

DFA

Dalhousie Faculty Association

Laying the Foundation:

Beginning your Tenure-Stream Appointment at Dalhousie University

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*“Laying the Foundation”
is available online through the DFA website*

<http://www.dfa.ns.ca>

Preface

The road to tenure starts on the first day of your appointment to a probationary tenure track contract.

While five years may seem like a long time to prepare for your tenure application, most faculty members are too busy with their day- to- day work to give it much thought. And, for most faculty members the reappointment procedure – which occurs in the third year of your probationary tenure track contract – will come upon you very quickly.

For most faculty members the reappointment process is not particularly challenging or stressful – after all the criteria and standards are not the same as for tenure. However, the reappointment process can be a valuable dress rehearsal for the more rigorous tenure review, which will follow in a short two - year period.

Early planning and preparation can pave the road to a successful reappointment and subsequently to a positive tenure review. This booklet is intended to help you on your way.

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1. *The nature of your appointment:*

a) *The expectations of your initial appointment:*

Academic staff who will be considered for tenure are hired on either a *probationary tenure-track* contract or a *tenure-track* contract.

Probationary tenure-track appointments are entry-level appointments, which ultimately lead to a consideration for tenure. Typically, *probationary tenure-track* appointments are for three years. In the fall term of your third year, you will be considered for reappointment to a *tenure-track* appointment. You may have the period of service on a *probationary tenure-track* appointment reduced if you held a limited term appointment at Dalhousie. You should consult the DFA office for more information.

Tenure-track appointments are usually for four years. The timing of tenure consideration is stated in your letter of appointment. In general, faculty appointed to *tenure-track* positions have held academic positions at other universities. If you have been appointed to a *tenure-track* appointment, you will not go through a 'reappointment' process – your first *official* assessment will be for tenure.

The length of your appointment and the timing for consideration for reappointment and tenure are described in your letter of appointment.

The general university criteria for tenure are described in the DFA/Board of Governors Collective Agreement at Clause 15.03. Normally, you will be expected to engage in teaching and research; you will have some responsibility for collegial service and to engage in outside professional activity. Unless otherwise stated in your letter of appointment, teaching and research constitute your principal duties.

Academic staff hired on tenure stream contracts, i.e., either a *probationary tenure-track* or *tenure-track* contract must be given the current Regulations in your Faculty regarding the additional criteria and standards that will be used to assess your application for tenure. In most Faculties, the Regulations do not describe criteria and standards for

reappointment. However, they do describe any additional criteria and standards for tenure and, as such, they provide useful information and identify goals for your tenure consideration.

The amount of teaching and research, as well as the amount of administrative service required of you, is dependent on your Department and Faculty.

b) The letter of offer:

Ultimately, you will receive a letter from the President welcoming you to the University. Usually, the conditions of your academic appointment are specified in the letter of offer from your Dean. This letter must describe any special terms attached to your appointment. The letter describes the kind of appointment you will hold, its length and the timing for reappointment and tenure. In addition, the letter may contain a description of specific expectations that are attached to your appointment. For example, you may be required to apply for a certain grant [SSHRC or NSERC or CIHR]. If you have not completed your Ph.D., you may be required to complete it before reappointment or tenure consideration.

c) Expectations regarding research:

Most of you are very familiar with the importance of obtaining grants to support your research. The type of grant and your ability to secure one early in your career is one of the most important goals that you will have. Many of the reappointment and tenure recommendation letters will comment – whether it is in Engineering, Medicine, Science or FASS, - favourably or negatively on your ability to secure a grant.

If you do ‘bench based’ research, you will want to be assured of appropriate space requirements and equipment - ideally with generous start-up funds -minimally, with the funds necessary to get your lab up and running.

Expectations regarding research productivity can be vague. At best, there may be *informal* indications regarding the desirable number of research publications. The actual requirements will vary from Faculty to Faculty – some Faculties (Medicine, for example) are more definitive regarding the quantity and quality expectations of your publication record. If you are on a tenure path, you need to be very clear about the research expectations.

In the *2017/20 Collective Agreement (see Clause 17.17)*, in keeping with the Boyer model, the definition of scholarship was expanded to specifically include **scholarship of discovery, integration, application and/or teaching**. Further, the review and

assessment of scholarship should recognize “**non-traditional forms of scholarship and traditional ways of knowing.**”

Information regarding the Boyer model can be found at this link:

<https://dfa.ns.ca/images/BoyerScholarshipReconsidered.pdf>

d) A ‘normal’ teaching load:

It is often said that you will never get tenure based on your teaching performance alone. While that may be true, it is also true that bad teaching will almost certainly put your tenure application in jeopardy. Many universities have centres that assist academics to improve their teaching performance. At Dalhousie, the Centre for Learning and Teaching is a valuable resource and participating in their programs is a requirement for all newly hired academic staff. They also produce a *Teaching Dossier* document that will help you record your teaching philosophy and performance.

The amount of teaching that is expected of you depends on your Department and Faculty. Ultimately, the amount of teaching will be determined in consultation with your Department Chair or Director and then approved by the Dean. Since teaching takes many forms you need to determine the expectations regarding graduate supervision, teaching large undergraduate classes, and distance education, if any.

If you have been appointed to a *probationary tenure-track* position, you will be given a teaching and administrative workload that is less than the ‘normal’ teaching and administrative workload for your Department. This reduction, which will be in place for the first two years of your appointment, will allow you to focus attention on establishing your research. Normally, reductions in teaching and administrative workloads do not apply to faculty holding *tenure-track* appointments.

Be very cautious about taking on too much teaching at the start of your academic career.

It is hard to turn down a Department chair who argues that the additional teaching is ‘for the good of the department’ or ‘you will be helping the department get through a difficult time.’ After all, one of your obligations is to be a good department citizen. Further, you may assume that the additional teaching will stand you in good stead when you undergo reappointment or tenure consideration. This is rarely the case.

It is very difficult to recover from a pattern of heavy teaching over a number of years. Even when you have been promised, “this is just for this year!” be extremely wary. A heavy teaching workload can lead to negative consequences if it affects your research productivity. A heavy teaching load can be a crushing burden on a new faculty member – teaching courses that are not in your specialty area – teaching large, introductory

classes with little or no TA support – these can produce negative assessments of your performance – not only in teaching but also in research.

In certain circumstances, (for example, major change in Department curriculum or a teaching or administrative workload that is above the norm for the Department – see Clause 15.13(c) of the DFA/Board Collective Agreement) you may be able to request a deferral of tenure consideration – this deferral request is *only* available during the *tenure-track* appointment. If you have concerns about your teaching or administrative workload, you should consult the DFA office for advice.

e) Administrative service:

In some respects, administrative service is like teaching, while it will not ensure a successful application, it can stand in the way of tenure if you have a negative assessment. Furthermore, heavy administrative loads can affect your teaching and research performance.

If you have been appointed to a *probationary tenure-track* position, you will be given a teaching and administrative workload that is less than the normal teaching and administrative workload for your Department – for the first two years of your appointment. Normally, reductions in administrative workloads do not apply to faculty holding *tenure-track* appointments.

Most institutions try to treat their new academic staff kindly and not expect heavy committee involvement in the first years of their appointment. However, consistent with academic self-governance, administrative service is both a right and a responsibility. It is important to be able to demonstrate your collegiality – most universities will consider this criterion as part of your evaluation for reappointment and tenure. As with teaching, however, committee work for new academics should be a *gradual assumption of normal duties* and not a full administrative load.

Before undertaking any significant administrative responsibility, make sure you have fully considered the ramifications to your pre-tenure career.

If you are a Member of a ‘designated group’ (see Article 1 of the Collective Agreement for definition) and are providing higher than normal academic administrative service in a year when your workload is considered to be full time, you are entitled to an overload stipend and/or support for teaching and/or research (see Clause 20.09 of the Collective Agreement).

f) Annual evaluation:

Some institutions require an annual assessment of pre-tenure faculty. While this can be stressful, it does serve a useful function if it provides an opportunity for improvement or correction - especially if you are heading down the wrong path.

At Dalhousie, there is no formal mechanism for yearly evaluation. In most Faculties, Members are required to submit an Annual Report. In some units, the department chair and/or the Dean use the Annual Report as an opportunity to meet with you to discuss your progress. It is important to use these meetings as an opportunity for self-reflection. Are there things that you need to do? What are the ways you can improve?

Do not assume that because you are working extremely hard, that you are on the right path and doing what you need to do to get tenure.

2. Reappointment: Your first official assessment

a) What are the expectations for reappointment?

Generally, the evaluation for reappointment from *probationary tenure-track* to *tenure-track* is less onerous than the assessment for tenure. Clause 14.15 of the Collective Agreement describes the criteria and standards to be met in the reappointment process.

The evaluators consider evidence to determine:

- (i) if you have fulfilled the relevant provisions of your appointment as specified in your letter of appointment;
- (ii) the quality of your teaching, research, scholarly, artistic and/or professional activity; and
- (iii) if you have performed these duties to a '*satisfactory*' level.

At Dalhousie, *probationary tenure-track* candidates are assessed by only one committee – your Department Committee. The Department Chair may also provide a letter of recommendation. The Dean will assess your application file, followed by the President who will make his recommendation to the Board of Governors.

If you who identify as Aboriginal or African Nova Scotian, you may elect to have a non-voting representative on your Department or unit level committee. See Clause 14.15(c). (For Continuing Education professors see Clause 37.03(c)).

Most people are successful in their reappointment application but there may be certain hints that you are having difficulties in some area. It is important to focus on areas of concern for the next assessment – tenure.

Note: If your first appointment has been to a *tenure-track* position, you do not undergo reappointment consideration, you undergo tenure consideration at the time indicated in your letter of appointment. For more information, you should review “*Under the Microscope.*”

b) What should I do to prepare for reappointment?

While your reappointment application must be designed to show you meet the criteria and standards described in Clause 14.15 of the Collective Agreement (see above), it would be prudent to orient your application toward meeting the tenure criteria when your application is presented in two years time. In that respect, you should fully understand and work toward meeting the criteria for tenure even though you are applying for reappointment.

The general criteria described in Article 15 of the Collective Agreement broadly set the criteria you must meet to advance a successful tenure application. In addition, each Faculty is entitled to establish additional criteria and standards that are specific to their discipline. In some instances, the Faculty Regulations (for e.g. the Faculty of Medicine) provide a clear set of expectations for tenure and promotion. However, most Faculties establish additional criteria and standards that are general, at best. It is critical that you gain an *early* understanding of the tenure criteria and standards in your Faculty.

c) Are there specific rules for submitting a reappointment application?

Many departments have a standardized format for the submission of the reappointment application. For example, you may be required to organize your C.V. in a particular way. You may be required to submit a certain number of copies of your application package – one for each committee member. Be sure to check your Department and/or Faculty website well in advance of the 15 September deadline to ensure you follow Department protocols.

d) What happens to the timing for reappointment if I take a pregnancy/parental leave? Can I request a deferral of my reappointment application?

Members applying for *tenure* consideration ‘may elect to defer’ tenure consideration for one year. There is no similar provision for deferral of *reappointment* consideration.

However, it is not unusual to request that your reappointment consideration be deferred for a period of time while you access your pregnancy/parental leave. You should contact the DFA office for advice and assistance.

e) If I feel I am ready for tenure consideration while still in my probationary tenure-track period, can I apply for tenure instead of reappointment?

Clause 15.10 of the Collective Agreement indicates that a Member may initiate 'early' consideration for tenure. If your tenure application is unsuccessful, you will continue in your *probationary tenure-track* or *tenure-track* appointment with tenure consideration occurring at the prescribed time.

Members on *probationary tenure-track* contracts who apply for 'early' consideration, usually submit an application for reappointment and an application for tenure – at the same time.

f) What should I do if I feel I am not quite ready for reappointment consideration? Can I defer?

Deferral of reappointment consideration is not common and is not a decision to be made lightly. However, there may be particular circumstances that merit thoughtful consideration of this option. You should contact the DFA office for advice and assistance.

g) I was given a copy of the Faculty Regulations at the time I was appointed. What should I do if the Faculty Regulations change before I undergo reappointment or tenure consideration?

You have the right to be evaluated on the basis of the Faculty Regulations that were in place at the time of your initial *probationary tenure-track* or *tenure-track* appointment. Alternatively, you may elect to be evaluated on the basis of the Faculty criteria and standards in place at the time of your tenure consideration (see Clause 15.04 and 15.07 of the DFA/ Board Collective Agreement).

h) What is a ‘Special File’? Can I see what is in it?

A ‘Special File’ is created when you submit your reappointment (or tenure) application. It contains an inventory sheet, which describes the contents of the file and any additions or deletions to it as the Special File works its way through the system. In addition to your application, it will contain the recommendations of the Department Committee, the Department Chair, the Dean and the President. As well, it will contain the Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) documentation and solicited and unsolicited letters pertaining to your application.

You have a right to review its contents within two days of making the request to see the file.

i) Do my Department colleagues have access to the ‘Special File’?

Other than the persons charged with considering your application (for example, the Committee and the Dean), only your DFA colleagues (i.e., your department colleagues who are Members of the DFA) are entitled to review your Special File.

j) Am I required to provide copies of the Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) for each of my courses?

The results of the common questions and *signed* student comments (with identifying information removed) are used in the reappointment, tenure and promotion processes. Unsigned student comments are provided *only* to the course instructor.

In addition, the summary data for Items 1-8 are made available to students via a secure website when:

- The instructor has given permission for these results to be made available to students;
- When course student response rates are forty (40) percent or higher; and,
- Where course size is ten (10) students or more.

The *Senate Policy for Student Ratings of Instruction* provides that, “Exclusions from the student accessible SRI summary reporting site may also occur under the following conditions:

- Where an instructor is in his/her first three years of teaching;

- In contexts where the evaluation of teaching using the SRI instrument may not be appropriate such as clinical teaching or where courses are team taught or taught by multiple instructors;
- On the recommendation of an instructor’s department head or chair.”

When undergoing reappointment or tenure consideration, the Collective Agreement requires the evaluators to take various factors into account when interpreting the results of the SRI’s. They include:

- (i) Number of times taught and consistency over time,
- (ii) Number of students enrolled,
- (iii) Response rate,
- (iv) Departmental mean and variability,
- (v) Class material,
- (vi) Level and type of class (for example, Introductory, advanced, compulsory, optional, method of class delivery)
- (vii) Expertise of Member.

k) Will my reappointment application be sent to external referees’ for consideration?

Assessment by external referees is the norm for tenure and promotion but less common for reappointment consideration. However, if they are required, half of the persons approached for recommendations must be your choice. You have a right to review the full contents of the letters from the external referees. The identifying information (letterhead and signature block) are removed *only* if the author requests that they be withheld.

l) Should I ask to meet with the committee? The Department Chair? The Dean?

Some Department committees will ask if you want to meet with them – you have a right to be present for all of the committee work with the exception of the actual deliberation of your application. Most Members choose not to meet with the committee unless requested by the committee to do so. However, you should always indicate your willingness to meet with them if they require clarification. Additionally, you should always be willing to provide further information if requested. If you have received a negative recommendation from the Department Committee (or the Department Chair or

the Dean), you may want to request an opportunity to meet with them. You should contact the DFA office for advice and assistance.

m) Will I receive advance notice from the committee if they intend to write a negative evaluation?

Unlike the tenure process, there is no requirement that you receive advance notice of an anticipated negative recommendation. Therefore, your first indication of a problem may be when you receive the letter from the Department Committee (or Chair or Dean).

n) Am I given a copy of the Department evaluation? What about the Dean's letter, the President's letter?

You should receive a copy of each recommendation as it is sent to the next evaluator, i.e., when the Department committee sends its recommendation to the Department Chair, you should receive a copy of the letter *at the same time*. Likewise, when the Dean writes his/her letter to the President, you will be provided with a copy *at the same time*.

o) What happens if I receive a negative decision from the committee?

If the Department committee recommendation is negative, you should seek the advice of the DFA to assess whether you should ask to meet with the committee and/or write a letter to the Committee or others assessing your application.

p) Can I appeal a negative decision?

Unlike certain situations in the tenure process, there is *no appeal* from a negative decision on reappointment. If you believe that fair procedures were not followed, you may have grounds to file a grievance under the provisions of the DFA/Board Collective Agreement. You should contact the DFA for assistance. [Grievances must be filed within 15 business days of notice of the matter giving rise to the grievance complaint. You are advised to consult the DFA as soon as possible.]

q) When will I find out if I am reappointed to a tenure-track position?

You should receive notice of the decision by 31 October of the year in which you apply. From time to time, this deadline is extended by agreement of the DFA and the Board. If you have not received your decision by this date, you should contact the DFA for advice.

Practical Advice: Preparing for Reappointment consideration

I. Getting Started:

- (i) ***Start Early:*** Reappointment consideration occurs in the third year of your probationary tenure-track appointment and is quickly followed by tenure consideration two years later. Don't put off thinking about your reappointment and tenure application. Both procedures have an element of uncertainty, which can lead to insecurity. A thoughtful and organized reappointment application will create a good base upon which to build a successful tenure application.
- (ii) ***Find a Department mentor:*** Most of your colleagues have experienced the uncertainty that is inherent in the reappointment and tenure process. They are a valuable resource in helping to identify the specific criteria and standards that are needed to be successful in your applications. If they have served on Department and/or Faculty committees, they will know what the expectations are for teaching and research. They are also a useful resource in reviewing your application and helping you to understand the Department and Faculty culture.
- (iii) ***Become knowledgeable regarding Criteria and Standards in your Faculty:*** When you were initially appointed, you were provided with the Faculty Regulations for tenure. Standards may change over time. Ensure that you are aware of the Regulations that apply to you. If the Faculty criteria and/or standards have changed since your initial appointment, you have the right to elect the set of criteria and standards, which will apply to your application for tenure. [The criteria and standards for reappointment are set in Clause 14.15 of the Collective Agreement]
- (iv) ***Be mindful of your workload:*** The Collective Agreement specifies that new probationary tenure-track faculty are to receive lighter teaching and administrative workloads. New faculty are keen to demonstrate they are collegial and willing to share the department workload. Remember, you will be judged on teaching, research and service. It is important to provide evidence on all aspects of your duties. Do not focus on one aspect of your responsibilities to the exclusion of other criteria.
- (v) ***Address trouble spots early on:*** If you are having difficulty in some area, find ways to address the problem. If you need advice about your teaching, seek help from the Centre for Learning and Teaching and assistance and advice from your colleagues.

- (vi) **Annual review:** Faculty members are required to submit an Annual Report, describing their activities during the preceding year. In some instances these Reports are submitted and filed without comment. In other cases, Department Chairs and Deans use them as an opportunity to meet with you to discuss your progress toward reappointment and tenure. Be proactive in your discussions about your progress – are there areas which could be improved? Are you on target in your research plans?
- (vii) **Identify possible ‘arms length’ referees:** The selection of an external referee is one of the most important decisions you will make as a tenure candidate. Some Faculties have specific rules regarding eligibility and most state that the referee should be at ‘arms length.’ While external referees are not usually required for the reappointment process, you should reflect on possible candidates (half of the referees approached must be selected by you) for the tenure process to come.
- (viii) **Keep Yourself Organized:** Both your reappointment and your tenure applications should be organized in a manner that allows the evaluator to easily access the information and reach conclusions about whether you meet the criteria and standards. Check with colleagues in your Faculty and across campus about how they organized their application. Make sure your application package is carefully indexed. Make sure your application is clear, accurate, comprehensive and persuasive.
- (ix) **Continuously update your Reappointment file:** Prepare drafts of your teaching and research dossiers and update them as you go through your appointment. Continuously update your C.V. Include copies of your published material (books, articles). Determine how many copies of the documentation should be included in your application.

II. Getting It Together:

- (i) **Prepare an Executive Summary and Covering letter:** In essence, the Executive Summary is a synopsis of the evidence that the evaluator can expect to see in the application and details how you meet each of the criteria and standards. Your covering letter should be brief and should summarize why you feel you deserve reappointment (tenure) and the contribution you will make to the university. These should be prepared after you have organized your application – it will provide an opportunity to be fully knowledgeable about your package and to reflect on areas of strength and possible areas of confusion.

- (ii) ***Anticipate areas of confusion and provide clarification:*** While your Department colleagues may understand the nature of your research, you should not assume that your Faculty colleagues, the Dean or the President will understand or appreciate the value and significance of your scholarly work. Ideally, the external referees will address this but at the reappointment stage, where there are no referees; it is your obligation to ensure the decision makers understand the various aspects of your file. (For example, the type and importance of your journals; research grants, citation factors, etc.)
- (iii) ***Comply with Department & Faculty Deadlines:*** The Collective Agreement states that your application must be presented no later than 15 September in the relevant year. However, your department may have other deadlines, for example, you may be required to submit a list of possible referees (for tenure) in the spring or summer.
- (iv) ***Be reflective:*** Consider what you have accomplished and ensure your package clearly describes what you want the committees and decision makers to know about you. Consider how best to explain your work. Use tables to describe quantitative data such as class size, student evaluations, research grants.
- (v) ***Don't make extra work for the committee and decision makers:*** Understand that the number of files that evaluators review increases as applications work their way through the system. Remember that your Dean is required to evaluate all reappointment, tenure and promotion files submitted in the Faculty. The President will consider all applications from across the University. Ensure your application is thorough, well presented and easy to peruse (use an index, tabs, page numbers).
- (vi) ***Meeting with the Committee, Dean:*** In your covering letter, you should offer to meet with the Department Committee, Department Chair, and Dean to clarify any questions they may have about your application. Always signify your willingness to provide additional information and/or clarify aspects of your package that may be causing confusion.
- (vii) ***Market your strengths:*** Ensure you properly document positive feedback if you have received awards, letters with positive comments from former students, colleagues and collaborators from other universities, etc.
- (viii) ***Address trouble spots:*** While you are entitled to submit your application in the most favourable light, you should not attempt to hide or ignore trouble spots. Address them succinctly and honestly. Find a way to demonstrate that you dealt with the problem and made improvements (for example, teaching evaluations in a particular course improved over time; you obtained advice/assistance from the Centre for Learning & Teaching).

- (ix) ***Know your rights and monitor the process:*** Do not forget about your application once it has been submitted. Be aware of the deadlines; monitor additions to the ‘Special File.’ Be aware of which evaluator has the file.

CHECKLIST: Preparing for Reappointment Consideration

1. General:

- _____ Review Clause 14.15 of the DFA/Board of Governors Collective Agreement
- _____ Review DFA/Board of Governors articles regarding student evaluations,
- _____ Review Faculty Regulations regarding tenure and promotion – to determine if you are on track
- _____ Review Faculty website for presentation of your file, for example, your C. V.
- _____ Discuss your progress with your Department Chair/Dean at your annual review.
- _____ Review DFA booklets “*Laying the Foundation*” and “*Under the Microscope*”
- _____ Consult with faculty colleagues and others across campus for helpful strategies in preparing your reappointment application
- _____ Know your rights! Make sure you understand the procedures

2. Teaching:

- _____ Review Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) results each year.
- _____ Analyze the SRI data. How do your SRI’s compare to those your Department colleagues?
- _____ Is there a pattern of improvement each year?
- _____ Develop your *Teaching Dossier* – Describe curricular changes, innovations you have developed, your teaching philosophy
- _____ Describe teaching methodologies and processes for evaluation of student performance
- _____ Provide course outlines, syllabi
- _____ Indicate teaching improvement courses and/ or workshops you have taken.
- _____ Describe future teaching goals

- _____ Seek advice/assistance from the Centre for Learning and Teaching
- _____ Notes cross- appointments
- _____ Note graduate student supervision

3. Contributions to an Academic Discipline:

- _____ Identify areas of contributions – publications at workshops and conferences, research grants received, research grant proposals submitted
- _____ Describe the type of journals or textbooks where articles are published. Indicate whether they are refereed
- _____ Consider other examples of success in your publication record. For example, an article or chapter published in subsequent editions of a text is a good indicator of contribution to the discipline
- _____ Describe overall research objectives and short and long-term goals
- _____ Demonstrate consistent advancement and refinement of your work, technique and analysis
- _____ If your research focuses on a number of areas of interest, make sure it appears logical, consistent and integrated (i.e., describe how it fits within a programme of research)
- _____ Citation Record
- _____ Describe collaboration; independent research

4. Ability and Willingness to work with Colleagues:

- _____ Describe administrative responsibilities within your Department, the Faculty and the University
- _____ Describe your contribution to the committee. Describe your responsibility and what you accomplished
- _____ How does your administrative service compare to that of your colleagues?

5. Outside Professional Activities:

- _____ Describe your contribution to a professional organization, board, etc.
- _____ Describe your membership in professional and/or academic organizations
- _____ Describe your participation in conferences, workshops
- _____ Describe your service to the community

