

Center for Instructional Development and Research

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Information for People who Teach
at the University of Washington

Writing a Teaching Statement

Teaching philosophy statements are becoming increasingly important in hiring, promotion, tenure, and even grant proposals. However, writing a teaching philosophy statement can be a challenge for a number of reasons. Some people find it daunting to put a “philosophy” into words, and others are not sure if they actually have a philosophy of teaching. It can also be difficult to determine what to say and how to say it in a limited space. In this issue of the Bulletin, we offer suggestions for easing the process of articulating and developing a statement of teaching philosophy.

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING STATEMENT

There are many ways to develop and organize a teaching statement, but statements that communicate effectively often include elements that are:

Descriptive: What you do when you teach, types of activities or thinking in which you engage your students

Analytical: Why you teach in the ways that you do, how your thinking about teaching has changed over time

Empirical: Experiences or observations of student learning on which your decisions about teaching are based

STARTING A TEACHING STATEMENT

Here are some different starting points to help you begin organizing your thoughts and putting ideas on paper:

One way to start is to write out answers to questions about typical **learning goals and teaching practices**:

- What do I want students to learn?
- How do I help them learn?
- What obstacles are there to student learning?
- How do I help students overcome these obstacles?

Another way to start writing is to focus on **specific learning activities** that you have used in class recently:

- What did I want students to learn from this activity?
- How well did it work?
- How do I know how well it worked?
- What would I change next time? Why?

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In addition to your experience teaching in classrooms, consider how you have helped people in **other learning situations**, even if you weren't formally "teaching":

- tutoring
- leading a research or design team
- advising
- working with patients or clients
- coaching
- mentoring a new associate

How is teaching and learning in those situations similar to what you do in class? How is it different?

Instead of writing your teaching statement from your perspective as an instructor, try writing from a **learner's point of view**. How would students describe their experience in a class that you teach?

DEVELOPING AND REVISING A TEACHING STATEMENT

After writing in response to one or more of these questions, review your notes and identify main ideas, themes, or underlying principles that characterize your teaching.

Most people find that it takes many drafts to organize their ideas and develop a statement that is a satisfactory representation of the way they think about their teaching.

To help you as you write, ask others to read drafts of your statement, identify ideas or themes that stand out to them, and indicate what might need to be clarified or elaborated:

- If you're writing a teaching statement for your department or college, find a colleague who has developed a teaching statement for a similar audience.
- If you're writing a teaching statement as part of a job application, find people with experience at the types of institutions that you are applying to.
- If you have colleagues who are also developing teaching statements, form a writing group so that you can periodically read and review one another's drafts.
- Consult with CIDR staff for feedback and suggestions to help you continue developing your teaching statement.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CIDR has collected additional resources and examples at:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/resources/portfoliotools.html>



Center for Instructional Development and Research

CIDR promotes excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Washington through its work with individual faculty and TAs, departments, campus-wide initiatives, and University leaders. CIDR staff are available year-round to collaborate on the design, implementation, and assessment of ways to advance teaching and learning for all students in the diverse UW community. Consultations are confidential and offered at no charge to UW faculty, TAs, and departments.

If you have questions about teaching and learning, or you would like to find out more about working with CIDR, you can call us at 543-6588, send a message to cidr@u.washington.edu, or visit our web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/>



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