

**Essential Elements in Making a Case for Tenure or Promotion
(and Enhancing Professional Development)
Prepared by Rick Holmgren**

General Tasks

Define your professional persona—Decide what is important to you in teaching, scholarship, and service. The College encourages and Allegheny faculty exhibit a diversity of approaches to teaching, scholarship, and service. It is up to you to decide what approach best suits your talents and interests.

Know the process—Familiarize yourself with Section 5.2 of the Faculty Handbook and the FRC’s on-line materials: <http://committees.allegheny.edu/frc/>.

Determine how you will describe the role you have defined for yourself, assess your effectiveness in that role, and demonstrate that you have met the criteria for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Seek regular feedback, and Document your work. Your department is required to draft an evaluation of your performance in the second, fourth, seventh years of service, but you can ask for additional feedback at other stages of your career. For example, if you are considering a change in your teaching strategies or a new direction for your scholarship, you may want to describe your goals and intended plan of action in a brief written document and ask your chair, other tenured members of your department and/or the Dean for feedback. If their feedback is oral and you would prefer a written document, you can summarize their comments in writing and verify with them that you have captured their critique accurately.

Details

The File is a collection of materials that accumulates in the Dean’s Office. A duplicate file is kept in the office of the hiring department. When updating materials for the file, send copies of materials to both locations: the Dean’s Office and the Department. It is difficult to remove material from the file, so consider carefully what and how things are submitted. Some material like RSE results, self-evaluations, and departmental evaluations are included automatically in the file as part of the review process. You can and should contribute other materials. Keep a file drawer, shoe box, or other vessel handy, and direct items that you might want to include in your file to your holding bin as they come across your desk. (It can be hard to track down a memo from the dean or a letter from a publisher six months after it arrived.) *At least once each year*, organize your materials, select those that best represent your work and submit an organized packet of materials to both the Dean’s office and your Department Chairperson. The packet should include an “institutional C.V.,” which is described below. (Please contact me if you want further advice on creating a packet.)

The Self-Evaluation is the document in which you provide your best argument for why you deserve tenure or a promotion. Like any argument you might make in the academy, the self-evaluation should be constructed with careful attention to audience and purpose, claims that are supported by evidence and sound reasoning, and the development of your credibility as an author. Bear in mind that a good way to establish your credibility is by representing your strengths and your challenges as a faculty member accurately, and by presenting a thoughtful plan for addressing the challenges you face.

There are no institutional guidelines for drafting a self-evaluation, but I recommend the following rules of thumb:

- Start writing your self-evaluation well in advance of the deadline for submitting it. Your self-evaluation is one of the most important documents in your review process, and it takes time to construct an effective one.
- Ask trusted Allegheny colleagues and your Department Chair to review and comment on drafts. (Not all Department Chairpersons will do so, but you should ask.) At least one of your reviewers should be a tenured faculty member. It will take time for reviewers to read and develop a thoughtful response to your draft, so you should provide drafts for review at least 7 – 10 days before the final document is due. Further in advance would be better.
- Consider your audience.
 - Address teaching, professional development, and service separately since that is how departments and the FRC consider them. Since many (most) of our activities are multi-faceted and cannot be neatly assigned to one of these three areas, it may help to think of teaching, scholarship, and service as lenses through which to view your work rather than categories by which your work is classified.
 - The FRC is interested in your teaching as a whole. Discuss trends and larger issues and refer to individual courses only as examples. Avoid the temptation to review each course individually and in detail. Highlight your accomplishments. Note areas of your teaching in which you would like to seek improvements, and describe what you intend to do to realize gains in those areas being careful not to promise too much too quickly. Most faculty do not have the time or energy to succeed with more than one or two significant shifts in teaching strategy or course design each year.
 - In professional development, describe not only what you have accomplished but also a plan of work that will lead to additional achievements. Your department and the FRC are expected to assess not only the quality of the work that you have completed but also your potential for further professional development. Avoid jargon or overly detailed discussions; remember that most members of your primary audience are not specialists in your area of scholarship.
- The self-evaluation should not be a list of activities—that role is played by the institutional C.V.—but a critical assessment of your work that is structured as an

argument for tenure or promotion. Your claims should be supported by the evidence available in your file.

- A document of twelve single-spaced pages is more than long enough for the tenure review; shorter is better. Reviews in the first year should typically be two to five pages and reviews in the fourth year perhaps twice that.

In addition to serving in the review process, the self-evaluation provides an opportunity for you to reflect on your career at Allegheny and define your niche at the institution. A thoughtful approach to its creation cannot only earn you tenure or promotion but also enhance your professional development. The accompanying essay on self-evaluations describes one approach to self-evaluation that is intended to lead to a document that not only presents a strong case but also encourages ongoing development.

The Institutional C.V. is an expanded curriculum vita that lists all of your professional activities as a member of the Allegheny College faculty. It provides the department, FRC, Dean, and President with a brief overview of your activities. It can be organized around teaching, professional development, and service and might list any or all of the following items: education and background, courses taught, courses developed, curricular innovation, work on senior projects, responsibilities for advising majors and non-majors, teaching development activities, other teaching activities, publications and presentations, grants written and/or funded, service to professional organizations, other professional activities, departmental service, committee service, advising student groups, assisting Admissions, other service.