HOW TO CREATE A DOSSIER
REAPPOINTMENT, TENURE, OR PROMOTION

For Teaching and Support Faculty

1. What is a dossier?

The dossier is your documentation of and self-assessment of your teaching and overall job performance. You are required to assemble and submit the dossier to your Division Personnel Committee in support of your application for reappointment, tenure or promotion. It is a qualitative assembling or collection of evidence of your teaching and other professional development activities. It brings together in one place materials documenting your teaching strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, and goals as well as providing information about your other non-teaching professional activities.

2. What is its purpose?

Its primary purpose is to provide you and your peers with an opportunity to reflect on your teaching and other professional activities in a systematic way. Its other purposes are: to improve your teaching performance; to encourage teaching improvement strategies at the individual and divisional levels; to enhance the profile of teaching accomplishments in the overall evaluation process for personnel decision-making. Your dossier should reflect the community colleges' emphasis on teaching effectiveness and the value of teaching in the overall faculty evaluation process.

3. Who evaluates it?

Your peers on your Division Personnel Committee (also, your Tenure and Promotion Review Committee in the case of a tenure application), your Division Chair, your Program Dean, the Dean of Academic Affairs, and the Chancellor.

4. How do I go about preparing it?

The following steps for preparing your dossier are presented here as simple, helpful suggestions rather than as prescriptive (you have to do it) steps:

1. Clearly state your teaching philosophy and responsibilities:
   - Briefly state your teaching philosophy. Describe your individual approach or teaching style. In other words, how do you communicate your subject to your students. If you are support faculty, consider how you communicate with teaching faculty as well as students. There often exists between colleagues in your division (or subject area) an informal understanding concerning responsibilities and criteria for success. You might summarize these understandings in a short paragraph or two. Points covered might include understandings about the numbers and types of courses to be taught, how students are to be evaluated, and the nature of progress expected by students. Where such an understanding does not exist, you should include a brief statement of your own assumptions concerning your teaching or duties and other professional responsibilities and obligations.

2. Select items for inclusion in your dossier that demonstrate effectiveness and overall job performance:
   - A list of the possible items that you might include in your dossier are presented in Question 5. Paying close attention to your statement of teaching philosophy/style in Step 1, you should select those items that are most applicable to you and prepare a statement about your accomplishments in each area. Your item choices will reflect
your personal preference and teaching style.

3. **Present the items in your dossier in an orderly manner with first priority/emphasis given to primary duties (either teaching or instructional support)**
   - Materials in your dossier should be arranged in a manner that makes your dossier clear and easy to evaluate. The arrangement should emphasize teaching/instructional support and your personal teaching/professional emphasis, focus, or goals. For example, if you wish to demonstrate improvement in your teaching, entries that in the short run lead to teaching improvements could be emphasized.

4. **Compile the documentation:**
   - You should keep copies of all printed items referred to in your dossier. These materials are not part of the dossier, but are back-up information in case "original" evidence is requested by your Division Personnel Committee. The most important and relevant materials in support of your dossier could be put into an appendix that could be submitted along with your dossier. These appendix materials might include examination papers, original replies to course evaluation questionnaires, letters from your division chair and students, or samples of student work.

5. **(Optional) Add exemplary materials to your dossier:**
   - You might include a few pages of materials that illustrate some of the major evidence referred to in your dossier. For example, an exemplary course outline, student learning outcomes, reading list, an examination keyed to objectives, a numerical summary of student course evaluations or unsolicited letters of praise from students, professional or community groups might well be worth including in your dossier. For instructional support units it might be faculty or student instructional units developed, web site creation, best practices in training or information dissemination, workshop descriptions and evaluations. The advisability of this step depends on your personal preference, but it is likely to be especially important when you are confronting a major personnel evaluation such as tenure or promotion.

5. **What should my dossier include?**

There is no single correct recipe for preparing your dossier. Since it is a highly personalized product, like a fingerprint, no two are exactly alike. For teaching faculty, it is highly recommended that student evaluations be included in your dossier. But, a good dossier will normally contain items from the following three broad areas: (1) the products of good teaching or instructional support, (2) materials from oneself, and (3) information from others. Here is a suggested list of items that you might include in each of these areas.

1. **Products Of Good Teaching:**
   - Students' scores on teacher-made or standardized tests.
   - Student essays, creative works, projects, field-work reports, laboratory workbooks/logs, publications or conference presentations, and awards or competitions won by students.
   - A record of students who select and succeed in advanced courses in your field.
   - A record of students who elect another course with you.
   - Evidence of effective supervision of student projects.
• Setting up or running a successful internship program.
• Testimonials from employers or students of the effect of courses or your influence on student career choices.
• Evidence of help you have given students to secure employment.
• Evidence of help given to colleagues on teaching improvement.

2. Materials From Oneself (A)

These are descriptive materials on your current and recent teaching responsibilities and practices:

For teaching faculty:

• List of course titles and numbers, credits, and enrollments with brief elaboration.
• List of course materials prepared for students. Representative course syllabi which detail course content and objectives, teaching methods, readings, homework assignments and a reflective statement as to why the class was so constructed.
• Information on your availability to students.
• Summary of steps taken to identify students with special problems and to design teaching and assessment procedures that facilitate their learning.
• Summary of steps taken to encourage student participation in courses or programs.
• Description of how computers, audio-visual equipment, or other non-print materials are used in your teaching.
• Steps taken to emphasize the interrelatedness and relevance of different kinds of learning.

For support faculty:

• List of instructional support materials prepared for teaching faculty and students.
• Information on your availability to teaching faculty and students.
• Summary of steps taken to identify problems and to design procedures which alleviate problems.
• Summary of steps taken to encourage faculty and student use of instructional support facilities and programs.
• Description of how computers, audio-visual equipment, or other non-print materials are used in your instructional support.
• Steps taken to emphasize the interrelatedness and relevance of instructional support.
• Materials From Oneself - Description of steps taken to evaluate and improve one's overall job performance.
• A reflective statement of your teaching philosophy and contribution to the teaching mission of the Division and College.
• A personal statement describing your professional goals for the next five years.
• Description of steps taken to improve resulting from self-evaluation.
• Reading journals on improving instructional support and attempting to implement acquired ideas.
• Reviewing new instructional support materials for possible application.
• Exchanging instructional support materials with a colleague from another institution.
• Conducting research contributing directly to instructional support.
• Becoming involved in an association or society concerned with the improvement of instructional support and the improvement of teaching and learning.
• Attempting instructional support innovations and evaluating their effectiveness.
• Using general support services such as the Faculty Development Committee or the Faculty Development Resource Center to search out materials for improving your job performance.

3. Materials From Oneself (B)

These include descriptions of steps taken to evaluate and improve one's teaching:

• A reflective statement of your teaching philosophy and contribution to the teaching mission of the Division and College.
• A personal statement describing your teaching and/or professional goals for the next five years.
• Description of steps taken to improve teaching resulting from self-evaluation.
• Reading journals on improving teaching and attempting to implement acquired ideas.
• Reviewing new teaching materials for possible application in your courses.
• Exchanging course materials with a colleague from another institution.
• Conducting research contributing directly to one's own teaching, course, or discipline.
• Becoming involved in an association or society concerned with the improvement of teaching and learning.
• Attempting instructional innovations and evaluating their effectiveness.
• Using general support services such as the Faculty Development Committee or the Faculty Development Resource Center to search out materials for improving one's teaching.
• Participating in seminars, workshops, and professional meetings intended to improve your teaching.
• Participating in course or curriculum development.
• Pursuing a line of research that contributes directly to your teaching.
• Preparing a textbook or other instructional materials.
• Editing or contributing to a professional journal on one's subject.

4. Information From Students:

• Student course and teaching evaluation or instructional support data which suggest improvements or produce an overall rating of effectiveness or satisfaction.
• Written comments from students.
• Unstructured (and possibly unsolicited) written evaluations by students, including written comments on exams and letters received after a course has been completed.
• Documented reports of student satisfaction with out-of-class contacts (e.g. student
advising).

• Interview data collected from students after completion of a course.
• Honors received from students, such as a nomination or award for "teaching excellence."

5. **Information From Colleagues:**

For Teaching faculty

• Statements from colleagues who have observed your teaching, either as members of a teaching team or as independent observers of a particular course, or who teach other sections of the same course.
• Statements from colleagues (or a community advisory group) who have systematically reviewed your classroom materials (the course syllabi, assignments, reading lists), equipment, testing and grading practices.
• Written comments from those who teach courses for which a particular course is a prerequisite.
• Evaluation of contributions to curriculum/course development and improvement.
• Statements from colleagues from other institutions on such matters as how well students have been prepared for further study in your field.
• Honors or recognition, such as a distinguished teacher award or election to a committee on teaching.
• Requests for advice or acknowledgement of advice received by a committee on teaching or similar body.
• Statements from colleagues recognizing your contribution to the academic community.
• List of activities undertaken as a member of various faculty committees.

For Support Faculty

• Statements from colleagues who have observed your job performance, either as members of a faculty committee or as independent observers of a particular instructional support workshop that you might have conducted for faculty or students.
• Statements from colleagues (or a community advisory group) who have systematically reviewed the instructional support materials/programs that you have adopted.
• Written comments from those who teach courses for which you provide special instructional support services.
• Evaluation of contributions to curriculum/course development and improvement.
• Statements from colleagues from other institutions.

6. **Information From Other Sources:**

• Statements about teaching achievements from administrators at one's own institution or other institutions.
• Alumni ratings or graduate feedback.
• Comments from parents of students.
• Reports from employers of students (e.g., in work-study or internship)
• Invitations to teach from outside agencies.
• Professional recognition/awards; invitations to present a paper at a conference or to contribute to the teaching/research literature in your field.
• Other kinds of invitations based on one's reputation as a teacher (e.g., a media interview on a successful teaching innovation).
• Statements from non-academic community organizations recognizing your contribution or service.

7. How much information is needed?

There is no simple answer to this question. It should be a minimum amount that fairly represents your teaching and overall job performance. Experience suggests that a maximum of 4-8 pages plus supporting appendix materials should be sufficient. Keep in mind that your dossier is a living document that changes over time. You will be adding new items and removing other items.

8. Where do I get help in preparing my dossier?

• Other faculty: your division chair or a trusted colleague in your division, program, or subject area.
• A dossier preparation workshop featuring faculty who are willing to share their suggestions and helpful hints (these workshops are organized by the Staff Development Committee).
• Other faculty members writing dossiers at the same time. People collaborating in groups can be very beneficial -- and others can help make the task enjoyable.

Conclusion

These sources of help are meant to provide you with assistance in the preparation of your dossier. Ultimately, the burden of the work involved in preparing and writing your dossier falls on you and requires your careful attention, time, and effort. It is best to keep good records of activities, materials, and thoughts as you go through the year. When it comes time to write the dossier, you will have items ready to jog your memory and to include. Also, you should start writing the dossier well in advance of its due date. Writing it all a week or a weekend before it is due will probably result in a document you will be disappointed in later. If it is written entirely at the last minute, it will also probably interfere with your performance in the classroom.

In summary, your dossier is not simply a tool to make you look good to your Division Personnel Committee and others. It is a careful, thoughtful gathering of materials that demonstrate your self-evaluation and evaluation by others of your teaching effectiveness and overall job performance. Preparing your dossier will force you to think about the effectiveness of your teaching or instructional support, think about your personal activities, rearrange your priorities, rethink your strategies, think about ways to improve your effectiveness, and plan for the future. It may seem like a real chore, but its principal effect should be that of improving your teaching or support service -- and that should make it more than worthwhile. Approached correctly, it can be very educational -- and enriching.