

Finding Your Philosophy of Teaching (and writing it down)

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By the end of this 90 minute workshop, participants will

- recognize the role of a teaching statement in an academic portfolio or job application
- identify the views and experiences that influence their own philosophy of teaching
- begin to translate this philosophy into a written teaching statement

OUTLINE

- 1) What makes for a good teaching statement?
- 2) What is your philosophy of teaching?
- 3) How do we get it on paper?

To think about how we write a teaching statement, we should think about why search committees ask for them.

research
heavy (R1)

PUI

teaching/
curriculum
design only



to verify that an
applicant will be
able to teach
when required

to assess if the applicant
teaches and reflects on
teaching at the level
required for the job and
the wider dept/org

as the basis for interview
questions

———— as a writing sample ————

———— as a way of getting to
know a future colleague ————

Regardless of where on this continuum you find yourself, there are certain universal characteristics of good, great and bad teaching statements.

a good teaching statement makes the reader confident that the applicant will be able to accomplish the teaching-related aspects of the job

- demonstrates appropriate experience (good)
- demonstrates reflection, motivation, desire and ability to improve (great)

a great teaching statement makes the reader feel that you will bring vibrant, effective teaching to their group or department

a great teaching statement allows the reader to picture you in the their classroom

- do your homework: what sort of teaching will you do?

Regardless of where on this continuum you find yourself, there are certain universal characteristics of good, great and bad teaching statements.

a bad teaching statement implies that you do not have the teaching experience required to do the job effectively

- most commonly by including very generic ideas about teaching or demonstrating that you have no understanding of the type of teaching required for the position
- excessive use of jargon or cliches gives the impression of no real substantive knowledge or experience

a very bad teaching statement raises other red flags

- do not include overly personal, professionally inappropriate information
- make sure it is coherent, well-organized, and free from errors

Thinking about and writing a teaching statement can also prepare you for the interview.

the act of creating an honest reflection on your teaching will prepare you to respond to questions about:

- teaching
- mentorship
- collaboration with faculty
- student advising

note that an inability to talk comfortably about what you include in your statement can have very negative consequences

—> do not include ideas or approaches you are not personally familiar with

Take ~15 minutes to complete this worksheet.

this is a personalized document
- responses should be your own -

(But this does not mean you need to be silent. You may wish to discuss or share your with your neighbors.)

You will not be asked to share this with the class.
Be honest with yourself.

Making a Statement

We will use what we have discovered about your teaching philosophy to create a teaching statement.

(philosophy)

the types of teaching you do & want to do, how you view yourself as a teacher

specific
experiences



(statement)

demonstration that you can teach at the required level for the job, or are otherwise qualified

grounding your teaching statement in specific experiences makes it more compelling, more convincing, and more likely to make a difference

Making a Statement

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demonstration that you can teach at the required level for the job, or are otherwise qualified

- features of teaching that you like and dislike
- type(s) of teaching you typically do or have the most experience with
- approaches/techniques you use
- goals you have for your students
- how you want your students to view you

- how did you come to recognize that you liked them (features)?
- a specific time when your student(s) achieved one of these goals
- approaches/techniques you use

(plus anticipated experiences)

We can simplify the writing process by adhering to some best practices.

A simple structure can get you started:

- 1) an introductory paragraph that grabs our attention and sets the stage for the rest of the statement
 - a description of you in the classroom
 - a particularly memorable moment
 - a declarative statement about yourself or your beliefs about teaching
- 2) 2-3 paragraphs that develop/demonstrate your approach to teaching, supported by specific examples from your experience
 - e.g.: goal to reach every student, collect answers on short assessments every class, in your physiology course in 2016 this helped you recognize that John Doe was struggling, you met with him in office hours and he got an A
 - focused on the ideas you feel are most important for this particular position
- 3) A forward looking summary paragraph that demonstrates continued reflection and a desire for growth as a teacher

We can simplify the writing process by adhering to some best practices.

Some specific things to avoid:

- do not simply summarize your CV or recount all the teaching you have ever done
- avoid the “ever since I was little, I wanted to be a teacher” structure
- do not reference pedagogies you are not familiar with (no buzzwords without substance) - but references are OK

Some specific things to strive for:

- be succinct: aim for 1 page, but never more than 2.
- say something: make sure your statement has a point to make.

We are going to get words on paper!
For the next ~15 minutes, start to put together the structure and content of your teaching statement.

1) Complete this statement:

When the search committee is finished reading my teaching statement, they will know that I _____.

2) Pick 1-3 specific moments from your teaching that illustrate the point you describe in #1 above. If necessary, one can be an anticipated experience. For each:

- Write down the class/situation, the types of student(s), the type of teaching you were/will be doing
- Sketch a sentence or two that explains the connection between that experience and what it illustrates about your teaching
- Write a sentence describing how you recognized the outcome/impact/feeling/connections you are discussing

3) If you have time, start to link these thoughts into connected paragraphs

We are going to keep each other on target!

Check your worksheet for the number in the upper corner.
This is the number of your work group.

- 1) Get up and move to the table that matches your number. Bring your work/computer with you.
- 2) Along with your partner, find a realistic day between now and October 12th (~3 weeks) to set as your goal for having a completed rough draft. Agree that you will send each other your drafts by this date. PUT IT IN YOUR CALENDARS.
- 3) Agree on a date by which to return written feedback on the draft (I suggest one week later).
- 4) Use the remaining time to discuss what you each created today and your plans for developing it into a full draft