

Advice on Preparing Your Tenure Dossier

Todd Timberlake, Berry College

Do Good Work

This is obvious, but ultimately your tenure decision should be about the quality of your work during your time at Berry. If the quality of your work is poor then there is little that your tenure dossier can do to help you. On the other hand, if the quality of your work is good (and I'm sure it is ...) then you want to make sure that your dossier clearly shows it.

The Structure of Your Executive Summaries

You will need to write executive summaries covering your Teaching, Scholarship, and Service. My advice is to think about how you have evolved in each of these three areas and try to identify themes in each of these areas. This may be hard or impossible in regards to Service, but I think it can be very helpful in the other two categories. For example, in thinking back over my work at Berry I was able to identify three major themes in my teaching (Expanding the Curriculum, Inquiry-Based Learning, and Teaching with Technology) as well as three themes in my scholarship (Student Research, Scholarship of Teaching, and an expansion of my research interests beyond my area of work in grad school). I think identifying and presenting these themes helped to give a coherence to my work that would otherwise be lacking. I think it also helped me to clearly identify a "trajectory" in my work as a teacher-scholar. Make sure to include some comments about new things you plan to do in the future (in both teaching and research). This makes it clear that you have thought beyond the tenure decision (and it gives the appearance that you are confident that the tenure decision will go your way).

Also, don't be afraid to discuss problems you have had. Ideally you should be able to illustrate how those problems have been resolved or at least reduced. At the very least you should indicate what you have done to prevent the problems from occurring in the future. If it's a problem that nobody would ever notice then just don't mention it, but if it is something that will be noticed by someone reviewing your dossier (for example, a particularly bad semester of student evaluations) then it is best to address the issue head-on instead of leaving the reviewer to speculate.

Examples of Executive Summaries

I have posted my executive summaries online. You can download them from my fsweb home page:

<http://fsweb.berry.edu/academic/mans/ttimberlake/#pro>

All three executive summaries (along with my CV) are listed in the Professional Information section. Please feel free to download and print these if you wish.

Documentation

Make sure to include documentation of your work where appropriate (I probably included too much). Here are some suggestions of things to include:

- All of your Annual Evaluations, Service Reports, Course Evaluation Effectiveness Measures, and evaluation materials from your Third-Year Review.
- All of your student evaluations (numbers and comments). You may want to highlight some comments, but it is probably better to quote particular comments in your Executive Summaries.
- Grant proposals (whether funded or not).

- Documentation of participation in workshops, etc.
- Letters/emails from students, parents, colleagues praising your work.
- Syllabi and a few select course materials (exemplary assignments, printouts of VikingWeb pages, grading rubrics, etc.).
- All publications whether published, in press, under review, or in progress. Make clear the status of each item.
- Referee reports for published, accepted, or under review articles. Letters of acceptance for articles still in press.
- Any publicity items that have highlighted your work (Berry magazine, Campus Carrier, etc.).
- Letters/emails from faculty at other institutions, particularly if you work with them on research, etc.
- Any noteworthy things you have created as part of your service efforts (reports, surveys, web pages, etc.).
- Letters/emails thanking you for service activities.
- Documentation of service to discipline (i.e. your name on a published list of reviewers for a journal).

Organization

Here are some hints on how to organize the dossier:

- Include a cover letter at the very front that gives an overview of the great work you've done at Berry. You should mention your teaching, scholarship, and service (this is a great place to introduce the themes I mentioned above) and try to tie them together to provide the big picture of your work at Berry. This letter should lay out the basic argument for why you deserve tenure, without getting into details.
- Next you need a Table of Contents, the mandated Self-Evaluation Form, and then your CV.
- Next should come your executive summaries. I recommend that you don't put documentation and supporting materials in the same place as the executive summaries. Put these materials in Appendices and refer to them in the executive summaries. That way a reviewer can read straight through your three executive summaries and really get the story you want them to get, without getting bogged down in details. If they want to take a more detailed look at something then they can flip to the relevant appendix and see the details.
- Fill in the rest of the dossier with supporting materials and documentation (as listed above), organized carefully into appendices. Try to hold back and not put too much into this (I almost certainly went overboard here).

Tables and Graphs

I found it helpful to summarize a lot of information by creating tables and graphs, which were included within my executive summaries. Here are a few examples of tables and graphs from my dossier:

Course	Number	Contact Hours	Students	Credit Hours
Regular Classes	21	62	488	1456
Laboratories	13	26	227	227
WI Classes	4	12	26	78
Honors Classes	3	3*	12	36
BCC 100	2	0	38	38
Directed Studies	4	0	4	12
Total [†]	49	105	804	1854

* This figure does not include contact hours for a student who took honorized versions of PHY 302 and 402I, because these hours are accounted for elsewhere in the table.

[†] Totals have been adjusted so as not to double count the hours for a student who took an honorized version of a WI course.

Table 1: Teaching load summary

Academic Year	Published Papers	Presentations	Student Presentations	Total
2001-2002 [†]	1	2	0	3
2002-2003	1	1	2	4
2003-2004	0	4	0	4
2004-2005	1	0	2	3
2005-2006	2	2	3	7

[†] The data for the 2001-2002 academic year represents work completed in July and August of 2001, prior to the start of my term at Berry.

Table 2: Summary of scholarship activities

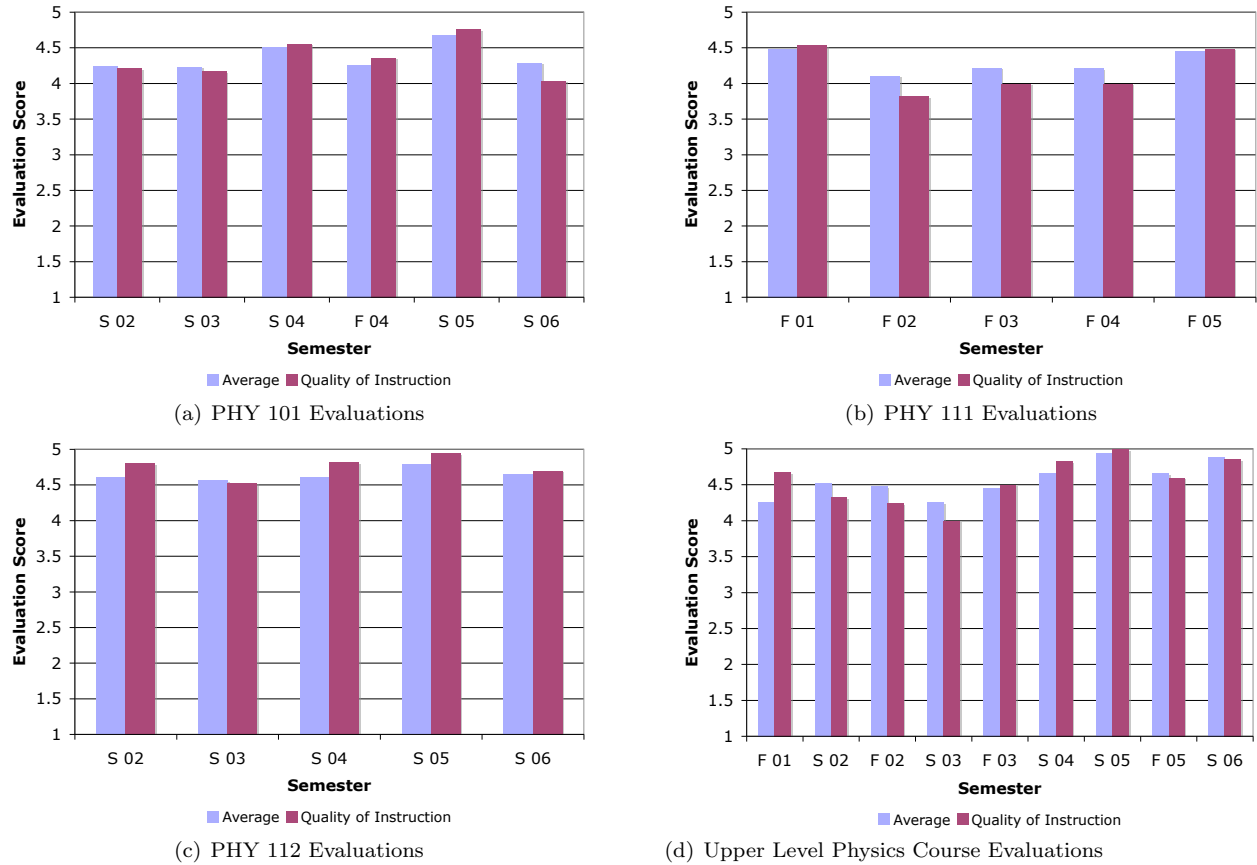


Figure 1: Histograms of evaluation scores (2001-2006)

Journal Title	Acceptance Rate ^a	Impact Factor (Rank) ^b	PageRank (Rank) ^c
<i>American Journal of Physics</i>	≈25-30%	0.792	NA
<i>Physical Review A</i>	60%	2.589	1.55×10^{-3} (8)
<i>Physical Review E</i>	62%	2.202	2.34×10^{-3} (5)
<i>Physical Review Letters</i>	37%	7.035 (7)	8.41×10^{-3} (1)

^a Acceptance rates for regular articles during 2004.

^b From the 2003 Journal Citation Report published by Thomson ISI. Rank is among all physics journals in the report.

^c Weighted PageRank is a measure intended to reflect the prestige of the journal (see “Journal Status,” by Johan Bollen, Marko A. Rodriguez, and Herbert Van de Sompel, arxiv.org/cs.DL/0601030 in Appendix ??). Rank is among all physics journals in the 2003 Journal Citation Report.

Table 3: Indicators of journal quality

Title of Article	Total Citations	Excl. Self	Excl. Co-authors
High harmonic generation in systems ...	9	7	5
Changes in Floquet-state structure ...	17	15	9
Phase-space picture of resonance ...	5	4	2

Table 4: Citations of prior work