

# Department of Wood Science & Engineering

## Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating the Teaching Portfolio

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### Objective

The objective of this document is to provide a framework and guidelines for helping WS&E faculty prepare documentation of excellence in teaching in their P&T dossiers. Also presented here are methods of evaluating dossiers for use by Departmental committees. It is the intent of the Departmental P&T committee that this document be the beginning of the process. It is also believed that performance can best be assessed at the Department level. As we begin implementation, guidelines will need to be fine-tuned so that they best meet the needs of our faculty and institution in providing a basis for identifying excellence in teaching during the P&T process.

### Background

Currently dossiers contain a section on teaching which usually includes a list of courses taught, graduate students advised, and student evaluation of teaching. Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness provide excellent feedback in some areas, but fall woefully short in others. This is especially true when class sizes are small and one disgruntled student can skew the results considerably. Evaluating excellence in teaching requires and demands that student feedback be included. Students are the primary "customer" of any university and their needs must be addressed. There are many other facets of teaching that also need to be included in any P&T dossier. Over the years there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on providing educational opportunities for faculty to enhance their teaching skills, but not much emphasis placed on how to effectively evaluate teaching performance.

### The Teaching Portfolio

In recent years, many universities in the U.S. have found a solution by using Teaching Portfolios. Seldin (1993) describes a teaching portfolio as a factual description of a professor's teaching strengths and accomplishments. It includes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance. The portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship. As such, it allows faculty members to display their teaching accomplishments for examination by others.

There are many forms of teaching portfolios. Their contents need to be flexible enough to meet the needs of individual faculty while at the same time providing enough standardization to allow for competent evaluation.

Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan (1991) describe the advantages of a teaching portfolio.

1. Portfolios provide documented evidence of teaching that is connected to the specifics and contexts of what is being taught.
2. They go beyond exclusive reliance on student ratings because they include a range of evidence from a variety of sources such as syllabi, samples of student work, self-reflections, and faculty development programs.

3. In the process of selecting and organizing their portfolio material, faculty think hard about their teaching, a practice which is likely to lead to improvement in classroom performance.
4. In deciding what should go into a portfolio and how it should be evaluated, institutions must necessarily address the question of what is effective teaching and what standards should drive campus teaching practice.
5. Portfolios are a step toward a more public, professional view of teaching. They reflect teaching as a scholarly activity.

### **Portfolio Guidelines**

The WS&E Department guidelines include standard items of evaluation to be contained in each teaching portfolio. Each faculty member is encouraged to add additional relevant materials as he or she considers appropriate. The teaching portfolio will be an integral part of the dossier for those undergoing mid-term, tenure, or promotion review.

#### *Contents of the portfolio*

##### □ Overview of teaching philosophy

The overview of teaching philosophy gives the faculty members the opportunity to state what they feel is personally and professionally important in their role as an educator. It also gives faculty members an opportunity to use this philosophy in implementing their teaching program. The teaching philosophy should be reflected throughout the courses being taught.

##### □ Statement of teaching responsibilities

This section of the portfolio contains the portion of the position description related to teaching and the relative proportion of assignment. It also provides for the listing and brief overview of each of the courses that faculty member taught including credits student enrollment and lecture/lab information.

##### □ Statement of teaching strategies/objectives

Whereas the teaching philosophy provides the vision to the portfolio, this section provides specific strategies or objectives that the faculty member implements in his or her courses. This discussion can be an overview or on a course-by-course basis. If the latter, this category and the one above could be combined.

##### □ Representative materials for each course taught

These items form the core of what will be evaluated by the departmental P&T committee relating to teaching excellence. This material should include the documents that describe the course goals, policies, and daily schedules, major assignments, and attendance policy and grading methods. This material should also include course content for representative activities (*i.e.*, typically several examples of lectures and labs, but could include other activities as well) and representative homework assignments. Also include sample exams or other assessments.

Explain how to access the course BlackBoard site and/or a server site if such a site is used extensively for the course so that the committee can get to the site. You can also include a CD or link to a site if, for example, you have developed software that should be part of the evaluation.

People with extension assignments will also want to include representative materials for major events they have put on, as well as the assessments of such events. Minor events can be included in tabulated form.

☐ Summary of student course evaluations

Extract the student course evaluations for the previous five years from your CV and insert them here.

☐ Efforts to improve teaching performance

This section should include any relevant information which relates to individual faculty efforts aimed at improving teaching performance. Items could include reading materials used, workshops/courses taken, or grants received, etc. The key to this section is to communicate that regardless of how good a teacher the individual faculty member, efforts are being made to become even more effective.

☐ Future teaching goals

The faculty member should outline his or her goals for current courses or new courses offered by the Department. A 3-5 year time horizon would be appropriate.

☐ Teaching-related committee work

If the faculty member has been involved in any department, college, or university committees with a focus on undergraduate or graduate teaching, this material should be included here.

☐ Record of graduate student supervision

All graduate students need counseling and guidance in developing their program of courses for their advanced degree. Any students which the faculty member has worked with in this capacity should be listed and a brief description of what was done included here.

☐ Recognition and awards for teaching

All appropriate awards or other forms of recognition for teaching excellence fall under this category.

☐ Department faculty statement

This statement should include a description of the faculty member's role in departmental teaching and how the courses taught fit the overall departmental curriculum goals.

The following sections are optional. The individual faculty member should include other items that are appropriate in addition to those listed above. The following items are a good starting point.

☐ Statements from students and alumni

This section of the portfolio contains unsolicited comments from currently enrolled students or alumni attesting to the significance of what they learned from the faculty member.

☐ Other evidence of teaching accomplishment

The material included under this topic would contain a collection of materials which offer additional insight into the teaching performance of the faculty member. These materials might be included in an appendix.

☐ Efforts to improve courses

This optional section will document the major recent changes you have made in the courses. The purpose is to show that you are changing the materials and/or delivery in response to new information and/or new technologies.

### *Evaluating the Teaching Portfolio*

Based on suggestions by Seldin (1993), the following are recommended for use in evaluating a faculty member's teaching portfolio.

1. Evidence of accomplishment, not just a reflective statement must be present in the portfolio.
2. The statement of what and why the faculty member teaches as he or she does must be consistent with the syllabus, study guides, reading materials, lab materials and student evaluations.
3. There must be evidence of student learning, not just a compilation of materials from others and the faculty member being evaluated.
4. The degree of documentation in the three areas of student learning, materials from others, and materials from one's self must be in general balance and several sources should be used as documentation in each area.
5. Efforts of improved performance over time must be reflected in the evaluation reports.
6. The ratings of all common core questions on student rating forms from several courses (if applicable) and several years must be included in the portfolio.
7. Some evidence of peer evaluation or review of instructional materials must be presented.
8. The teaching responsibilities section must be consistent with the Department Head's statement, if one is included in the portfolio, of the professor's teaching responsibilities.
9. The vast majority of the material in the portfolio must be current or from the recent past.
10. Data on scholarly research or publication must be considered in a teaching portfolio only if it relates directly to teaching, or student learning, in one's discipline.
11. The portfolio must reflect consistency between a professor's reflective statement of teaching philosophy and his or her teaching actions in the classroom.
12. All claims made in the portfolio must be supported by evidence in the appendices.

### **Summary**

It is the intent of the WS&E Faculty Review Committee to offer this document as a starting point for meaningful evaluation of effective teaching relating to promotion and tenure. As we use this document in Departmental evaluation, fine tuning will be necessary. This document will be especially useful for un-tenured faculty as they prepare for their mid-term review in the P&T process. All faculty are encouraged to review the documents listed in the references and other related documents to become more familiar with teaching portfolios.

### **References**

- Edgerton, R., Hutchings, P. and Quinlan, K. The Teaching Portfolio: Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education. 1991.
- Seldin, P. The Teaching Portfolio, A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc. 1991.
- Seldin, P. Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc. 1993.