CANDIDATE’S NARRATIVE STATEMENT

# Focus of Statement

A single narrative statement written by the candidate is required. This statement should focus on clarifying and highlighting the primary area(s) of concentration and contribution by the candidate to aid the College and University Committees in their review of the dossier.

# Placement of Statement in Dossier

This statement is placed immediately after the College and Department Criteria Statements in the dossier.

# Process for Statement Review Prior to Finalization

The Department Head has a responsibility to review the candidate’s narrative statement and ensure that it is not subjective or evaluative. The candidate may be asked to make revisions as part of this review.

# Guidelines for Statement Preparation

The format of the Narrative Statement should:

* Be a brief statement explaining areas of emphasis and major contributions. We encourage candidates to be as succinct as possible. The narrative statement should not exceed 2,000 words; this word length will be reduced to 1,600 words when there are no candidates pursuing tenure who were in their probationary period in calendar year 2020.
* Be written in the first person
* Include sections on research, teaching, and service. It is also helpful to explain links between these areas.
* Be factual and objective, not subjective or evaluative (e.g., avoid phrases such as “internationally recognized,” “made important contributions,” …).

# Suggestions for Creating a Strong Statement

1. Audience: you are not writing for your colleagues in your department, but for people on the College and University P&T Committees. They may be lawyers, musicians, biologists as all possible specialties may be on the University committee. Therefore, avoid unnecessary technical jargon, technical acronyms, or other phrases that reviewers outside the discipline would not understand.
2. What Do They Want to Know? Quite simply, who are you as a scholar at Penn State. Committee members are confronted with about 150 dossiers at the University level. They need to be able to make sense of these dossiers without first having to read it through, line by line. At the department level, people do that close reading and some even read papers or chapters cited in the dossier! Many committees assign two people to read the dossier in detail and to present a case statement to the rest of the committee who have, at least, skimmed through the dossier.
3. What Is Your Challenge? To give the educated, scientifically informed reader a context into which to put the details of your work. Committee members welcome the help. Your statement is often the first thing that people read, and they often quote from it in their own letters of evaluation.

**Therefore, some advice:**

1. Think Big Picture: assume that the details are present in the body of the dossier. People want to get a sense of context. They want to understand your career aspirations and how you are meeting them in your work at Penn State.
2. Don’t Repeat the Details: refer to and develop connections among the details in the three major sections: teaching, research, and search. However, for example, you should not refer to specific grants or courses unless it is to illustrate a bigger point.
3. Think of Your Philosophy, Overarching Themes, and Goals: people want to know who you are, what you are doing, why you do it, how you do it, and where you are going. I know that these things make people feel uncomfortable, but….
4. Begin Each Section with a Statement of Beliefs and Goals: this is easiest to do in the teaching section because you do have a teaching philosophy. Show how that underpins all your instructional program, but also show how, for example, you realize this philosophy in different ways in introductory versus advanced level work, general education courses versus graduate seminars, etc. So, you might talk about any of the following things: the role of active or collaborative learning; the use of e-Education approaches; the goal of developing critical thinkers; the fostering of life-long learners; the use of undergraduate TIs; the development of essentials skills such as…. Use these section beginning statements to organize what follows. If you have themes, then refer to them in the more detailed discussion.
5. Begin the Narrative Statement with an Overarching Philosophy and Goal: this might mix the following things:
   1. A short (10-20 words) description of your research area; you want the reader to remember that you are an X who is working on Y to….
   2. A statement as to how you see the links among teaching, learning, and service.
   3. And if you can do it, make a statement about what you want to be when you grow up! Seriously, we do have long-terms goals for ourselves, and readers do want to see that you are not just focusing on the immediate present (e.g., getting tenure at Penn State). This can either appear at the end of the first paragraph, before you address the three areas in sequence, or it could appear as a conclusion. I think that the latter is preferable.
6. You Should Write in Ways that are Memorable and Searchable: by this I mean that you want the reader to remember some things about you and your work, but you also want them to be able to refer to this statement and find things quickly. Therefore:
   1. Use headers and perhaps even sub-heads; alternatively consider using bold or italics to highlight key ideas
   2. Use short paragraphs with clear topic sentences
   3. Write in an active voice (they want to know what you think and what you do)
   4. Keep it tight and focused

I’m sorry to say it, but this short (2-3 page) statement is as important as any article that you will write. It is your chance to make the reader (judge) see that you are thoughtful, articulate, and driven. Readers like to see a vision and a commitment: you are not just doing this as a job, but you care about X, Y, and Z. Your academic life is a passion and a vocation. That does not mean you should indulge in multiple adverbs and exclamation marks. It does mean that you should not just report on who you are but try to share a sense as to why you do what you do, why you care. If you do that, then they too will care and react positively to the detailed information in the rest of the dossier.