“Establishing Your Philosophy of Teaching and Learning”

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Outline

• What is a ‘Philosophy of Learning and Teaching?’
• Why should I care? Is it important?
• How do I collect ideas for my statement?
• How do I make my statement unique?
introductions

• Name
• Year in grad school
• What do you believe is the single most important characteristic of an effective teacher

From this discussion we generated this list of what effective teachers must:
• have empathy
• put things into context
• be clear and consistent
• excite students
• read students
• be energetic
• be engaging
• plan appropriately
• be a good listener
What is a philosophy of teaching and learning?

A brief (usually 1 to 2 page) statement that clearly states:

- Your goals and ideals as an educator
- The methods you use to achieve these goals
- A justification and reflection on these methods
What is a philosophy of teaching and learning?

• There is often no set format for a teaching statement!

  “The statement of teaching philosophy may be expressed in a statement of beliefs that reflect a value system, a policy statement, a list of objectives and how they are achieved, an essay, or as an art form.” (Goodyear, Allchin)

• But keep in mind who your audience will be.
Why should I care? Is it important?

- Practical!
  - A survey of 457 search committee chairs in six disciplines (English, history, political science, psychology, biology, and chemistry) found that 57% requested a teaching statement at some point in a job search. (O’Neal, Meizlish, and Kaplan)
  - A statement of teaching philosophy is becoming a regular part of the dossier for promotion and tenure. (Chism)
Why should I care? Is it important?

• Personal!
  
  ▪ The process of writing your philosophy of teaching and learning stimulates self-reflection about your goals as a teacher and the best methods for achieving those goals:

  “The act of taking time to consider one's goals, actions, and vision provides an opportunity for development that can be personally and professionally enriching.” (Chism)
But I don’t think I have a teaching philosophy…

• You do! 😊

• Whether or not you’ve ever formally thought about it, you have a set of opinions based on your experience as an instructor as well as a student.

• All you need to do is reflect and crystallize your ideas about teaching into written form.
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• Remember: The teaching philosophy is supposed to demonstrate that you can be that effective teacher we discussed at the beginning!
“Easier said than done…”

• The most important part of the process is *writing down your observations*!

• When you get around to actually writing the statement, you’ll have a stockpile of your opinions and experiences to draw from.
Exercise

• Write down an experience as a *learner* that you felt was very effective and why.

• Write down an experience that was ineffective or frustrating and why.
Questions to help explore your philosophy:

Big Picture
• What motivates me to learn about this subject?
• What do I expect to be the outcomes of my teaching?
• How do I know when I've taught successfully?

Specific Topics
• What do I value about teaching and student learning?
• How does your research influence your teaching?
• How do your students’ identities and backgrounds affect your approach to teaching?
• How do you take differences in student learning styles into account?
• What is your approach to evaluating and assessing students?
“The same basic ideas and buzzwords appear in just about every teaching statement I have ever read. Everybody cares about the students, wants to challenge them, runs a student-centered classroom, relies on a mixture of lecture and discussion or other techniques, puts students first, is available to students outside the classroom, loves teaching, has learned a lot from students, integrates research and teaching, and so on and so on.”

-4 Steps to a Memorable Teaching Philosophy by James M. Lang
Creating an Memorable Teaching Philosophy

James Lang has 4 tips to make your statement unique:

- Begin with the end
- Make distinctions
- Be specific
- Cite your sources
Should I look at actual statements?

Get yourself on paper first!

When you are able to compare without copying check out a few statements.

A resource which compiles a number of teaching statements is: (beware!)

http://ucat.osu.edu/teaching_portfolio/philosophy/philosophy2.html
More exercises to get started!

- Make a list of qualities of a good teacher.
- Write a letter to someone outside of academia about the joys and challenges of teaching.
- Write about a memorable experience in the classroom as either a teacher or student: what went well, what would you do differently?
- How would an outside observer describe your teaching?
- What are specific skills you think students should gain in the classroom?

- Design your dream course:
  - What would your topic be?
  - What would you want your students to achieve?
  - How would you achieve your goals for the class?
- How would you approach teaching an introductory undergraduate class?
- How would you approach teaching an advanced graduate seminar?
- What are the qualities of an ideal student?
  - How can you help your students gain these qualities?

http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/writing-teaching-philosophy-statement
Writing your statement

• Format: Choose a style that you feel comfortable writing and one that is appropriate to the audience.

• Content:
  – Use concrete and personal examples about how you teach and why.
  – Provide content that is understandable to the audience (i.e. technical jargon or details would not be appropriate for a general audience, but would be to a committee of only those in your field.)
What your evaluators are looking for

- **Offer evidence of practice**: Use personal and specific examples, not vague or formulaic statements.

- **Convey reflectiveness**: Show that you can evaluate your positions on education and improve your teaching.

- **Show commitment to students**: Show evidence of attentiveness to student learning, such as plans to accommodate different learning styles or abilities.

- **Make sure your statement is well-written and readable**: Common sense, but this will go a long way.
Conclusion!

• Your statement of teaching philosophy is an important part of your professional resume, but should also help you understand and improve your personal stances on education.

• Take the time to write down your observations when you reflect on teaching and learning to aid the process.
Resources


• Lots of good examples of Teaching Philosophy Statements: Ohio State University Center for the Advancement of Teaching. “Writing a philosophy of teaching statement.” Accessed online 11/17/2010: http://ucat.osu.edu/teaching_portfolio/philosophy/philosophy2.html
**Resources**

  **Free, but must sign up as a member of facultyfocus.com**