Retention, Promotion, Tenure (RPT) Week:
Professional Standards Committee Panel

Ten key points to consider:

1. Under each category: (a) teaching/advising, (b) research/scholarship, and (c) service, succinctly make your case as to how you meet your departmental criteria (since they differ across the university) for the bid you are making. It can be helpful to explicitly cross-reference your accomplishments to departmental criteria or prime indicators.

2. Make sure you CV is in tip-top shape, since it is a key document reviewed by PSC members.

3. When presenting teaching data, it can be helpful to offer a table that includes relevant information (e.g., course, semester taught, enrollment, overall course average based on student ratings); this makes it easier for a reviewer to consider lots of data in a snapshot. Then your narrative can offer qualitative aspects related to your teaching (e.g., course development, your own professional development, responses to student feedback).

4. When presenting scholarship be clear about what is the "coin of the realm" in your discipline. Remember, reviewers outside your field of study may not be fully aware of expectations within your discipline -- so it can be helpful to remind or inform them. With some fields peer-reviewed journal articles are of key importance, where the quality of the journal may be based on metrics such an impact factor, acceptance rate, and circulation. For other disciplines "the book" is what matters most along with the quality or reputation of the press. In still other disciplines conference proceedings can be very important.

5. Make the case for the quality and impact of your scholarship using what is valued in your discipline. In some disciplines (e.g. physical sciences, social sciences) this may be journal and citation metrics. For other disciplines (e.g., humanities, performing or visual arts) this may include positive reviews of books, poetry, performances, or exhibitions. Increasingly, social media and/or the extent to which the reach of one's scholarship extends beyond academic circles into the popular press are sources of potential impact. If one's scholarship informs legislation, public policy, or practices at local, state, national or international levels in public health, the environment, education, social services, agriculture, business, government, science, food systems, and others (too numerous to list) this can demonstrate impact.

6. Regardless of the prime scholarship indicators, explain unique equivalencies (and hopefully have your Chair confirm). For example, is writing or co-writing a successfully funded federal grant equivalent to writing one or more articles? Is doing a foreign language or ancient text translation equivalent to one or more articles? Help the reader understand the equivalencies of less common scholarly outputs in ways that help them understand the time and commitment and value within the field.
7. Collaborative research and scholarship is expected and desirable in many disciplines. When you are among a group of authors contributing to a scholarly output of any kind it is vital that you explain the extent and type of contribution to the work. Get clear guidance from your Chair and Dean about what is expected in terms of lead authorship. This is important because whether someone has met scholarship expectations in their discipline to warrant reappointment, tenure, and/or promotion depends on variable expectations across fields of study. Is it enough to have a sufficient quantity of articles in quality outlets even if one’s role is modest? What percentage of those collaborative outputs should demonstrate a majority role or leadership in the activity? Especially for early career scholars, it can important to demonstrate independence from their doctoral or post-doctoral mentors (even though such positive collaborations may continue).

8. When reporting external funding, be careful to only take credit for amounts you personally have garnered by writing/securing the funding yourself. Like co-authorship of articles or books, if a grant application was prepared by a group of people, explain the extent and type of your contribution to the proposal. Often, we see a CV (or narratives) where someone lists grants (including large dollar amounts) that they have been hired to work on, but were not responsible for garnering; be careful to not inadvertently seem to be taking credit for a grant written by someone else (this happens more frequently than you might imagine, and should be avoided).

9. If your review includes external reviewer letters, be sure to work with your Chair to ensure the reviewers: (a) at "arms length", (b) are at or above the rank you are seeking, (c) are qualified to evaluate your materials, and (d) are affiliated with institutions of higher education that are comparable to UVM (e.g., typically Carnegie Classifications R2 or R1 universities are most common); exceptions may be necessary in highly unique situations -- so consider this a general recommendation.

10. Presentation and technical adequacy matter! Stay within the word limits. Proofread your submission. Make sure the links in your dossier are active and that you have created functioning bookmarks in the pdf. Everyone who takes the time to review your dossier, and that’s lots of people (i.e., external reviewers, departmental colleagues, Chair, Dean, college-level Faculty Standards Committee members, Professional Standards Committee members, Provost), will appreciate a carefully prepared and well-written application.