

Department of Sociology

31 October 2007

Ian Taplin, Chair
Department of Sociology
Wake Forest University
1834 Wake Forest Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Dear Ian,

Almost three years ago, I came to Wake Forest believing it would be an environment supportive of my deepest values and interests. I saw in Wake's Teacher-Scholar Ideal the perfect description of what I aspire to be as a faculty member: "passionately committed to teaching and actively engaged in advancing their fields of specialty." I knew after just a few weeks on campus that Wake Forest would provide a perfect setting for me to pursue my vocation as a scholar. It encourages me to pursue my highest priorities with equal fervor: teaching undergraduates well and doing social science that matters. Therefore, I want to be a full and permanent member of the academic community here. Please consider this letter and the supporting materials that accompany it my application for tenure and promotion.

These materials represent the range, substance, and style of my scholarly activities, and include the following:

1. A "tenure dossier" binder, which contains information on my teaching, scholarship, and service, with a primary emphasis on my accomplishments since arriving at Wake Forest in January 2005.
2. A "pre-2005 scholarly materials" binder, which contains my teaching evaluations from the University of Notre Dame (1998-2004) and my non-book publications prior to my arrival at Wake Forest.
3. The three books I have written (*Student Movements for Multiculturalism*, *The Catholic Church in State Politics*, and *Real Stories of Christian Initiation*) and the one I have edited (*Goodbye Father*).
4. The first four issues of *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* that I have edited.

Collectively, these materials document my passion for and contribution to the Teacher-Scholar Ideal.

Excepting the books and journals, these materials are also available on-line at:
<http://tenure.davidvamane.com>

Teaching

As I discuss at length in my teaching statement (Tenure Dossier Tab F), to learn, you need to *do*. We know this from the considerable research that has been done on the benefits of *active learning*, some of which I cite in my 2006 article in *Teaching Sociology*. This article has gotten a good deal of attention nationally, having been discussed at length in *The Teaching Professor* newsletter, mentioned in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and sent to all Wake Forest faculty as part of the Teaching and Learning Center's newsletter (Tab G). I implement active learning most fully in my "Principles of Sociology" course (Tab I), but I employ it in my "Sociology of Religion" and "Sociology of Vocation" classes as well (Tabs J & K).

The effectiveness of my approach to teaching and learning is evidenced, in part, in the evaluations I receive from students. In a department whose average course evaluations are consistently "above average" (i.e., above 4 on a 5-point scale), I take pride in the fact that my quantitative evaluations are consistently above even that high bar (Tab H). One qualitative evaluation from a student in my "Sociology of Religion" course in Fall 2006 stands out for capturing quite clearly the various things I try to accomplish in teaching:

The instructor was very knowledgeable and he loves the subject, his energy just flowed through his teaching. He was very helpful and accommodating each and every time I asked to meet or had a question. One of the best qualities of Dr. Yamane's is the relationships he develops with his students. Each of us feel like he cares because he's given his time to develop and improve our lives. I know he is one teacher I will never forget—he made me love and enjoy learning when attending his class. In my opinion he is one of Wake's best professors—in knowledge, in conveying the material & because he cares about his students.

We focus a lot as faculty members on "primary" (classroom) teaching, and rightly so. But an important part of my vocation as a faculty member, as suggested by this student's comment, is to be involved in student life as much as possible. Because I value this "secondary" teaching so highly, I have never been more proud than when I was selected by students to receive the *Kulynych Family Omicron Delta Kappa Award for Contribution to Student Life* last spring (Tab L).

Scholarship

As I discuss in detail in my research statement (Tab N), my scholarship is not driven by an overarching, hedgehog-like question. Rather, I engage more immediate, fox-like problems. This is reflected in the number and breadth of my publications (see Tenure Dossier Tabs P, Q, R, & S, and Pre-2005 Scholarly Materials Tabs 3, 4 & 5).

As you can see from my cumulative bibliography (Tab O), I have published a book, peer-reviewed article, or book chapter in 12 of the past 14 years, dating back to my third year of graduate school in 1994. These include four books (one edited), 10 refereed articles (nine single-authored, all first author), and four book chapters (all single-authored). I have also published over thirty reviews, essays, encyclopedia entries, and other occasional pieces. Since I arrived at Wake Forest in January 2005, I have published two books, three peer-reviewed articles, one book chapter, and four other smaller pieces. My work-in-progress includes a book and article on the process of conversion to Roman Catholicism (Tab S).

These publications cover topics as diverse as multiculturalism in higher education, religious experience, the Catholic priesthood, religion and politics, and conversion. They employ a diverse array of methods, including inferential statistics, content analysis, interpretive analysis, and ethnography. Some also engage in methodological or theoretical reflection. And they purposely address diverse "publics": students of higher education and religious studies, political scientists and sociologists, theologians and liturgists, journalists and activists. I have especially relished opportunities to translate sociology into a language comprehensible to non-specialized publics - that is, to do "public sociology" (Tab Y) - and look forward to doing more along these lines in the future.

In recognition of my active publishing history and agenda, I have serviced on the editorial boards of the *American Sociological Review* (the flagship journal of the American Sociological Association) and *Teaching Sociology* (the leading disciplinary outlet for the scholarship of teaching and learning). More recently, I have been serving as editor of *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* and working hard to make it the premier English-language outlet for research in the sociology of religion (Tab V).

Service

One of the attributes I love most about Wake Forest is the ease with which a faculty member can get involved in departmental and university service. In less than three years here, I have been the major advisor for **24** students in the sociology department (plus **11** lower division students), worked with three departmental honors students (two currently), helped bring two speakers to campus (one currently), and co-authored a report on the department's curriculum (Tab W).

I also enjoy my involvement in the life of the university more broadly. Indeed, some forms of university service seem more like rewards: traveling to Ghana as faculty advisor to Pro Humanitate Scholar Kayla Landers, twice helping to select **Poteat** Scholarship recipients, escorting and hooding **2007** commencement speaker David Brooks, and so on (Tab X).

The size of Wake Forest is also congenial to developing strong, collegial relationships with other faculty and staff, both inside and outside one's own department. Outside of sociology, I have cultivated such relationships in particular with faculty in the religion department and the Divinity School (I am an Associated Faculty Member in both units), though not limited to them. You should be receiving letters from **Bill** Leonard, Dean of the Wake Forest Divinity School, and Christina **Soriano**, an assistant professor of dance, **testifying** to this.

Thank you for considering this application for tenure and promotion. If I can clarify anything or provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



David Yamane
Assistant Professor of Sociology
yamaned@wfu.edu
336/758-3260