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?

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
- advising
- coaching
- leading a research or design team
- working with patients or clients
- 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/PortfolioTools.htm

Writing a Teaching Statement

The *Bulletin* provides people who teach at the University of Washington with *brief* descriptions of current topics related to teaching and learning in higher education. Previous issues include:

- Developing a Teaching Portfolio
- Classroom Assessment of Teaching and Learning
- Preparing for the First Day of Class
- Classroom Observation
- Designing a Course
- TA Preparation Reconsidered
- Teaching through Discussion
- Transforming a Course
- Helping Student Writers Succeed
- Teaching a Service Learning Course
- Teaching Freshman Interest Groups
- Information Literacy: The Library Connection
- More and Better Class Participation

- Teaching, Learning, and Technology in a UW Classroom
- Helping Students Read Well
- Mentoring
- What Helps Students Learn?
- Inclusive Teaching
- Talking with Colleagues about Teaching
- How Do We Change the Way We Teach?
- Problem Solving in Groups
- Engaging Students in Discussion Online
- Developing a Professional Portfolio
- Pieces of the Writing Puzzle
- Teaching and Learning in Sections and Labs

Issues of the *Bulletin* are available at: **http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/TeachingLearningBulletin.html**

Questions for CIDR?

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 info@cidr.washington.edu, or visit our web site: **http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/**

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- Would you like to be notified by e-mail when future issues of the *Bulletin* are posted to the CIDR web site?
- Do you have questions about teaching that you would like to see addressed in a future *Bulletin*?
- Has this issue of the *Bulletin* been helpful for you?

✉   *Please let us know by sending a message to info@cidr.washington.edu*