

**Tenure and Promotion Handbook**  
**Faculty Manual §4.VII. E.12:**  
***Initiator's Statement of Recommendation and Rationale***

*[The dossier shall contain] Statement(s) of recommendation and rationale prepared by the initiator(s) of the candidacy. The statement(s) shall make a specific recommendation as to whether tenure or promotion should be granted and support the recommendation with a rationale that synthesizes the evidence in the dossier in relation to each of the categories and criteria for faculty evaluation (Section 4.VI.B). The rationale shall also consider the evidence in the dossier in relation to the department Statement on Significant Scholarly/Artistic Work or, in the case of a joint appointment, the joint statement of expectations for teaching, scholarly or artistic work, and service. The rationale shall specify the number of tenured members of the department whose statements recommend granting tenure or promotion and the number whose statements recommend against such action. The rationale shall also reference the opinions of all non-tenured members of the candidate's department who are full-time during the year of the review, and who have completed at least two years of full-time service at the college prior to the year of the review. The years of service need not have been consecutive, but they must have occurred during the candidate's years of service. In the case of an interdisciplinary teaching assignment (identified as in Section 4.VII.F), the rationale shall reference appraisals of that candidate's teaching in that assignment, if warranted under conditions described in Section 4.VII.F. In the case of a joint appointment, the initiators may prepare independent statements.*

**1. Individuals who have access to this item:**

- The initiator
- The candidate's Associate Dean
- The Dean of the College
- Members of the Tenure and Promotion Committee
- The President
- Members of the Board of Regents

**2. Participants in preparing this item:**

- *Initiator* – Ensures that dossier includes all required items; reads contents of dossier and prepares statement. In cases of joint appointment, the two initiators may collaborate in preparing a single document or may write independently.

**3. Guidelines and suggestions for the content of this item:**

- The initiator's statement of recommendation and rationale is separate from other documents the initiator may contribute to the dossier (e.g., a statement as a tenured member of the department).
- The rationale should address each criterion within each category of faculty work in the *Faculty Manual* "Standards for Faculty Evaluation" (Section 4.VI.B).

- The rationale should include a variety of evidence and provide concrete examples and illustrations to support the recommendation. The most common sources of evidence for each category of faculty performance include the following:
  - *Contributions to student learning and development*: Candidate's portfolio of teaching materials; candidate's professional statement; peer reviews of teaching; student and alumni reviews of teaching; statements of tenured members of the department; opinions of non-tenured members.
  - *Contributions of scholarly/artistic work*: Candidate's portfolio of scholarly/artistic work; candidate's professional statement; evaluation of external reviewers; statements of tenured members of the department; opinions of non-tenured members.
  - *Contributions of leadership and service*: Statements from St. Olaf colleagues outside the candidate's department; candidate's professional statement; reviews of administrative work (if applicable); statements of tenured members of the department; opinions of non-tenured members.
  
- Some contributions to the dossier that typically focus on just one category of faculty evaluation may include information about the candidate's work in other categories as well. For example, a colleague in another department may have team-taught with the candidate, or a former student may have collaborated on a research project with the candidate. The initiator should include this information wherever appropriate.
  
- The statement is also to reference "the opinions of all full-time, non-tenured members of the candidate's department who have completed at least two years of service at the College."
  - Faculty members in this category include those who are full-time during the year of the review, and who have completed at least two years of full-time service at the college prior to the year of the review. The years of service need not have been consecutive, but they must have occurred during the candidate's years of service, to allow sufficient opportunities for observation of the candidate's work.
  - While the non-tenured members are not expected to provide a systematic review of the candidate's performance, they should be referred to the *Faculty Manual* "Standards for Faculty Evaluation," and encouraged to review the candidate's CV and portfolio of teaching and professional materials.
  - Those providing opinions are not required to make a recommendation; they may elect to convey no opinion.
  
- The *Faculty Manual* does not prohibit chairs from soliciting opinions of the candidate's work from other knowledgeable department members, such as faculty members on phased-in retirement who have resigned tenure and are not currently full-time, or other part-time instructors with many years of experience in the department.
  
- The rationale should include any information about the candidate's work that is not referenced elsewhere in the dossier. For example, a candidate may have contributed

service to the department that is not noted in the tenured members' statements and might not be visible to students. The initiator can include this supplementary information in the rationale.

- It is important for the initiator's statement to discuss candidly the areas of weakness or lesser achievement in a candidate's portfolio of contributions; even the most accomplished candidates do not do everything equally well. Rather than avoiding mention of any concerns, initiators should acknowledge them, provide any context that helps to explain why concerns exist, and then describe what the candidate, the initiator, the department, and any other colleagues may be doing (or planning to do) to help the candidate improve his or her performance in these areas. This information is now specifically invited in the revised Standards for Faculty Evaluation. Section 4.VI.B.1.e requires evidence of a faculty member's activities in "continuing [his or her] own development as an instructor," and Section 4.VI.B.2 refers to sustained engagement and dissemination in scholarly or artistic work. An initiator's rationale that fairly summarizes the entire pattern of evidence in the dossier is more convincing than a rationale that is silent with respect to any evidence of weakness.
- **Recommended length: 700-1,600 words** ([see optional template form](#))