

Suggestions for Preparing Form A (AKA the “Self Study” or “Faculty Profile”)

Saint Mary’s College of California Rank and Tenure Committee

To assist faculty members with the preparation of self-studies (Forms A) in the rank and tenure process (interim reviews, tenure, and promotion), the Rank and Tenure (R&T) Committee offers the following informal guidelines. Before you begin, please keep in mind that the Committee limits its review of cases to the criteria for reappointment, promotion, and tenure as set out in Sec. 2.6 of the *Faculty Handbook*. Hence, we look first and most importantly to you, the faculty member, and second, to your department chair/program director and dean, to present a clear and evidence-based case that your teaching, scholarship, and service satisfy these criteria. Also, if this is not your first review, you will want to reread the letter you last received from the Committee. Given that we are committed to helping you build a successful career at the College, we often raise questions or provide suggestions for you to consider in future self-studies. Locate these in your letter and address them explicitly where you think appropriate in your narrative.

I. General Suggestions

1. Given that the composition of the R&T Committee changes each year and new members will be reading your file for the first time, please submit a complete Form A for each review. However, you need not write an entirely new self-study each time. Simply leave in material that is still current or relevant, delete dated information, and highlight new additions in **bold** or *italics*.
2. Interim reviews often begin in a candidate’s first year of service, before you have established a record of accomplishment at Saint Mary’s. In these cases, use this review as an opportunity to introduce yourself to the Committee, discussing your activities and experiences at other institutions, and/or relating your ambitions for your career with us. What drew you to Saint Mary’s? What are your plans during your first year?
3. Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. We all have them. What are you working to improve? Of what are you particularly proud? What might not have gone as you would like, and, most importantly, how are you addressing it?
4. You want us to read your Form A carefully; however, if you submit a large, disorganized file, we have to decide how to work through it. **While there is no official minimum or maximum length, the Committee suggests that the Form A narrative be approximately 15-25 double spaced pages. However, individual cases may vary. Fully addressing the criteria in the Faculty Handbook is more important than page length.**
5. Avoid including materials in your file that serve no apparent purpose, or receive no mention in the self-study. Ask yourself—why am I including this material? Have I made it clear to the Committee members what I want them to learn from it?
6. Before you begin to compose your self-study, familiarize yourself with the contents of Sec. 2.1.1 and Sec. 2.6 of the *Faculty Handbook* and consult it frequently as you construct your case.
7. Explain how your teaching, scholarship, and service meet the rank-specific criteria for promotion and tenure, keeping in mind that these three categories are weighted equally: a surplus in one area does not offset a deficiency in another.

8. Open each section (teaching, scholarship, and service) with introductory context. For teaching, provide us with your overarching teaching philosophy; for scholarship, describe your line of inquiry and establish its significance; for service, explain what motivates you to serve your department/program, school, and College.
9. Address the applicable rank-specific “additional criteria,” including “special emphasis on the contribution and commitment to the aims and ideals of the College, an active interest in the quality of the curriculum, and the ability to work productively with colleagues.” See the *Faculty Handbook* (Sec. 2.6.1.1), and the “Additional Criteria” section of this guide for suggestions.
10. Provide evidence of consistent, on-going productivity in each of the three areas, keeping in mind that expectations are different for each rank and that progress must be sustained over the course of one’s career. For example, the *Faculty Handbook* states that “Appointment to the rank of Full Professor is made in recognition of **consistent** evidence of high teaching effectiveness, high scholarly achievement, (the latter to be substantiated by a sound reputation among academic colleagues outside the College), and a high degree of effective service.” (Sec. 2.1.1)
11. Please submit your Form A and supporting materials by the *Handbook*-mandated deadlines (Sec. 2.6.2.2.3): on or before August 15 for interim review, and on or before October 15 for promotion, tenure, or pre-Professor progress reviews. These deadlines were established to ensure that your chair/program director and dean have sufficient time to complete their letters of assessment, and that we have a complete file when your case comes up for review.

II. Specific Suggestions

1. Teaching Effectiveness

- a. The *Faculty Handbook* discusses a variety of ways faculty members can demonstrate their teaching effectiveness. As you plan to present your case, remember that the Committee’s focus is always on the following question: What evidence has the candidate put forward to support assertions of teaching effectiveness? Hence, we recommend that you become fully familiar with the teaching section of 2.6.1, and consult it frequently as you build your case.
- b. There are, of course, multiple ways to organize your evidence. Some faculty members organize their discussion around the *Handbook*’s listing of various ways that effectiveness can be demonstrated (Sec. 2.6.1).
- c. Instead of discussing in detail each of the courses you teach, please provide us with a well-articulated assessment of your overall strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, the review of one or more single courses may be warranted.
- d. Begin your narrative by describing your broader teaching philosophy and objectives, and explaining how they are aligned with the College mission/aims and ideals (see Sec. 1.1 and Sec. 2.6.1.1 of the *Faculty Handbook*, and “Additional Criteria” section of this document).
- e. Describe how your courses advance/enhance departmental, school, and College-wide curricular objectives.
- f. Describe how your academic objectives are expressed in actual instructional methods by referring to syllabi, sample course assignments, classroom activities, and the like.
- g. Demonstrate how you promote intellectual stimulation, provide challenging learning experiences, and maintain high academic standards by discussing your grading patterns, specific assignments, and instructional methods.
- h. Provide concrete examples of how you assess student learning (grading rubrics, standards, etc.), and how you have used this assessment to modify your courses.
- i. **Do not submit copies of your course evaluations.** We have them already. Instead, discuss in depth what you have learned from the student evaluations. How have you responded to student feedback? We do not need an exhaustive review of the quantitative data and written comments for all of your evaluations.

Instead, provide a synthesis of the quantitative data, identify recurring patterns, and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses.

j. Work with your chair to arrange class visits by colleagues, and **make certain that at least three current peer observation reports are included in your file**. Class visitations are mandated by the *Faculty Handbook*, and provide concrete evidence that complements student evaluations. Naturally, you will want to reflect on peer feedback in the same way as discussed above for student evaluations.

k. Clearly label appendices with a description of their content. If you include all the appendices in one file please provide a table of contents. Include copies of peer review letters (unless your chair submits them directly to Academic Affairs), copies of course syllabi, and/or examples of course materials that provide tangible evidence of the themes discussed in your narrative. Avoid including materials (e.g. course syllabi) unaccompanied by a discussion of your purpose in including them.

2. Scholarship

a. While the *Faculty Handbook* defines scholarship broadly, scholarly activities are to be “specifically and publically demonstrated in order to be evaluated fairly and effectively,” and “should include some form of public presentation and external peer review” (Sec. 2.6.1). As with teaching effectiveness, the *Handbook* provides a number of specific ways in which scholarship might be performed or produced, as well as a variety of methods by which your work may be presented and evaluated by others. Hence, we recommend that you become fully familiar with the scholarship section of the *Faculty Handbook* (Sec. 2.6.1), and consult it frequently as you build your case.

b. In accessible language, provide a description of your scholarship: your fundamental questions and goals; how it fits into and contributes to your discipline; and whether it builds on your previous work or establishes a new line of inquiry.

c. If you are engaged in an emerging field of research and or discipline that involves new methods, theoretical approaches, and unconventional peer review venues, help the Committee understand the significance of your contribution by providing enough background information.

d. Provide a research plan or trajectory that sets clear goals for the future, and helps us understand how you see your scholarship unfolding beyond your present project. Scholarly vitality, evidenced by public and external peer review is expected at each rank, and must be sustained over time.

e. In general, you want to be as specific as you can in offering evidence documenting how your scholarship meets the *Handbook* criteria.. **Give evidence of external peer review**. Submit letters attesting to the submission of forthcoming publications, performances, or exhibits. **We need copies of works that are recently published or under review** (only once; no need to resubmit these annually unless you revise them). Include these in the appendix. Let us know the acceptance rate for conferences and journals; how single-versus multiple-author research is viewed in your field; and what “conference proceedings” mean in your discipline (this ranges from highly competitive to everything being included in proceedings).

f. Some forms of scholarly activity are easier to document than others. Nevertheless, you have the obligation to make the case, for example, for why a compilation or synthesis of existing research, workshop, consultancy, art show, recital, or advocacy represent scholarship within the meaning of the *Handbook* criteria. Remember also, that we might not be completely familiar with how your discipline defines and evaluates scholarly achievement, so don't shy away from educating us as you think appropriate.

g. In your vitae, is your scholarly work categorized in a way that differentiates among working papers, papers under submission, and those that have been published or presented?

3. Service

a. As stated in the *Handbook*, service to students, colleagues, and the College as a whole is a “privilege and a responsibility” (Sec. 2.6.1). Forms of service are varied, but service within and outside of your department/program is expected as is appropriate to your rank and position. As an obvious example, first-year

faculty members are not expected to serve on major—especially elected—College committees. As with teaching and scholarship, you are responsible for providing clear evidence of effective service. Hence, familiarize yourself with the service section of the *Handbook* before you begin your self-study, and consult it frequently as you construct your case.

b. **Go beyond merely listing committees and task forces by sharing with us what you consider to be your specific contributions in these positions** and how students, colleagues, your department/program, or the College has benefitted from them. In other words, any evidence you provide that indicates the nature or range of your contributions helps us to understand the effectiveness of your service achievements. Letters from chairs of relevant committees, commenting on the extent and quality of your service, are helpful.

c. Distinguish between duties expected of every faculty member and those that exceed normal expectations, including extra service that may stem from staffing shortages and/or new curricular, assessment and accreditation initiatives in your department/program. For example, do not list every meeting or campus function that you have attended in the past year. Almost all of us write letters of recommendation for students; don't include them. Faculty members are expected to supervise independent studies. Instead, summarize these kinds of activities and explain how they exceed normal expectations/duties.

d. In addition to calling for service to departments, programs, and schools, the *Faculty Handbook* stipulates that faculty members should participate in “the governance of the College, for which School-wide and College-wide committees is one important element.” Be sure to describe how you are achieving or planning to achieve this criterion.

4. Additional Criteria

The *Faculty Handbook's* additional criteria place “special emphasis on the contribution and commitment to the aims and ideals of the College” (Sec. 2.6.1.1). To this end, familiarize yourself with the College mission statement (Sec. 1.1), and reflect upon how your teaching, scholarship and service align with:

1. The liberal arts tradition of developing students' critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem-solving, and communication skills; teaching students to engage in the process of inquiry itself, e.g., by learning how to explore questions, discover and analyze sources of information, draw conclusions, and present persuasive arguments based upon that analysis; promoting an appreciation of different ways of knowing; engaging in shared inquiry, i.e., learning activities or scholarly investigations performed in collaboration with others.
2. The Catholic tradition of promoting the dialog of faith and reason; defending the goodness, dignity and freedom of each person; fostering sensitivity to social and ethical concerns.
3. The Lasallian tradition of developing students' capacities for responsible, independent thought, spiritual growth, active citizenship, and a productive life; relating to students in a respectful and honest manner; fostering awareness of the consequences of economic and social injustice, and commitment to the poor.

4. The additional criteria (for tenure and promotion to full professor) also call for “the ability to work well with colleagues” (Sec. 2.6.1.1). Here, again, the mission statement is applicable: provide evidence that you are committed to creating “a student centered educational community whose members support one another with mutual understanding and respect” and “defend the goodness, dignity, and freedom of each person” (Sec. 1.1). Evidence can come from your chair and/or dean, departmental colleagues, and fellow committee members. You may also provide examples of how civility and mutual respect frame or shape your interactions with colleagues, e.g., treating others with professionalism and respect regardless of their status or background; facilitating management of differences by encouraging mutually beneficial resolutions; and understanding and welcoming the perspectives of others.

III. Assistance in the Process

The Committee recognizes that for many faculty members, especially early in their careers, preparing a Form A may feel novel and challenging. Fortunately, most of your colleagues have successfully completed various stages of review and can serve as sources of information and support.

1. Department colleagues can share their experiences with you, provide peer feedback on your self-study, visit your classes, and review your teaching, etc.
2. Your department chair/program director can assist you in understanding how you fit with and serve your department's needs and goals, how best to interpret and use your teaching evaluations, how to construct a workable program of research, how to choose appropriate service opportunities within your department and school, and how to participate in the governance of the college.
3. The dean of your school can also provide important counsel, and you should meet regularly with your dean regarding your progress.
4. Colleagues outside of your department and outside your school can also offer valuable perspectives on the process, and also offer specific assistance by visiting your classes, reviewing evaluations, and offering comments on your self-study.
5. The Office of Faculty Development has helpful materials to guide you through the process. Do not hesitate to call on them for support.
6. The Rank and Tenure Chair is available for consultation about the process as well.

03/17