

Presenting a successful teaching case to the Divisional Committee for Tenure

Tenure is granted for excellence in one area and significant accomplishment in another. These areas include research, teaching, and extension/outreach.

Most common situation: Excellence in research (or extension), Significant Accomplishment in teaching. Rarely, there are cases based on teaching as the primary area of excellence with significant accomplishment in either research or extension.

Take this seriously: Presenting your teaching case is not a pro forma matter; the Biology Divisional Committee has declined to promote candidates with good funding and substantial publication records who either did not teach or taught poorly. The key to a successful teaching case is not just to teach well and sufficiently, but also to **document** your accomplishment.

I. Metrics for evaluating teaching:

- A. The Numbers: courses and total student credit-hours taught
- B. Quality: Student evaluations
- C. Quality: Peer review
- D. Quality: Teaching materials
- E. Impact: Publications, grants, presentations, change of practice
- F. Impact: Outside expert letters

A. The Numbers:

- Which courses were taught, and when? (title, number, semester)
- How many credit-hours?
- How many students were enrolled?
- How many of the classes were new preps?
- How many students were mentored out-of-classroom?
(graduate students, independent study, etc.)

Strongly suggest compiling classroom teaching information in a single, complete table.

Write a separate list of your mentor students giving name, length of association, type of student (ugrad, grad, postdoc, visiting scholar etc) and outcome (how many pubs, degree earned, grad/professional school attended, current position)

B. Quality: Student input

Students are not always objective or fair, but their collective wisdom is usually relevant.

- *Student evaluations* - give a summary of numerical ratings for each class taught (include the survey instrument & dep't average for comparable classes)
- *Qualitative student evaluations* - give all student written comments for two or more courses. You may not edit or select these; if you present some comments from a class, you must present them all.
- *Exit interviews*- candidate's mentor committee interviews 2-5 randomly selected students from each class, and compiles a summary for the dossier

C. Quality: Peer review

- Each semester, two faculty observe 2 class sessions, give the candidate a written evaluation and informal discussion, suggestions.
- Ideally, this should be consistent and ongoing. At least, a candidate's teaching should be peer reviewed the first time s/he teaches, once in mid-probation, and once in the last class taught before the case is written.
- *For primary teaching cases (see below)*, establish an ad hoc independent (outside dept) committee of master teachers to globally assess the candidate's teaching performance. Their report goes into the tenure dossier.

D. Quality: Teaching materials

- Candidate submits a 2-page statement of teaching philosophy and practice. Don't forget to discuss your mentor-teaching philosophy (why & how you work with grad students & undergrad independent researchers)
- May also include your original teaching materials: syllabi, assignments, lab or field exercises, presentations, exams
- May include new curriculum development, if relevant

E. Impact: Documenting effect of candidate's teaching work beyond campus (for primary teaching cases)

- *Publications* - scholarly work specifically related to teaching, e.g. peer-reviewed articles describing pedagogical research or innovations, textbooks or text chapters
- *Presentations* on teaching- at regional, national, or international meetings
- *Grants* - to develop courses, curricula, or do pedagogical research
- *Change of practice* - documentation that candidate's teaching research or innovation has changed practice beyond the campus, e.g. adoption of curricular materials, exercises, or methods.

F. Impact: Outside expert letters (for primary teaching cases)

Ad hoc teaching committee solicits evaluation letters from outside (off-campus, arm's length) experts on teaching in or near the candidate's field. Just as for research, these experts review the candidate's teaching dossier and provide an assessment

2. Tenure on the basis of primary excellence in teaching: a higher standard

- Excellence in classroom teaching is not enough
- "Candidate must have attained a national or international reputation as demonstrated by scholarly work specifically related to teaching"
- For example: write a textbook, develop a widely-used online course(s), publish peer-reviewed research on pedagogy
- Rare, but not unheard-of (3 cases out of about 90 in biology over a recent 3 year-span)
- If you think you might do this, start documenting & peer-reviewing your teaching from the beginning of your appointment

