

Suggestions for Writing Promotion and Tenure Documents

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(Pending approval by the CALS Governance Council)

A. General suggestions for writing your dossier:

1. Applying for Promotion and Tenure is similar to applying for any other job. The candidate should submit professional quality documents, free from misspelled words, grammatical errors and unnecessary jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations. The formatting must follow university guidelines and strictly adhere to the most recent template provided by the Provost's office (<https://faculty.vt.edu/promotion-tenure.html>). Be sure to check for updated versions. Formatting should meet the guidelines and make the documents easy to read and simple to evaluate.
2. Many faculty members keep a dossier that they update annually or more frequently, and this complete dossier should form the basis of the version that is submitted for Promotion and Tenure. However, items that do not add substantially to the impact of the candidate's accomplishments can be left off of the version submitted for review.
3. It is helpful to gather example dossiers and candidate's statements from successful applicants who share similar appointments in generally similar academic fields. Those may be available by asking department heads or other faculty in the college who share similar appointments.
4. Some accomplishments may cross over into two different sections. For example, listing the number of attendees for an extension training event offered to an underrepresented group may be listed under *Extension Training* events, and the event also described under *Diversity and Inclusion*. However, you must only count the number of attendees one time, and clearly indicate every item that is listed in more than one section, by using footnotes (for example) in summary tables or including text such as "(also listed in Section X.A.1)". As another example, an invited talk given at an international meeting listed under *Other International Activities* should not also be listed under *Invited Keynote Presentations and Lectures* or *Abstracts of Presentations at a Professional Meeting* without any indication of the cross-listing.
5. The impact of your accomplishments (i.e., the outcomes of your activities) may be more important than the quantity of output. In places where narratives are allowed, such as the Candidate's Statement, write in a clear, active voice, as if you were speaking to a civic group, at a high school reunion, or to a garden club. Assume that the audience does not know what you did, what your job was, why the subject of your work is important, or why what you did made a difference (i.e., what positive changes happened because of your actions). Sustainability and continuity of your program is very important, and should be emphasized. If there is a significant gap in your record of accomplishments, that should be explained as well. Remember that your dossier will undergo multiple assessments at

different levels of the university, so keep in mind that evaluators outside of your discipline will evaluate your dossier and needs to understand the importance of your program.

6. In each section, be very clear which accomplishments occurred before and after promotion or promotion and tenure. For example, if you are applying for promotion to full professor, list accomplishments between your appointment and before promotion and tenure in one tally, and those since your promotion and tenure date in another. Use separate subheadings and separate table rows, columns, or footnotes in summary tables to distinguish those items that occurred since appointment or promotion. The dossier template provided by the Provost's office provides good examples for summary table formats.
 7. Be certain that summary table totals agree with individually listed accomplishments. For example, be sure that the total amounts listed under external grants tally up with those listed in each grant.
 8. Use summary tables at the beginning of sections that include numerous repetitive items, such as Extension training events, graduate students advised, grants awarded, and scholarly contributions.
 9. Be clear what your job expectations were, and identify if that changed and when it changed during the period being evaluated.
 10. List accomplishments at department, college, university, state, regional, national, and international levels whenever possible.
 11. List professional society and other leadership and editorships that advanced your profession or brought positive attention to your unit or university.
 12. For individuals with an Extension appointment, request an Extension Review at least one year before applying for promotion.
 13. For individuals with a teaching appointment, request a minimum of two peer reviews at least one year before you plan to submit your dossier.
- B. Specific suggestions for writing your dossier:
1. In the Executive Summary, include a few examples of publications and grant awards that highlight your accomplishments. It is not necessary to list everything. Make good use of the summary tables. Adhere to the page limit.
 2. Accomplishments of advised students should be listed, including awards earned, positions achieved after graduation, and published contributions. Their accomplishments are in partnership with your accomplishments. Their success in scholarship is a reflection on your advising success.
 3. Under published contributions, list your H-index according to Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. A reference to what number constitutes a good H-index score in your specific field may be helpful. Clearly differentiate between peer-reviewed and editor-

reviewed contributions. List the impact factor of journals that you published in, and the number of citations. List your role in each written contribution (e.g., I wrote the Methods section, or I reviewed and edited the manuscript). Provide a key to reviewers in the heading of published contributions, successful grant proposals, and presentation sections. For example, the lead author or presenter should be in bold. Do not arbitrarily bold the name of the first author or your own name each time. Add an asterisk for advised graduate students, and a different symbol for undergraduate authors, and advised post-docs. If the lead author is an advised student or post-doc, bold your name if you were their advisor (provided that the post-doc did the research in-house under advice and guidance). If the lead author is not your student/postdoc then bold the name of their advisor. You also have the option to include a qualitative description of the scope and relevance of the journals that you are publishing in, which can be useful for external letter writers and evaluators who are not familiar with your field.

4. Under Sponsored Research, Grant Applications, and Awards, separate Internal from External funding sources, and competitive grants from non-competitive grants. List the starting and ending dates. Include the names of all participants on the grant, not just your name and role. Be clear what percentage of the work was expected by you for each grant, and what percent of the award was under your authority to spend. Add any pertinent details, such as your role in the project. People calculate these percentages in different ways. Many try to adhere to the percentages listed with the Office of Sponsored Programs during the proposal development process. Others base their numbers on the allocation of dollars within the grant. You can choose from either of these approaches, or other possibilities, but be consistent and make sure the listed numbers accurately reflect your involvement in the project. Consult with your collaborators and make sure your numbers match your collaborator's numbers on their dossier.
5. Under service, indicate whether the activity was required as part of your job or was voluntary.

C. Keys to writing compelling executive summaries and candidate statements:

1. The executive summary should include a short <250 word written summary of the scope of your program, the problems you are addressing with your work, and the impacts that your activities have had on your scientific field or other people. First impressions matter, so try to be concise but informative with your language. The statement should be free of jargon, and provide context for who you are as a candidate and what you are accomplishing with your work.
2. The candidate's statement is a longer section (limit of 4 pages) that should aim to cover the same topics as the executive summary but in much greater detail. The statement

should be organized, use proper grammar, avoid incomplete and run-on sentences, and be free from misspelled words and unnecessary jargon, acronyms, and abbreviations.

3. The candidate's statement is your chance to put your work and efforts in a larger context. Be specific with products that have facilitated your work (e.g., grant proposals, collaborations) and resulted from your work (e.g., students trained, papers published). If possible, try to link the pieces in the rest of your portfolio to specific questions and outcomes. Specific examples of output that made an impact help the readers in their evaluation. For example, you can say that to address a particular problem, you used funding from these sources to train this number of students, work with this many external stakeholders, and create these many products. Then explain whether you were successful in helping solve that problem. After reading your candidate statement, a reviewer should be able to understand the importance of your work and the impact that you have made thus far in your efforts. Emphasize impacts and outcomes of your output rather than just listing outputs alone. Even though it may be evident to you, do not assume that they made the connection. Let the readers know, in simple but clear terms, what difference you and your program made during the evaluation period, and overall. What were your goals? Did you achieve them? Were your efforts and your program recognized at regional, national, or international efforts? Did they bring positive attention to your department, or college, or Virginia Tech?
4. Begin working on your candidate statement soon after appointment, and continue to refine and revise through time. Have other people read it, including those who are familiar with your discipline (and thus will have more understanding of specific details), and those who may be less familiar (and thus will be able to comment on parts that are unclear or confusing).