

Tips for Writing Meaningful Colleague Letters for FEC Review

1. Observe teaching more than once, and ideally under “typical” teaching situations.
2. Open a dialogue with colleagues about what they think are strengths and weaknesses in their teaching, how their teaching has evolved since past review, and any issues that may have come up in previous reviews.
3. Offer to meet with the colleague before and after the teaching observation to talk about different classes, review syllabi and major assignments, and follow up the teaching observation with feedback.
4. Write specifically about teaching observations with as much detail as possible, especially for high-stakes reviews (promotion and tenure, off-cycle reviews) to re-create the classroom experience for the readers.
5. For colleagues within your discipline, write about your colleague's specific expertise relative to the curriculum your department offers.
6. Ask to review their research or scholarly activities and discuss scholarly goals and expertise within the discipline.
7. Write about their advising load, advising approach, and strategies for mentoring students.
8. Ask your colleague for examples of any “invisible service” that they do to benefit the department, campus, or community that you can highlight in your letter. Some contributions may not have a place on one’s CV or within the parameters of the self-evaluation prompts.
9. Even if you’ve written a letter for the same person previously, note changes, improvements, and growth in your letter.
10. Consider reviewing or discussing their self-evaluation responses and student course evaluations, especially as a way to normalize the process of self-reflection and continuous improvement for tenure-track faculty.

