

An Inter-Institutional External Peer-Review Process to Evaluate Educators at Schools of Veterinary Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Despite its fundamental importance, the educational mission of most schools of veterinary medicine receives far less recognition and support than the missions of research and discovery. This disparity is evident in promotion and tenure processes. Despite the frequent assertion that education is every college's core mission, there is a broad consensus that faculty are promoted primarily on the basis of meeting expectations relative to publications and grant funding. This expectation is evident in the promotion packets faculty are expected to produce and the criteria by which those packets are reviewed. Among the outcomes is increasing difficulty in hiring and retaining faculty, including young clinicians and basic scientists who are drawn to academic institutions because of the opportunity to teach. The Regional Teaching Academy (RTA) of the West Region Consortium of Colleges of Veterinary Medicine initiated an inter-institutional collaboration to address the most important obstacles to recognizing and rewarding teaching in its five member colleges. Working from the medical education literature, the RTA developed an Educator's Promotion Dossier, workshops to train promotion applicants, and an external review process. Initial use has shown that the reviews are efficient and complete. Administrators have expressed strong support for the product, a letter of external review that is returned to a promotion applicant's home institution. The overall result is an evidence-based, structured process by which teaching-intensive faculty can more fully document their achievements in teaching and educational leadership and a more rigorous external review process by which member colleges can assess quality, impact, and scholarly approach.

Key words: assessment, administration, leadership, inter-institutional collaboration

INTRODUCTION

When faculty with primary research appointments are evaluated for promotion, several broadly accepted and relatively simple metrics can be used to evaluate the quantity, quality, and impact of their work. Most of these metrics have intrinsically embedded information that is useful in the assessment. Examples include the reputation of the journals an applicant has published in, an article's citation metrics, and knowledge of the competition required to successfully garner funding from a particular extramural source.^{1,2} More important, these metrics also involve rigorous peer review, which for the most part is outsourced as part of publication and proposal review processes.

Evaluation of faculty with significant teaching appointments, however, has traditionally been a much more subjective process.³ At most institutions, evaluating teaching (including both didactic and clinical supervision or precepting) has traditionally come down to teaching

quantity and student reviews.⁴⁻⁷ Evaluation sometimes includes observation by local peers, but this type of review often represents casual one-time observations that generate letters or forms that read like testimonials and as a result carry little weight.⁸ Teaching-intensive faculty play essential roles in colleges. Their teaching, mentoring and advising, educational innovations, and educational leadership are crucial to the continued success and growth of college programs. However, the traditional metrics of success that work well for research-focused faculty must be expanded to adequately assess the impact of the activities of education-focused faculty.^{3,9-17}

In 2011, the deans of five west region colleges of veterinary medicine (Colorado State University [CSU]; Oregon State University; University of California, Davis; Washington State University [WSU]; and Western University of Health Sciences) came together to discuss ways in which their colleges might effectively collaborate to address important issues faced by the profession and

the colleges. The result was formation of the Consortium of West Region Colleges of Veterinary Medicine (the consortium). Recognizing that improving educational practices was a primary shared concern, the deans and their representatives chose establishment and support of a Regional Teaching Academy (RTA) as the first initiative of the new consortium. One of the first charges to the new academy revolved around the deans' collective statement (paraphrased), "We don't know how to evaluate teaching effectiveness and impact. We need a robust process by which our valued teaching-intensive faculty and educational leaders might be assessed and rewarded—that is, promoted." Accordingly, the formation of an External Peer Review of Teaching (EPRT) working group was one of the RTA's first initiatives.

The goal of the RTA's EPRT initiative was to address two major obstacles to recognizing and rewarding teaching in its colleges: (a) the lack of defined and ready-to-use tools to assess teaching, teaching-related professional activities, and the scholarship of teaching and (b) the lack of a respected and rigorous external review process. Stated very simply, the RTA through this initiative sought to develop a process by which a rigorous, meaningful external review could provide summary information about an educator to internal reviewers (departmental peers) and administrators.^{18,19} In addition to the lack of a robust review process, fixed institutional norms and culture were also identified as important obstacles. The founding fellows in the new academy and the EPRT working group accepted the deans' charge with the hypothesis that inter-institutional collaboration could provide leverage to foster much needed campus-wide change at all five member institutions.

In this article, we describe the processes by which the RTA's inter-institutional EPRT working group (a) studied existing academic portfolio and review systems, (b) pilot-tested modified versions that better addressed our collective needs, (c) designed an evidence-based promotion dossier template for faculty with significant teaching or educational leadership responsibilities, (d) began to train faculty to prepare more persuasive education-focused promotion dossiers, and (e) introduced a National Institutes of Health (NIH)-style external review process for member colleges.¹⁸ We also briefly discuss how the EPRT process has begun to penetrate our universities and alter the evaluation of faculty with a significant teaching workload.

The RTA's review process is targeted to faculty who have significant teaching responsibilities, which includes teaching in classroom, laboratory, small groups, and clinical settings. *Significant* implies that applicants invest more than 30%–40% of their professional effort in the teaching mission of their college. The review process also includes any faculty members who consider teaching an essential component of their professional identity and faculty for whom teaching will be an important consideration in their promotion review. Other professional activities that apply include engagement in educational leadership, student advising, development of new educational programs, curriculum revision, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW PROGRAM

Formation and Actions of the External Peer Review of Teaching Working Group

The EPRT initiative was selected from multiple proposed projects at the first Biennial Conference (Corvallis, OR, in 2013) of the new RTA using a collaborative, two-part brainstorming process. The other chosen RTA initiative was a shared inter-institutional faculty development program (described in a separate article²⁰). A small subset of the 50-plus conference participants indicated their interest in joining the newly created EPRT working group, and additional group members were recruited after the meeting. All five member colleges were represented in the working group. For a summary timeline of the development process, see Figure 1.

The EPRT working group began by reviewing the literature on teaching portfolios, which is vast. An important early reference was Seldin and colleagues' *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions*.²¹ This book provided invaluable guidance regarding definitions, goals, challenges, best formats, and the power of guiding questions or prompts for educators who are creating promotion documents. Seldin and colleagues discussed the obstacle of instructor and institutional resistance, as well as problems with format and length that can burden reviewers. A 2011 white paper on evaluating teaching effectiveness from the Institute for Teaching and Learning, a campuswide resource at CSU, was another invaluable guide.²²

Further research revealed an emerging but decade-long movement in medical schools to change existing paradigms relative to their teaching and learning mission. Part of that movement has included efforts to raise the status of health sciences educators, recognize excellence and innovation, reward educational leadership, and (in general) develop systems by which faculty with large teaching responsibilities can be promoted.^{2,9,23} Publications in high-impact medical education journals sought to identify the parameters that should be evaluated, develop tools that educators could use to assemble readily evaluated promotion documents, and define criteria that could or should be considered when evaluating health science educators.^{24–30}

Working via monthly Internet videoconference, the group also developed a project scope statement.³¹ This three-page document included the project goals; defined short-term and long-term deliverables; and guided a discussion on anticipated project obstacles, sustainability, and how best to get started.

Development and Modification of the (Promotion) Applicant Toolbox

The EPRT working group chose to follow medical education's lead to the Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC's) Toolbox for Medical Educators, an evidence-based method by which instructional faculty can organize, describe, and report activities and outcomes using a defined set of broadly applicable educational domains.³⁰

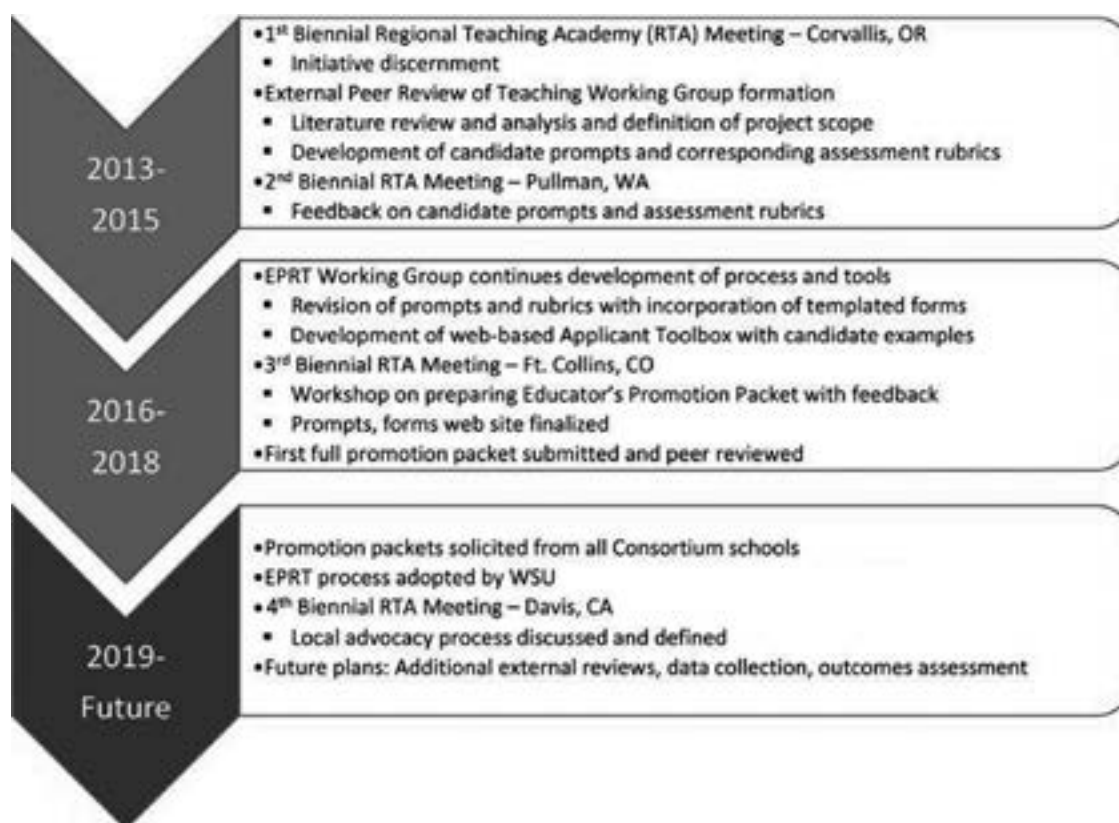


Figure 1: Summary timeline: development and implementation of the RTA external peer review of teaching process
RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching

The AAMC Toolbox is the model that has increasingly been adopted (with or without modifications) by medical schools across North America. Among the products of the AAMC Toolbox is an Educator's Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a structured reflective document analogous to a teaching portfolio. However, the AAMC format and prompts did not always address undergraduate and graduate student mentoring and teaching, and so did not sufficiently address the broader needs of RTA member colleges that also have significant undergraduate and graduate programs.

Using the AAMC Toolbox as a guide, the working group created a first draft consisting of the six original toolbox domains. Each domain in the drafted document provided prompts for educators to consider; a list of example activities; and suggestions on how to document quantity, quality, impact, and scholarly approach or scholarship. The group then began an iterative process by which a small number of educators at member colleges piloted the RTA documents to prepare real or mock promotion dossiers. Input was gathered, and the RTA's promotion toolbox was modified. For example, at the RTA's second Biennial Meeting in 2015, a volunteer who used the toolbox format to create mock promotion documents reported back on the experience. The documents this volunteer created were also reviewed by an expanded version of the working group.

Between 2015 and 2017, several educators at member schools excerpted the RTA Toolbox domains and prompts to create and submit their promotion, tenure, or post-tenure review packets. Promotion outcomes were positive, and the packets were considered vastly superior for faculty for whom teaching, education leadership, or both was an important consideration in their promotion. However, the documents (with appendices) were also very long. The EPRT working group recognized that length was likely to generate resistance among both applicants and reviewers and to confound review.

In 2017, a member of the EPRT working group visiting University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), School of Medicine as part of a sabbatical learned of their efforts to create a version of the Educator Portfolio (EP 2.0) that addressed the issues of length and ease of review. The EP 2.0 approach uses a series of templates, designed around the AAMC Toolbox and Glassick's criteria,^{26,30,32} that prompt specific inputs and limit space allowed for applicant entries. The EP 2.0 template has since been integrated into the campuswide academic advancement system at UCSF.³³⁻³⁴ In cooperation with the Academy of Medical Educators at UCSF, a pre-publication version of EP 2.0 was modified to accommodate the RTA's EPRT format. After additional testing and feedback, these templates became part of the developing Applicant Toolbox and were posted on the RTA website for use by faculty preparing promotion materials at member schools.³⁵

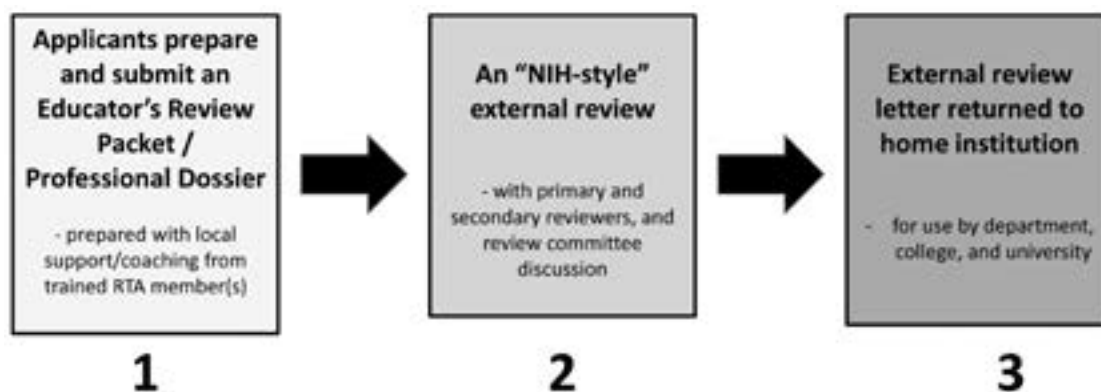


Figure 2: Overview of the RTA EPRT for promotion processes: (1) promotion applicants use online materials to prepare an evidence-based promotion dossier; (2) the dossier is reviewed by RTA external reviewers, and (3) the outcome is an external review letter that is returned to the home institution and added to the applicant's promotion material before local review

RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching; NIH = National Institutes of Health

Regional Teaching Academy's External Peer Review of Teaching Process

A rigorous external peer-review process was one of the original two goals of the inter-institutional collaboration. The working group envisioned a system by which instructional faculty and educational leaders at member schools would submit promotion material for review by qualified educators using an evidence-based approach (Figure 2). Members of the EPRT review team at home institutions would act as coaches who educate and help colleagues prepare their promotion packets. However, they would have no role in the review of these packets. Each packet would receive an NIH-style review featuring at least two reviewers and discussion by the entire panel.¹⁸ The product is a letter of external review that is returned to the home institution as one of the external letters for consideration by local peers, unit leaders, and local promotion and tenure committees. Applicants would be expected to have additional external reviewers beyond the RTA review panel according to the mandates of their departments and universities.

Working again from published materials in the medical educational literature and the AAMC Toolbox for Educators, the EPRT working group developed a Reviewer Toolbox.^{29,36} The toolbox includes reviewer guidelines, a reviewer worksheet, and a cover letter explaining the review philosophy and process. Under each domain, the guidelines list potential professional activities, indicators of quality, and examples of excellent performance. The reviewer guideline documents also provide references, including a list of the best-practice models that are intended to anchor the review (e.g., Glassick's criteria).^{26,30,32} These review materials are posted on the RTA website, which provides easy access for reviewers and transparency for applicants and others. In Fall 2018, the EPRT accepted for review its first complete promotion packet that fully used the recommended format. On the basis of this initial experience, a page was added to the RTA EPRT website to clarify the submission process and provide tips for preparing and submitting a promotion packet.

Advocacy and Dissemination: Teaching Educators to Use the Regional Teaching Academy Promotion Packet Tools

Throughout the development process, the EPRT working group recognized several significant barriers to change. First, many faculty members did not yet fully recognize the problems with traditional CV and promotion packets relative to teaching-intensive faculty and each college's education mission. Second, traditional formats were familiar. The proposed RTA promotion packet was unlikely to be intuitive, especially to a population accustomed to something that had changed little over many decades. Therefore, representatives of the working group from each college began to lead local faculty development sessions designed to address these barriers (Table 1). Similarly, RTA EPRT representatives gave presentations and led workshops for broader audiences outside the colleges of veterinary medicine. To avoid the "prophet in your own land" phenomenon, faculty exchanges were initiated—that is, colleagues from RTA member colleges were invited as visiting speakers and workshop leaders (Table 1).

In recognition that department leaders and mandated institutional formats were important considerations, EPRT members on each campus also began advocacy and education efforts that targeted leadership and institutional norms (Table 1). These efforts included meeting with department leaders, college leadership cabinets, provosts and vice-provosts, and faculty senate members. One member school (WSU) collaborated with other health sciences colleges on campus and worked through the university faculty senate to design a 4-year Teaching Portfolio experiment. The experiment (which begins in 2020) permits the health sciences colleges (veterinary medicine, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing) to test alternate teaching portfolio approaches that accommodate the RTA EPRT, AAMC Toolbox, and USCF EP 2.0 formats.

Table 1: Examples of EPRT impact on individual institutions

Example	Institution
Local CVM faculty development programs	
Workshops: documenting your teaching for promotion and tenure	WSU × 5 sessions, OSU × 3 sessions
Workshop: writing a teaching philosophy statement	CSU × 1 session, WUHS
Workshops with visiting RTA speaker: Preparing an executive summary and teaching portfolio	OSU, WUHS, WSU × 2 sessions
One-on-one consulting with EPRT group members on promotion packet preparation	CSU, OSU, UCD, WSU, and WUHS
Broader faculty development programs on campus	
Campus-wide workshop featuring visiting RTA speaker: creating persuasive and evidence-based documents that support teaching	WSU
Seminar on RTA development and initiatives, including EPRT, open to campus-wide audience	WUHS
Advocacy efforts—within CVM and campus-wide	
Presentation to the university's Council of Deans and departmental and educational leadership	CSU
Presentation and discussion with the university's vice-provost, discussion with university's Committee on Academic Personnel and school's Faculty Personnel Committee	UCD
Presentation and discussion with the CVM Dean's Cabinet or leadership council	CSU, WSU, and WUHS
Faculty senate approved a collaborative health sciences Teaching Portfolio initiative that included the EPRT and EP 2.0 formats	WSU
Presentation of the RTA formation and initiatives, including EPRT, at the AAVMC 2018 Annual Conference	RTA representatives
Presentation and discussion with all consortium deans requesting advocacy for the initiative with high-level university administrators	EPRT representatives

EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching; CVM = College of Veterinary Medicine; WSU = Washington State University; OSU = Oregon State University; WUHS = Western University of Health Sciences; RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; CSU = Colorado State University; UCD = University of California, Davis; EP 2.0 = Educator Portfolio 2.0; AAVMC = Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

Administrator Buy-In and Procedural Changes

The EPRT working group very quickly recognized that building support at the administrative level was critical to the success of this initiative. Although the college deans originated the request for process development and voiced their support for the effort, it was important to demonstrate that the resulting process was going to deliver the impact they expected. Throughout the development and introduction of the Applicant Toolbox and the EPRT process, the working group members met with the deans of their respective colleges to update them on progress. As the group prepared to solicit packets for review, EPRT representatives met with the consortium deans as a group to present information about the first successful external peer review of a full educator's promotion packet and to discuss strategies for an official roll-out of the process. At this meeting, the deans were asked to advocate with appropriate high-level administrators in their colleges and universities concerning the role that an EPRT review letter could play in the promotion and tenure process at their institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inter-Institutional Collaboration: Lessons Learned in the Development of Processes and Tools

In general, the multi-institutional collaboration using Internet videoconferencing was effective. However, the energy and excitement generated at RTA Biennial Conferences was difficult to maintain on returning home, and momentum often waned—especially during otherwise busy times. Faculty who elect to engage in an activity such as this are often among those most deeply engaged in teaching activities in their own colleges. A common comment was “It turns out that we already have full-time jobs.” The lack of perceived rewards for inter-institutional work was also cited as a barrier to progress.

An important lesson learned was that semi-regular face-to-face meetings, ideally at least annually and at a neutral location, were essential to sustained progress. These meetings provided much-needed deadlines and a dedicated

EDUCATOR'S PROMOTION PACKET / PROFESSIONAL DOSSIER

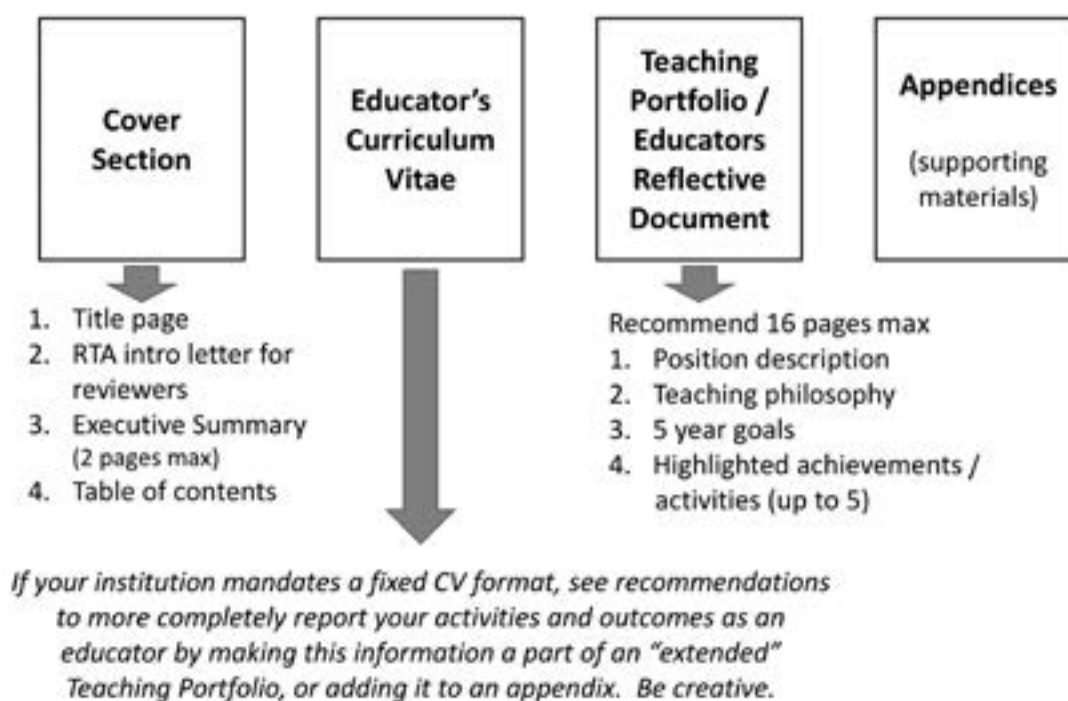


Figure 3: Four components of the RTA EPRT educator's promotion packet or professional dossier

The CV format is sometimes constrained by institutional mandates. It contains the expected CV information on education, work experience, publications, etc., but ideally should be expanded using prompts in the Applicant Toolbox to more effectively capture relevant teaching and educational leadership achievements. When formats are mandated, this additional information is moved to the Appendices section.

RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching; CV = curriculum vitae.

focus that was otherwise difficult to achieve. The neutral venue meant that collaborators were not preoccupied with the ongoing duties of their respective home institutions. Face-to-face meetings also helped build a community of practice with a strong sense of shared purpose.³⁷ Those who were most deeply involved came to consider the EPRT initiative a potential game changer relative to educators and the consortium's shared educational mission. They also developed a deep appreciation of their RTA colleagues and a better understanding of the overall issue, especially as they learned more about institutional differences.

Regional Teaching Academy's (Promotion) Applicant Toolbox

Senior members of the working group reported that they are often called on as external reviewers but are most commonly unable to evaluate a promotion applicant's teaching-related activities because of insufficient information. To provide needed information, the RTA's Educator's Promotion Packet consists of four sections (Figure 3), of which the CV and templated Teaching Portfolio are most important.

The Educator's CV Guide is intended to help applicants create a CV that captures as many of their relevant teaching and educational leadership accomplishments as possible, including items that have traditionally been overlooked.^{8,10,38}

Box 1: Educator domains

See Regional Teaching Academy website³⁴ for details on each domain.

Educator Domains

1. Teaching
 - a. Teaching activities
 - b. Development of enduring educational materials
 - c. Efforts to improve my teaching
2. Mentoring and advising
3. Learner assessment or outcome assessment
4. Educational research and scholarship
5. Curriculum and program development
6. Educational leadership and administration

It also seeks to shape written documentation of those activities in ways that provide reviewers with more information regarding quantity, quality and effectiveness, impact, and scholarly approach.

The guide lists the domains in which educators are likely to be active, defines those domains, shows examples, and provides a short list of prompts with suggestions on how

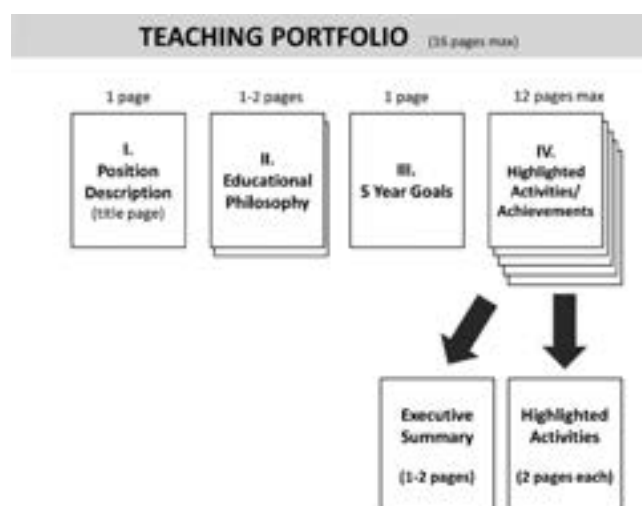


Figure 4: Components of RTA EPRT teaching portfolio

The RTA Applicant Toolbox provides prompts for each section and templates for the executive summary and each educational domain (based on the UCSF EP 2.0 templates). The result is a concise, easily reviewed document that may not exceed 16 pages. The 2-page executive summary is also included in the promotion dossier's cover section.

RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching; UCSF EP = University of California, San Francisco, Educator Portfolio.

best to document each activity (see Box 1 for a list of the domains). After recognizing that pre-promotion faculty were finding the list of domains intimidating, the document was revised to clarify that few faculty are likely to be active in more than one or two domains early in their career. The goal is not to demonstrate achievement in every domain, especially for early career educators.

The other primary part of the Educator's Promotion Packet is the Teaching Portfolio (Figure 4), which is limited to no more than 16 pages.³⁹ Also known as the Educator's Reflective Document, this section includes a position description, educational philosophy statement, 5-year goals statement, and the opportunity to showcase up to five total activities in the previously described educator domains. The educational activities sub-section uses the templates modified from the UCSF EP 2.0 documents.³³ In addition to a short Executive Summary template that provides an overview of the selected activities, applicants can download templates for each of the domains and sub-domains. Promotion applicants are advised to carefully choose activities and achievements that they believe best demonstrate their effectiveness, impact, and scholarly approach to teaching, educational leadership, or both. Highlighted activities can be limited to a single domain (e.g., teaching) or distributed across up to five different domains. No single highlighted activity can exceed two pages. The prompts are designed to solicit specific information (including a reflective critique). The templates produce short, easily reviewed entries.

Institutional rules (or norms) that mandate fixed formats for promotion documents remain a significant barrier to

change at two RTA member schools. For example, the highly automated compilation of promotion dossiers at one school severely limits the type of material that can be included in an educator's dossier. RTA fellows at that institution are focusing on having the EPRT review letter adopted as a routine element of the dossier of teaching faculty.

In addition, faculty who view the RTA Teaching Portfolio format for the first time find it unfamiliar and sometimes daunting. Learning to use the templates can require time and practice. Nevertheless, educators who have used the RTA guides and templates report them to be extremely valuable frameworks, even when the formats must be altered to address local mandates. To accommodate domains, activities, and outcome and impact information that are not permitted in mandated CV formats, applicants are encouraged to move these materials to the appendix section of their promotion packet. They are further encouraged to advocate for including the appendix in the materials provided to their reviewers, including all external reviewers.

For faculty at colleges that allow for flexibility in the format of their professional CV, the RTA's CV guide provides a structure by which they can write the teaching and educational leadership sections of their professional CV. The domains become sub-section headings. This complete CV is what the EPRT working group calls a true "Educator's CV." In addition to teaching and educational leadership, it includes all the components of a traditional CV, such as education, previous positions, publications, and grant funding.

Application and Adoption of the External Peer Review of Teaching Process

For many educators, the ways in which they can tell their professional story and articulate their achievements is changed dramatically by using the EPRT framework. Users of the documents and processes have provided positive feedback and constructive suggestions (see examples in Table 2). Positive themes include the usefulness of the formalized structure and prompts, the expectation to provide the scholarly rationale for an activity, the need to more fully consider and present educational outcomes, and the value of the required reflective critique (both formatively and retrospectively). A common piece of advice for pre-promotion faculty was to become familiar with the components and start to develop their RTA-formatted documents early, rather than waiting until shortly before the deadline for submission.

Administrators and reviewers who have viewed complete examples, including those involved in the first review of a complete promotion packet in 2018, have expressed strong support (see Table 2). The review team reported that the promotion packet was easily and efficiently reviewed and that the Reviewer Toolbox documents were effective evaluation instruments (Table 2). The applicant's department chair and dean expressed appreciation for the external review process and the letter that resulted. All five RTA deans viewed a redacted version of the review letter and indicated that it effectively addressed the need they voiced when the RTA was forming. The applicant was subsequently promoted and awarded tenure. A call

Table 2: Examples of user comments

User	Comments
Workshop participants who have just learned about the EPRT process and web resources	<p>“Although I identified a few areas where I feel I excel, one I focused on lacks outcome data to support that claim in my portfolio. I need to revisit writing specific learning outcomes, creating measures, and collect a few cycles/years of data to support my claim that innovation is helping my students perform better.”</p> <p>“I’ve been teaching for 15 years, and I haven’t done a great job at keeping track of everything that I’ve done. I wish I had started from day one. The EPRT documents are helping me tackle this daunting task.”</p>
RTA faculty or educators who have used promotion document guides, templates, or both	<p>“Although I am an educator with a lot of seniority, I would have missed highlighting several activities in my CV and dossier without the guidance of the Educator’s Promotion Packet. I found it to be very helpful in preparing for my post-tenure review now that much of my time is focused on educational leadership rather than traditional research.”</p> <p>“Creating a step-by-step guide, with examples, of what we should be doing and how it will be evaluated removes a great deal of anxiety from the process [of creating a promotion dossier]. More important, it encourages faculty to become better teachers. When the expectations, measures, and evaluation methods are explicit, all that remains is to do the work and document it.”</p>
RTA promotion packet reviewers	<p>“There is some concern from our Promotion and Tenure Committee that our Provost’s office might not accept the teaching portfolio format because it differs from what is used across all colleges in the university. We need to work to clarify how it can be used.” (local promotion committee member)</p> <p>“I was surprised at the level of agreement between reviewers on the first full packet that we evaluated when we began discussion. The packet format and the review rubrics made it easy to evaluate in a systematic and evidence-based manner.” (RTA EPRT reviewer)</p> <p>“I review promotion packets on a regular basis and often find that I am unable to effectively assess teaching effectiveness and educational leadership. The document I was asked to review was among the best I’ve ever evaluated, and the review process was extraordinarily helpful.” (RTA EPRT Reviewer)</p>
RTA administrators (deans and department chairs)	<p>“The various synergies and products that have been developed have exceeded our expectations. We also have been pretty successful at advertising the tools within our school to the faculty [who] may not be in the academy. As we talk to the general campus and our faculty explain the tools . . . we’re finding a great deal of interest.” (Consortium Dean A)</p> <p>“From my perspective, the external review of teaching was valuable in assessment of XXXX’s teaching performance. It was mentioned in all of the letters written (department committee, college committee, dean’s letter) as an important form of external review of teaching. I think in XXXX’s case, it was especially helpful as an assessment that independently assessed XXXX’s strengths and weaknesses as well as suggestions for improvement. I found it valuable and described it as such in my letter.” (Consortium Dean B)</p> <p>“My opinion is that the process is quite useful to the faculty in general and to the promotion review. I sought to determine if the P&T committee used it and the extension of the inclusion. I heard positive comments about the presence of the evaluation in the dossier. It is my belief that it makes the teaching evaluation of a candidate for promotion more complete and standardized.” (Consortium Department/Unit Head)</p> <p>“As an administrator responsible for assessing the teaching of faculty, I hope to implement the use of the Educator’s Promotion Packet in our annual review process. The information currently provided by most faculty is simply a list of classes taught, perhaps with student evaluations. I find it very difficult to adequately assess this information, and I look forward to reviewing more reflective documents in the future.” (Consortium Associate Dean)</p>

EPRT = External Peer Review of Teaching; RTA = Regional Teaching Academy; CV = curriculum vita; P&T = promotion and tenure

for submission of additional promotion packets went out to all RTA member schools in Spring 2019.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the process thus far is that one college dean has mandated submission of a promotion packet for review by RTA EPRT for all faculty for whom teaching, educational leadership, or both are likely to be a significant consideration in promotion (WSU; effective 2020). In addition, faculty with fewer teaching responsibilities are being encouraged to adopt the format of the portfolio to highlight their teaching accomplishments. This commitment to the EPRT process at one of the consortium colleges represents an important step forward in institutionalizing change (see “Future Directions” section).

Local implementation was also identified as a key part of institutional change. The strengths of an external, inter-institutional process with greater diversity and numbers of reviewers are clear. Creating an inter-institutional process that complies with each of the five local institutions’ review processes continues to be a challenge. To address the issue of local implementation, the EPRT workshop presented at the fourth Biennial RTA Meeting in Davis, CA, in 2019 focused on building momentum for procedural and institutional change. The workshop emphasized Kotter’s eight-step process for leading change:⁴⁰ (a) create urgency, (b) form a coalition, (c) create a vision, (d) communicate the vision, (e) remove obstacles, (f) create short-term wins, (g) build on change, and (h) anchor or institute change. Participants from all five original consortium schools and its newest member, Midwestern University College of Veterinary Medicine, were guided to develop action plans for building support for EPRT at their institutions.

Future Directions: Measurement, Assessment, and Adaptation

The consensus among the inter-institutional RTA collaborators is that developing the EPRT processes and web resources represents the first steps in creating a dynamic system analogous to external review of manuscripts and grant proposals. This group must now shift focus from creating to using and disseminating. As these processes and resources are used in the future, the EPRT working group plans to continue collecting constructive feedback from promotion applicants, internal and external reviewers, and administrators. For example, outcomes that will be followed include (a) the number of faculty who apply for promotion, tenure, or both using the expanded RTA format; (b) success rates; (c) the qualitative experience and assessment of faculty who use the RTA online documents and formats; (d) the qualitative experience and assessment of senior faculty and college leaders who review RTA formatted promotion packets; (e) collated comments or survey results from external reviewers; and (f) any available qualitative information on the experience and assessment of the University Tenure and Promotion Committee and university leaders (e.g., provosts). Through this kind of continued test–feedback–revise process, the RTA hopes to further refine its tools and processes. Ultimately, the EPRT process will help address the larger inter-institutional goal of furthering the educational mission of our colleges by recognizing teaching excellence and innovation, rewarding

educational leadership, and raising the professional status of health sciences educators.

In summary, we report the process by which a multi-institution consortium of veterinary schools collaborated to address a shared problem in veterinary medical education—that is, how to more fairly and effectively assess education-focused faculty so that they might be promoted. The result is both an evidence-based, structured process by which teaching-intensive faculty can more fully document their achievements in teaching and educational leadership and a more rigorous external review process that member colleges can use to better evaluate quality, impact, and scholarly approach.

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