

PORTFOLIO GUIDANCE FROM RPT

The intent of this document is to provide clarity for those individuals creating portfolios as well as those who are reviewing portfolios. These are suggestions based on ambiguous issues that, in the RPT committee's assessment, may require additional clarification.

Portfolio Q & A:

Q: How do I get started with my tenure portfolio?

A: Use the policy manual to guide your narrative. Use your annual reviews and developmental review portfolios to build on.

- Include in the self-assessment how you have grown and continue to do so, in each area of teaching, scholarship and service; be sure to discuss the strengths and challenges that you faced and the steps you took to try to overcome those challenges.
- Within your self-assessment, highlight examples and evidence of your claims to excellence in each of the areas. Provide instructions for locating the artifacts and data referenced or include a hyperlink.

Q: How do I get started with my promotion portfolio?

A: Use the policy manual to guide your narrative.

- Highlight the key accomplishments in all areas leading to tenure, followed by a discussion of goals that you set at tenure and how you worked towards achieving your goals.
- Include in the self-assessment how you have grown and continue to do so, in each area of teaching, scholarship and service since tenure; be sure to discuss the strengths and challenges that you faced and the steps you took to try to overcome those challenges.
- Within your self-assessment, weave in examples and evidence of your claims to excellence in each of the areas. Provide instructions for locating the artifacts and data referenced or include a hyperlink.
- Reflect on the process of growth in each area and evidence your growth by tying in to artifacts such as brief summary of course evaluations, lesson planning materials, presentations, course revisions, recommendation letters, service artifacts or letters.

Q: What is the difference between a narrative and a self-assessment? Should they be different documents in the portfolio?

A: Your narrative can weave in a self-assessment within it to have one document for both. Your narrative is a description of all your accomplishments in teaching, scholarship and service while your self-assessment is more of a reflective commentary on the accomplishments and what you draw from each of them.

Refer to section 2.9.3.1 of the Policy Manual for an explanation of what should be included in the self-assessment piece, and sections 2.9.3.2 - 2.9.3.4 for what should be included in the narrative.

Q: How many recommendation letters do I need to include and from whom?

A: The policy manual specifies 3 or more letters of recommendation. Recommendation letters are from other faculty and/or others such as students, alumni, professional organizations and community members. Note that the number of letters is not as important as the content, but they should be current letters (within the past year). Suggested letters include those that attest to your teaching and/or service and/or scholarship. Letters from tenured faculty (who are more experienced) carry more weight than those from non-tenured faculty. The content of the letters could/should be utilized in the discussion narrative as evidence.

Note that letters from your dean and department chair are considered support letters, not letters of recommendation.

Refer to section 2.9.2 of the policy manual for details.

Q: What should recommendation letters include?

A: Letters should state the level of your involvement and/or elaborate on your contribution to the field and/or show your active engagement in the area. Letters of recommendation should address the writer's knowledge of the applicant's excellence in one or more areas - teaching, scholarship or service. Letters that provide a good overview of your different areas of growth in the past few years need to be included and referenced in your self-assessment. Better letters show strengths and areas for improvement. Letters should be referenced as artifacts and the content from letters should be summarized as evidence of continued pursuit of excellence within the self-assessment.

Q: How many syllabi should I include?

A: As stated in the Policy Manual, include "representative course syllabi" only; not all course syllabi. Include syllabi that reveal changes and features to attest to your commitment to teaching and growing excellence. Within your self-assessment and/or narrative, refer to specific elements of your syllabi that demonstrate best practices in teaching and learning.

Q: Do I need to include all my course evaluations from past years?

A: No! Make it easy for the reviewers to follow your evidence instead of having them search for areas where you have improved.

- Include a summary of course evaluations to reflect your strengths and need areas. How are course evaluations helping you set goals and striving to achieve them? For example, did you revise a course based on student evaluations? What was the outcome? Did it improve your evaluations? If you are mentioning improving course content, include evidence such as artifacts from the content (examples) or course evaluations that highlight the positive trend.
- Showcase key findings from evaluations by providing a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative evidence. Some examples are listed below.
- Refer to section 2.9.3.1 and 2.9.3.2, section 2 of the Policy Manual for an explanation.

Some visual examples from previously successful portfolio(s) are included below. Please note, this is not meant to be an exhaustive set of examples; rather, the visuals should give you an idea of what has been included in successful portfolios.

A summary of quantitative results from evaluations:

Student evaluation data for my courses suggest that I have strengths in three major areas: being a caring and conscientious educator, showing expertise in my field, and providing beneficial feedback related to the valuable learning experiences in my courses. These themes have emerged over ten years across three different evaluation systems: The “old” eval system from 2011-2014, IDEA from 2014-2020, and the new “My Eval” system from 2021. Because these themes have remained relevant to my goals for the duration of my career at USF, I feel it is most valid for me to discuss an evaluation synthesis across all ten years, showing how the themes that I’ve been monitoring have persisted into the last five years post-tenure. I manually aligned and synthesized all data cumulatively across all evaluations in an excel document to help me come to these conclusions that are represented in Table 2 below. As the table shows, I chose to “chunk” my highest-scoring indicators into three themes for the purpose of succinct discussion.

Table 2: Cumulative Areas of Strength, 2011-2021

Cumulative Survey Responses Post Tenure						
Caring	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Maintained High Expectations	95.80%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.40%
Sensitivity to Backgrounds and Differences	100.00%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	89.30%
Respect for All Learners	100.00%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Available to Answer Questions	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Excellent Teacher	95.80%	100.00%	88.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Expertise in Content and Course Design	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Course Was Well Organized	95.90%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Excellent Course Overall	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	92.90%
Thorough Instructor Knowledge of Content	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Valuable Activities	95.80%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Modeled Best Practices	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	92.80%
Student Gained New Knowledge and Skills	87.50%	100.00%	88.80%	100.00%	100.00%	96.40%
Learned How to Better Serve Community	100.00%	100.00%	77.70%	100.00%	100.00%	89.30%
Communication/Feedback	HRE	SS	Sci	MGMT	394	PGS
Clear Expectations	95.80%	100.00%	77.70%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Constructive Feedback	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

When reviewing the data on a Likert-style scale, I identified my strengths by noting how many evaluations “agree” or “strongly agree” that I am consistently meeting each specific indicator. Thus, the percentages shown above are indicative of how many students rated me in the top two marks for each indicator between 2011-2021. The narrative reflection that follows articulates strengths further and also provides triangulation with qualitative data from evaluations and additional justification from letters of recommendation and applicable artifacts.

Examples showing growth/improvement:

Something I have been working on since tenure that is not necessarily shown in the evaluation feedback for my courses is helping students critically analyze and evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view other than their own for the purpose of helping students better understand how to become equitable and culturally-responsive educators in the EDUC394/MEDU662 Constructing a Supportive Learning Environment course. As shown in Figure 2 below, scores within that specific course for those two quantitative indicators hovered around 80% of students “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that the course was successful in helping them grow in this area, with the lowest scores falling in Spring 2017. Fall 2017 was when I began integrating content into the course about implicit bias, equity, restorative practices, inclusion, social justice, and culturally responsive teaching—topics that had before not been as explicitly embedded into the course. Artifacts related to these high leverage teaching practices by means of course materials and activities are articulated later in this narrative and are linked as artifacts within those sections to provide evidence for the reader as to what they are and how they allow me to meet these outcomes at high levels.

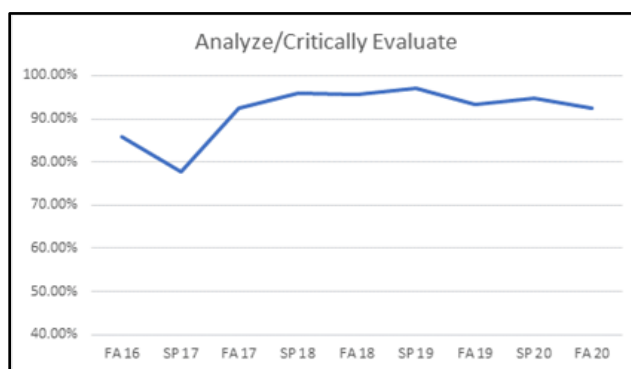


Figure 3: Analyze/Critically Evaluate

As I continued to lean into this content and students began learning more, with me asking them to always look at each topic covered through multiple lenses, scores have risen in this area into the 90th percentile. I will continue my efforts and will monitor future assessment data to make sure candidates are still looking at topics like these through multiple perspectives, as the dip that was encountered was due to two things: the topics not being as “at the forefront” of what we were studying, and the topics being heavily laced with political contention. Once I began asking candidates to analyze topics through various sources to understand, for example, how media outlets present similar information differently, it genuinely seems to be helping candidates to think critically about how information can be biased from one outlet or person to another. There is still, however, much work to be done in

this area, and our college is working together to better integrate these skills and topics throughout our curriculum.

Example reflecting on a previous area of improvement

One thing that I noted as a challenge before tenure was achieving adequate response rates from my evaluations. As of tenure in 2016, the cumulative average of my response rates across all courses was 60.8%. As Figure 1 illustrates below, my cumulative averages have increased by as much as 30% over the years, providing a much more reliable data set from which to draw conclusions. I have managed to accomplish this by providing time in class for students to complete the evaluations, adding the evaluation as an assignment in the week before finals week and providing a small amount of points for students who submit a screen shot showing proof of submission (NOT their actual evaluation, but the “thank you for submitting” screen), and, well...begging, when necessary.

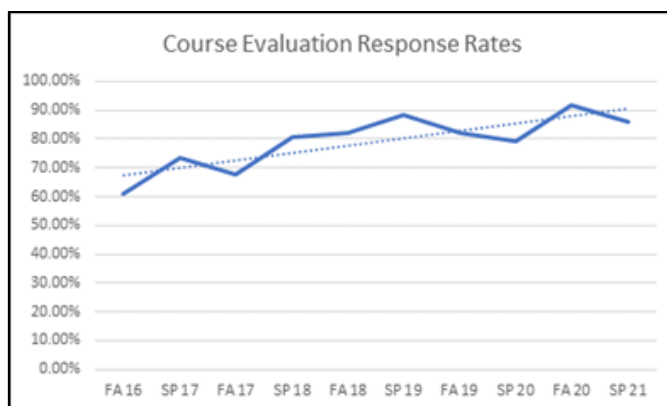


Figure 1. Course Evaluation Response Rates Post-Tenure

Having such high response rates with my course evaluations allows for much more valid and reliable data from which to draw assertions related to my strengths and areas of growth.

A qualitative example that synthesizes course evaluations and letters of recommendation:

Lab Bags

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, elementary teachers in the field thought little about teaching through computer screens and instead focused on teaching students face-to-face. Obviously, COVID changed all of that, and in 2020, educators across all sectors were scrambling to make adjustments in pedagogy to incorporate e-learning methodologies—no easy feat when working with very young learners in elementary schools. It was a tough time and shined a very

bright light on the fact that as teacher educators, we needed to do more to help prepare candidates for this reality. Below are the innovations that I built into my courses to accomplish this.

Science is a verb. This means that you don't just sit and learn science through telling and absorption; rather, you DO science. It's meant to be hands-on, inquiry-based, and interactive. Thus, in order to accomplish not only proper preparation of our teacher candidates but also to provide the most high-quality and effective experience for them as college students within my science methods course, I prepared "Lab Bags" for each student to be utilized during each class session from the time of the initial shut down in Spring 2020 through the Spring 2021 semester, whether classes were to meet face-to-face or online synchronously. For every class session that I teach, no matter the modality, candidates are asked to apply the content that they have read about and that I had lectured about in class within a hands-on, inquiry-based activity involving cooperative learning strategies. The Lab Bags were packed full of materials that I provided for each student for the duration of the entire semester out of my own pocket. They were organized such that each baggie housed all materials needed for candidates to participate in guided-inquiry activities during class (see photos below).

|During class, when it was time to engage in the lab-based inquiry activities, I would go over instructions with candidates and then, if face-to-face, candidates had all materials provided in such a way that the activity could be accomplished safely in a socially-distanced context. If we were online via Zoom, candidates could complete the activities as they would in the face-to-face socially-distanced context as a whole group, or I could put them into Zoom breakout rooms to do the activities cooperatively with their peers by utilizing their camera placements and discussion strategies for comparison and analysis of results. This methodology was considered innovative enough that I was able to write an article for peer-reviewed publication in the Journal for Success in High-Need Schools (2021) called "No Matter the Modality, Science is a Verb" (article linked in portfolio under "peer reviewed publications" section in "Scholarship artifacts").

Course evaluations for Spring 2020-Spring 2021 include ample and overwhelmingly positive feedback related to the use of Lab Bags. When looking at Fall 2020 evaluations as a sample ($n = 14$), Lab Bags were cited over a dozen times in the qualitative feedback as being the single most important resource in the methods course as well as being a best practice that candidates could see themselves taking with them into their future classrooms. Qualitative data from all three semesters also indicates that candidates not only had a more engaging e-learning experience themselves as students, but that they felt they were able to

apply similar strategies in their own student teaching placements, whether by utilizing school supply pickup days for families or even by hand-delivering supply bags of their own to their elementary students, a practice that the elementary learners were particularly excited!

Feedback from student evaluations as well as letters of recommendation related to the Lab Bags are as follows:

*The Lab Bag materials for remote learning were very helpful.
(SP21)*

Having the Lab Bags made class so much more engaging. (FA 20)

Having the hands-on material was so helpful to my learning. Breaking into groups to talk about what we were doing and thinking helped me think of questions I might ask as a teacher [during similar e-learning experiences] and also gave me ideas about the content. (FA 20)

Lab Bags with the interactive components really helped me connect to the methods [we were learning about]. (FA 20)

During the pandemic, Erin created Lab Bags for her students...that she had them use while performing hands-on activities in cooperative learning groups via Zoom rooms. This is exactly what we would want our teacher candidates to do with their own students, and Erin was able to model this for her students and talk through why she made the instructional choices that she did [to help them learn]. (Cathy Nelson; to see her full letter of recommendation for my promotion, see Letter of Support → COE→C Nelson).

From here, I do plan to retain at least one class session per semester as a dedicated “Zoom session” to allow candidates the opportunity to experience hands-on learning via synchronous e-learning format. Not only do we “never know” what the future holds, one thing that is certain is that while e-learning is not what is best for K-12 students on a day-to-day basis, it is possible and it may be an effective strategy to use in the future for emergency days, such as closures due to inclement weather. As such, I believe it is imperative that we keep at least some level of preparation in our program for candidates to be able to build their capacity for experiencing, designing, and implementing high-quality e-learning for their students in the field.

Q: Do I need to include a copy of all my presentations and publications?

A: No, list all the presentations and publications on your CV and include copies/links only to the ones that provide a glimpse into your pursuit of excellence in scholarship. Be sure to reference them as artifacts to your self-assessment narrative.

Q: What is considered scholarship? Or, more importantly, what is not considered scholarship?

A: First and foremost, consult with your department chair or Dean to determine the definition of scholarship adopted by your college/department. Use Boyer (1990) as a guide (Appendix II-A of the Policy Manual provides an excerpt/ Section 7.1.3 of the Policy Manual provides an excerpt) but understand that the definition of scholarship varies.

- You should state clearly what your discipline/department defines as scholarship. Include this definition/document within your portfolio. Discuss how your scholarship connects, within your self-assessment.
- As of this writing, most self-published, or pseudo journals are not considered suitable for scholarship consideration. When in doubt, do discuss with your dean/chair.
- Specify if the publications were peer-reviewed or invited ones. Verifiable peer-reviewed publications, as stated in the policy manual 2.9.3.3, hold more weight than invited or self-published ones.

Q: How many publications are expected for tenure?

A: The policy manual does not specify a number. However, for your guidance, the average number of publications in successful tenure applications over the past 5 years was 2 to 3.

Q: What is considered service? Or, more importantly, what is not considered service?

A: Service includes any relevant activity outside of your teaching load. These include service to the department, university, community, and profession including but not limited to: serving on standing committees and ad hoc committees, student recruitment, participating in department projects, advising students and/or student clubs, professional association membership/leadership, involvement in community activities, organization membership (where you represent the university), etc. Other examples are provided in section 2.28.1.3. Your contributions to committees and organizations weigh more than mere attendance or being a member. Examples of possible service can be found online. Here is one such example for your guidance:
<https://www.gvsu.edu/provost/faculty-responsibilities-in-the-area-of-service-113.htm>

Activities that pertain to your teaching responsibilities are generally not considered service activities.

Q: Should I include information from being an adjunct faculty member or an instructor faculty member (in general, time when pre-tenure track)? Should I include information from past institutions?

A: All previous and current positions should be in your CV, your narrative/self-assessment should only include relevant scholarship/activity that continues in your current position at USF. Tenure and promotion are based on what you do at USF - not what you've done at other places of employment. However, if years of teaching (from USF or another institution) were included as part of the hiring agreement (a letter from the Provost to that effect should be included within the portfolio), then you should include information from those years as part of your USF tenure portfolio.

Q: What should I focus on for promotion: teaching, scholarship and/or service?

A: Irrespective of what you stated in your tenure portfolio (wherein you specify more weight for scholarship or service), applications for promotion should reflect all three areas. Promotion to full professor requires *sustained* excellence in all three areas, as stated in the policy manual - "promotion to the next higher rank requires that the candidate demonstrate sustained excellence and accomplishments in teaching, scholarship, and service as defined in the USF Tenure Policy (Section 2.9.3)." (Policy 2.14.1).

Q: How can I use my college/department definition for scholarship?

A: See above
