The University RTP policy document (S15-8) provides performance expectations for retention and tenure, and for promotion to Associate Professor and Professor. You should read these sections 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 the professional accomplishments that warranted their appointment as the higher rank will also have prepared them to ‘hit the ground running’ right away.

The policy intentionally avoids specifying numbers of articles, or presentations, or grant dollars, or student ratings. Departmental guidelines provide profiles of expected performance in each area, but also do not provide exact article counts, grant dollars, or SOTEs scores.

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 to publishing those findings in refereed journals, constitutes evidence of increasing achievement and continuing activity in one’s profession.

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

The University RTP policy document (S15-8) specifies the normative timeline for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. 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 their 5<sup>th</sup> year in rank, with an award of promotion becoming effective in the 6<sup>th</sup> year. 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.

### **C. What are the levels of achievement required to attain retention, tenure, and promotion?**

The review process will review your dossier to determine a level of "excellent" or "good" or "baseline" or "unsatisfactory" in each of the three broad categories of achievement. Tenure and promotion depends upon reaching certain levels of achievement across these categories.

For tenure and promotion to Associate, those levels are:

- *Excellent in either Academic Assignment or in Scholarly/Artistic/Professional Achievement and at least Baseline in the other two categories; **OR***
- *Good in any two categories and at least baseline in the remaining category.*

Favorable **early** decisions require a significantly higher level of achievement than a favorable decision after the normal period of review. Candidates may be tenured and promoted to Associate **early** if they attain evaluations of

- *Excellent in two categories and Baseline or better in the remaining category.*

For promotion to Professor, those levels are:

- *Excellent in at least two categories and at least Baseline in the remaining category; **OR***
- *Excellent in at least one category and at least Good in the remaining two categories.*

For **early** promotion to Professor, the standard is the highest of all:

- *Excellent in at least two categories, and at least Good in the remaining category.*