FAQs about Professional Information Files (PIFs)
from the Personnel Planning and Review Committee

There is much lore surrounding the requirements for the structure and content of the Professional Information Files—the PIFs. In order to help RTP candidates create the most effective documents, and to help reviewing agencies who may advise them, we have gathered a number of questions about PIFs, and have tried to provide clear and constructive answers, as best we know them, to these questions.

Question #1 "What's RTP? And what's a PIF and what's a PAF?"
Acronyms, for better or worse, abound in most institutions, and CSUN has its fair share. Three acronyms frequently are used in the personnel process and it's essential to define them at the outset. **RTP** refers to "retention, tenure and promotion" and often is used as a shorthand notation for the personnel process.

The other two acronyms (**PIF** and **PAF**) refer to personnel files. Section 606 of the CSUN *Administrative Manual* (aka the "Blue Book") authorizes two personnel files. While the focus of this document is the PIF, it's helpful to distinguish the PIF from the PAF. The Professional Information File (PIF) is a file produced and maintained by the faculty member that contains information used in the RTP evaluation process (see Section 606.1.1). The Personnel Action File (PAF) is the official personnel file that is the property of the University (and kept in the office of the College Dean) that contains specific materials relevant to personnel actions (see Section 606.1.2), and is used in the process of evaluation of faculty (including RTP).

Question #2 "Why do we create these files?"
The PIF serves as a portfolio documenting an RTP candidate's professional activities as necessary for retention, tenure, and promotion at CSUN. Per Section 606.1.1.a of the *Administrative Manual*, all tenure track faculty who are being considered for retention, tenure, promotion (or some combination of these) "have the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a record of professional information to be submitted by the faculty member at the appropriate time for use in evaluation for retention, tenure, promotion, and service salary increase." (see Section 606.1.1.a.)

Question #3 "What goes into a PIF?"
The *Administrative Manual* specifies that the PIF shall contain a current resume and such forms as the University may, from time to time, prescribe. The file shall also contain data on: 1) Professional Preparation; 2) Teaching Effectiveness; 3) Contributions to the Field of Study: 4) Contributions to the University and Community. The faculty member may include, additionally, any other pertinent support material." (see Section 606.1.1.a. (2)). The PIF shall also include an index of the PIF contents. Both the current resume and the index should include the date they were prepared.

Question #4 "What is 'pertinent support material'?"
It is material relevant to the current review. Candidates should date all materials so that evaluators can place each piece along a timeline for the review. Most importantly, candidates should consult with their Department Chairs and with the Chairs of their

Department Personnel Committees for guidance on how to best meet the requirements of potentially more specific Department RTP criteria.

HINTS: Support material is likely to include copies of written submissions of abstracts, manuscript-like items. The order of presentation of any copies (in a section or in an appendix) should be aligned with the CV and of course with the Index. The order of items should present the most recent first, moving from there to the less recent work. If any of these writings are multi-authored, it's very helpful to describe the convention for ordering the authors (alphabetically, or with reference to the nature and substance of authors' contributions to the piece or the work that engendered it, for example).

Question #5 "Do I have to put everything in my PIF – what can I leave out?"
a. Teaching evaluations: Summaries of student evaluations of teaching effectiveness as well as peer class visit reports are required to be in the PAF (the Personnel Action File) for at least five years. Since these evaluations are part of the PAF, they do not need to be included the PIF. The PAF is kept in the College Dean's office, and is available for candidates to review at any time. The candidates should review the PAF periodically to assure that all materials specified are in place (see Section 606.1.2, "Personnel Action File").

Note that qualitative components of the student evaluations of teaching effectiveness (aka the free-form student comments) are required to be in the PAF (Personnel Action File) along with the quantitative results.

Student and peer teaching evaluations from other campuses are not generally included in PIFs.

b. Evidence of accomplishments prior to candidates' CSUN appointments: Beyond evidence of Professional Preparation and complete CVs, which reflect full records of candidates' activities and achievements, candidates should normally omit supporting material for activities and achievements prior to their CSUN appointments, as these are likely to have contributed to the candidates being hired, rather than to their developing CSUN records of accomplishments.

c. Tenured candidates seeking promotion to the rank of Associate Professor or Professor should omit supporting material that was used in securing a previous promotion to current rank.

d. Probationary second-year faculty may include supporting material related to scholarly activities prior to the tenure-track appointment at CSUN to establish patterns of scholarly activity for themselves.
Third, fourth, and fifth year candidates should generally not include such materials. If candidates are concerned about inclusion issues, they should consult their Department Chairs, Department Personnel Committee members, and Deans.

HINTS: Bulky items, such as journals or books should be part of an appendix. Avoid the use of plastic sleeves. Photocopies of letters or other original documents unsheathed are preferable to sheathed originals. No multi-page document should be placed into a plastic sleeve; reviewers will be loath to extract it for examination. Candidates should not include

all four editions of a book preceding the 5th edition that has been published at the time of PIF construction and submission. Similarly, candidates should include the published copy of an article or a chapter without the many drafts preceding it.

Question #6 "How do I document service to the University and Community?"
Listings of committee membership and other related activities will be part of candidates' CVs. Supporting materials in the PIF related to this area of candidates' careers should include only the highlights. It is not advisable for candidates to place minutes of all meetings attended, or to include memoranda with calls to meeting, for example. A report, or a piece of work done on behalf of a committee or for a community project, for example, would all constitute "highlights." Also to be included in this category would be a description of candidates' responsibilities and activities for relevant service experiences that appear in the CV.

Question #7 "Is there a general rule about what goes into the PIF?"
There are a few. Sensitivity and awareness of one's audience are important. Also important is the understanding that committees are reading multiple PIFs in a relatively brief time. Clarity, organization, and simplicity are crucial. Overall, candidates should make certain that their PIFs are very navigable.

Candidates should consult with their Department Chairs and Department Personnel Committee Chairs if they are concerned about the question of inclusion, or any questions in the process.

Note: Do not include *any* personal identifying information about colleagues or students such as grades or student I.D. numbers.

Question #8 "What are some ways to organize and clarify information in the PIF?"
Here are a few suggestions:

a. An introductory letter
One organizational strategy is to compose an introductory letter, of no more than two pages. This should introduce the PIF and highlight the most significant accomplishments since the candidate's appointment or last review, depending on which is most recent and relevant.

b. Interpretive notes
If there are materials whose inclusion or significance would be clear only to someone from the candidate's own discipline, the candidate should make certain that someone outside of the field will also be able to appreciate the significance. A note about the readership of a journal or the location of a conference in a field (a national, regional, or small but competitive meeting, for example) will help explain the role of supporting material.

c. Documents in another language
If a candidate has worked with or in another language, abstracts, précis, and relevant translations of the work, where necessary, are very helpful to reviewers, few of whom will speak all of the languages candidates are likely to work with or in.

d. Order
The order of sections and arrangements of supporting materials should adhere to Department or College preferences, and should be clearly indicated.

Question #9: "I am concerned that because I took 'furlough days' during the 2009-10 Academic Year, my Research and Scholarship, Teaching, or University Service may have been affected. How should I account for this in my PIF?"
Faculty who are concerned that their Teaching/Direct Instructional Contributions, Contributions to the Field of Study, and/or Service to the University and Community have been or may have been impacted by the 2009-2010 Faculty Furlough Program, may include a statement in their PIFs, either in the introductory letter or by separate document, about the impact. They may also submit a copy of the statement to be placed in the Personnel Action File.

Question #10: "Do I need to include extra copies of any of the documents in my PIF?"
Candidates might include extra copies of their Vita, so that reviewers may check them independently when the PIF itself is being read. These can be available in the Dean's office with PIFs and PAFs