



## MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Morgan Benton  
From: Dr. Eric Maslen, Department Head, ISAT Department  
Subject: Annual Performance Evaluation, 2014-2015  
CC: Dr. Robert Kolvoord, Dean of the College of Integrated Science and Engineering  
Date: 9 August 2015

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Your performance for the 2014-2015 academic year has been evaluated using the ISAT Criteria Guidelines for Annual Evaluation. I have looked at your work in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service.

### Teaching

I find your teaching to be **excellent**. It is clear from student comments that they admire your knowledge of the subject matter and your ability to explain it to them. But I see a steadily increasing response to your teaching format that it has insufficient structure. I appreciate that this structure is highly intentional on your part - not a way to get out of the efforts that more structured teaching entail - but instead to give students room to self-motivate and to focus on the things that they find of value. My guess is that, if this were the manner of instruction in all of their courses and (perhaps) the way that they learned in high school, your approach would be extremely successful. But I think that you have to consider that the combination of culture and external environment are working against you and perhaps present some insuperable barriers. Your discussion of this issue in your annual report suggests that you may have reached the same conclusion. What I would hope you would do in response to this is to find some middle ground that gives students more - and periodic - structure in the class but at the same time leaves them latitude to explore things on their own. I'm not persuaded that this is impossible. Outside the classroom, you have a very wide portfolio of curriculum, course material, and pedagogical development that illustrates your commitment to the enterprise and clearly makes a substantial contribution both to the departmental teaching mission and to the broader educational community.

### Scholarship

I find your scholarship to be **excellent**. You are now fully focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning and, as you say in your annual report, you are beginning to be recognized for your efforts. In particular, you had two invited talks this year and had a paper, coauthored with one of your students, accepted for publication in a refereed journal. You won several grants to support your work and have a fairly large (VentureWell) grant application still under consideration. I'm pleased that the scholarly communities you are collaborating with are both on the edge (Black Rock) and fairly conventional (IAJC/ISAM, BIF). Although it's not obvious how to involve students directly in the work you do, you have generated a number of "case study" forays such as the zome project that do provide strong opportunities for your students - I'm going to guess that this will be an important element of your scholarship as you continue to develop it.

## Service

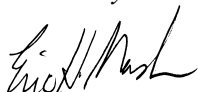
I find your service to be **excellent**. At the department level, you were a very active participant in the BSISAT Assessment Committee, a member of the IKM and Social Context teaching teams, the ISAT 190 Syllabus Development team, and the PAC. At the university level, you represented the ISAT department in the JMU Faculty Senate and, within the Senate, you chaired the Academic Policies Committee. A particular accomplishment in this role was a proposal for an intriguing pilot study of “micro-courses.” You served as the faculty advisor to the Japan Club and to the ISAT Honor Society. Within your scholarly community, you served as Co-Organizer for the Black Rock Educators Consortium and, in this role, you Co-Chaired the consortium’s annual meeting in August 2014.

## Summary

In addition to the three areas in which all faculty members work, within ISAT we also emphasize the importance of personal leadership, professional commitment, and professional collegiality. I find that you exhibit very substantial personal leadership and professional commitment this year and that you are consistently collegial. My only concern is that you are sometimes either over-committed or have trouble prioritizing your efforts and this has led to a reputation for being unreliable in delivering on projects in collaboration with other members of the faculty. You need to attend to this and find a strategy for ensuring that you meet commitments - especially those that you may view as of marginal importance. I’m concerned that, if you don’t, your colleagues will increasingly write you out of their efforts and this will lead you to become marginalized in the department.

The faculty handbook states, “In addition to an evaluation in each of the three areas of performance, the faculty member’s overall performance must be evaluated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.” Overall, I have assessed your performance for the year to be satisfactory.

*Submitted by*



*Eric Maslen,  
Department Head, ISAT*

9 August 2015

*Date*

*I have reviewed this document, discussed the contents with my department head, and acknowledge this with my signature. My signature does not necessarily mean that I agree with the assessment of my performance.*

*Faculty Member Signature*

*Date*