



If you received any advice from a senior faculty member during your first year in a tenure-track position, it may have been: Put EVERYTHING in The Drawer or, if you prefer electronic records, The File Folder.

Whatever form it takes, the Drawer is a repository for documentation of what you have done, and what you have done well.

Did you get a Thank You Letter from the chair of a University search committee or task force on which you served?

It goes in The Drawer.

Did a student send an eloquent email thanking you for helping him sustain performance in your course when he was recovering from severe illness?

It goes in The Drawer.

Acknowledgement of your paper submission to an academic conference? Your letter of recommendation for a student's application to grad school?

These go in The Drawer.

Why?

First, you cannot trust yourself to remember all you have done—not when you are preparing your annual review narrative, and certainly not when you are preparing your dossier for retention or tenure, covering multiple years of work.

Second, if you are a tenure-track faculty member, you teach, you conduct research, you apply for grants to support your research, and you do service—for your college, the university, the academy, and the community.

Your work is So Varied that you need a consistent approach to documenting both the sustained and the ad hoc work you do in your role as faculty.

Third, if you do Not develop the habit of storing documentation of your work, you may be inclined to think, at times of annual review or dossier preparation, Oh, I haven't done enough! What can I say about any of my work that merits favorable evaluation?

Plenty. The sheer Weight—and this why I choose to use The Drawer rather than an electronic repository (yes, I actually print out those emails of appreciation and copies of my syllabi, challenging new assignments I created, and thank you cards from colleagues)—the Weight of the accumulation provides persuasive evidence that you have Plenty to say about your contributions to the university and its mission.

When it's time to write a narrative or personal statement, pull out your Drawer's contents, and sort it.

You do not need to include words about every piece of evidence of every good thing you have done, but as you sort it into piles of Teaching, Research, and Service, you may be surprised to learn you wrote a dozen letters of recommendation for students this year, supervised three—not two—student internships last spring, and oh, yes, served on the master's committee of that architecture student.

Even if your conferences were canceled due to COVID, and you didn't receive the \$400,000 grant you helped propose last year, you have letters of acceptance for the conferences.

You have reminders of what fine interdisciplinary work you did with colleagues to prepare that grant, and maybe an idea of another source of funding you could try in the coming year.

Your narrative—conveying your zeal for helping students succeed, your convictions about that particular research thread—starts to come together in your mind as you See evidence of your work in these emails and letters.

In other words, the STORE of documentation helps you tell your STORY of contributions.