

Many academic job announcements request a teaching statement or a statement of teaching philosophy. Universities that strongly emphasize quality teaching are especially likely to ask for such a document. While some job postings ask for specific content (such as a list of courses you want to teach), the teaching statement is usually a description of how you teach.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS A TEACHING STATEMENT?

- A philosophy of teaching statement describes:
  - Your ideas about teaching and learning
  - The methods you use to teach different students in different situations
  - The outcomes associated with your teaching
- The teaching statement allows you the opportunity to:
  - Reflect on and improve your teaching
  - Demonstrate that you are purposeful in your teaching
  - Show evidence of solid writing skills

## TAILOR YOUR TEACHING STATEMENT

It is imperative that your teaching statement be targeted to the department and university to which you are applying. Before getting started on your teaching statement, consider the following questions.

- What is the mission of the university?
- Will you be teaching graduate students or undergraduate students?
- Will you be teaching general electives or highly specialized courses to declared majors?
- Does the department teach large lecture sections, small seminars, or both?
- Does each professor in the department teach a variety of courses or just 1-2?

## GET STARTED

Most teachers have a philosophy of teaching that guides their instructional efforts but many have a hard time articulating their ideas about teaching and learning. There are two main approaches to getting started with your teaching statement.

- **Reflect on Your Experience as an Instructor:** Think back to your experiences in educational and helping roles such as teacher, teaching assistant, guest lecturer, presenter, mentor, supervisor, camp counselor, and coach. Write about some of the more memorable aspects of those experiences and then analyze them for themes. Consider the following questions as springboards – but don't feel like you need to address all of these questions in your teaching statement!
  - How do you define teaching?
  - What is successful learning and what leads to it?
  - What role do student characteristics play in learning?

- What are common obstacles to student learning?
  - What are your strengths as a teacher?
  - What parts of teaching do you like best? Why?
  - Describe your greatest teaching success story.
  - What are your growing edges as a teacher?
  - Describe your worst failure or mistake as a teacher. What did you learn?
  - What feedback have students given you?
- **Reflect on Your Experience as Student:** Think back to times when you received instruction or help – from professors, supervisors, coaches, parents, friends, etc. What stands out as being positive successful learning experiences or frustrating unsuccessful learning experiences for you? Think about the following questions but don't necessarily address each one in your teaching statement.
    - What teachers did you like as an undergraduate and graduate student? Why?
    - Think back to a class or other instructional experience you disliked and describe why.
    - What classes or teachers do you remember the most? Why?
    - What gets you excited about learning?
    - What motivates you to give your best effort?

## BE VIVID

- When describing your teaching philosophy, try to give concrete examples.
  - For example, if you discuss the importance of student interaction, describe the most successful student interaction activity you led.
  - Similarly, if your goal as a teacher is to get your students to think more critically, discuss how you have accomplished that goal in the past.
- Consider framing your examples in terms of student outcomes – how students reacted in the moment, what students said on your evaluations, how student learning improved, etc.

## HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE

- Be authentically enthusiastic about teaching.
- Convey warmth towards students, rather than disdain. Talk about their strengths, not their flaws.
- Be appropriately humble. Don't be afraid to talk about the mistakes you've made in the classroom and how you've learned from them to improve your teaching.

## ATTEND TO LOGISTICS

- Try to keep your teaching statement to one or two pages.
- Follow any specific instructions listed in the job announcement – about length, content, etc.
- Always proofread carefully.
- Have others look over your teaching statement.
  - Faculty members familiar with your teaching
  - Colleagues who are also currently writing teaching statements
  - Staff at the UW Center for Instructional Development & Research

## TEACHING PORTFOLIOS

- What is a teaching portfolio?
  - The portfolio is a collection of documents that convey the quality of your teaching.
  - Example documents include your teaching philosophy, example syllabi, student evaluations, and supervisor evaluations but other documents can be included as well.
  - Job announcements sometimes request that you send a teaching portfolio with your application materials or bring one to your interview.
- Learn more at the UW Center for Instructional Development & Research (CIDR)
  - CIDR's website provides helpful resources on this topic and CIDR's consultants can meet with you on an individual basis to help you create your teaching portfolio.
  - Center for Instructional Development & Research  
University of Washington - Seattle  
422 Sieg Hall  
(206) 543-6588  
email - info@cidr.washington.edu  
website - <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/PortfolioTools.htm#Guides>

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & SAMPLES

- University of Washington, Center for Instructional Development & Research
  - <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/PortfolioTips.htm>
  - [http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/TLBulletins/7\(2\)Statement.html](http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/TLBulletins/7(2)Statement.html)
- Montell, Gabriela (2003). How to write a statement of teaching philosophy. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/jobs/2003/03/2003032702c.htm>
- The Ohio State University, Faculty & TA Development
  - <http://ftad.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Philosophy.html>
- University of California at Berkeley, Career Center
  - <http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDAcademic.stm>
- The University of Texas at El Paso, Center for Effective Teaching & Learning
  - <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=32483>
- Sample teaching statements are available at:
  - [http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching\\_assistant/philosophy/](http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/philosophy/)
  - <http://ftad.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Philosophy.html#samples>
  - Hieberger, M. M., & Vick, J. M. (2001). *The academic job search handbook*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

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