Excellence in Teaching Panelist Remarks
Dr. Floyd Robison, IU School of Education
Campus P&T Committee Member

What I Like to Find in a Teaching Dossier

When I review a teaching dossier, I reflect on several things, things I hope the dossier will include so I can speak to my colleagues with excitement about the candidate’s pedagogical expertise.

The first thing I hope to find in the dossier is a powerful philosophy of teaching. A teaching philosophy, to me, forms the foundation of the teaching dossier. It should justify the inclusion of all other materials in the file. I’ll suggest that a good teaching philosophy has four major elements, as follows: (1) a description of the ways students learn under varying conditions or when learning various types subject matter, (2) a description of the personal and professional attributes of an effective teacher, (3) a description of the methods teachers facilitate learning under those conditions, and (4) questions that the candidate wants to address or ways the philosophy may be expanded and how the candidate wants to undertake that expansion. The ideas in the teaching philosophy are enhanced when they are grounded in the literatures of teaching and learning. A teaching philosophy with references to the recent literature is most impressive.

The second thing I hope to find in the dossier is a wide range of activities that enact the teaching philosophy. These activities are described in thorough, well-organized, detailed syllabi and materials describing course and curriculum development.

Third, I’m excited when I find in the dossier projects to study and improve one or more elements of the candidate’s teaching philosophy. This often takes the forms of funded and submitted grants, articles, talks, and conference presentations that describe those projects and their outcomes. It’s also exciting to find evidence that the candidate has described the teaching philosophy and applied it to learning problems or situations in the candidate’s field as well as other fields. Again, these applications are described in conference papers, invited talks, and publications, among other forms of dissemination. I note that the refereed publications, talks, and presentations indicate that the candidate’s work has risen to the top of the products that were competitively submitted, then selected by the candidate’s professional peers. The invited talks and publications allow me to conclude that this candidate is sought out to share views on teaching, and is establishing a reputation beyond the local level.

Of course, the true merit of one’s teaching philosophy and methods is determined by their reception by students, colleagues, and the professional community. Summaries of student course evaluations are the bottom line of this evaluation of merit. But peers should have a significant role in evaluating a candidate’s teaching. Peer reviews should be conducted at least annually in addition to student reviews, by colleagues who themselves are respected teachers in our institution. These reviews provide additional information that external referees need In order to justify their favorable impressions of the candidate’s teaching. Then, of course, other products are necessary to tell the story of the candidate’s teaching success. The publications,
presentations, talks, grants, course development, and curriculum development activities inform the external reviewers of scope and quality of the candidate’s evolution as an teacher.

Thank you for allowing me to participate in your journey. Best wishes!