

Department of Wood Science & Engineering

Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating the Teaching Portfolio

November 2002
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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.

Background

Currently dossiers contain a section on teaching that 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. The portfolio should also include information on other teaching activities and efforts taken to continuously improve teaching methods.

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. The process of selecting and organizing a portfolio material give faculty a chance think hard about their teaching. This process itself can lead to improvement in classroom performance, and is therefore a worthwhile process.
4. 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. 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, strategies, and objectives

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

Whereas teaching philosophy provides the vision to the portfolio, this section should also provide an overview of strategies or objectives that the faculty member implements in his or her courses.

- Statement of teaching responsibilities

This section contains the portion of the position description related to teaching and the relative proportion of assignment. It also should include a listing and brief overview of each of the courses the faculty member has taught including credits student enrollment and lecture/lab information. This section can add any course-specific strategies and objectives that were not reflected in the overview section.

- Representative materials for each course taught

This section should include full syllabus for each class, which should describe the course goals, policies, daily schedules, major assignments, and attendance policy and grading methods.

As desired, you can add other materials or indicate the types of additional materials used in the course work. It is not expected to include a print out of all PowerPoint slides (if they were used). For lab classes (or if relevant in other classes), it can include a list or provide examples of representative activities. Some optional items are representative homework assignments, sample exams, or other assessments. 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 (SET scores).

- Efforts to improve teaching performance

This section should include any relevant information that 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.

- Efforts to improve courses and plans for new courses

This section documents changes you have made to courses as well as the process you use to continuously improve courses and teaching methods. You should also outline any goals for 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.

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. This document will be especially useful for un-tenured faculty as they prepare for their mid-term review in the P&T process.

References

Faculty members are encouraged to review the documents listed in these references and other related documents to become more familiar with teaching portfolios.

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.