

A Guide to Developing Your Teaching Philosophy and Statement

A Teaching Statement describes your:

- conception of how learning occurs,
- approach to facilitating student learning,
- beliefs about *why* you teach the way you do (questions to help you reflect on this are provided below),
- goals for yourself and for your students,
- teaching practices and how they support your beliefs and goals,
- approaches for creating an inclusive learning environment,
- strategies for assessing student learning in your class, and
- interests in new techniques, activities, and types of learning!

Getting Started!

- Make your Teaching Statement brief and well written. While Teaching Statements are typically longer at the tenure level (i.e. 3-5 pages or more), for hiring purposes they are typically **1-2 pages in length**.
- Use a narrative, first-person approach. It should be both personal and reflective.
- Be sincere and unique. **Avoid clichés**, especially ones about how much passion you have for teaching.
- **Be specific**. Ground your ideas in 1-2 concrete examples based on your experiences. For example, how do you approach teaching students that are at various learning readiness levels. Describe what you do in the classroom.
- Be discipline specific. Do not ignore your research. Explain how you advance your field through teaching.
- **Avoid jargon** and technical terms, as they can be off-putting to some readers. Try not to simply repeat what is in your CV. Teaching Statements are not exhaustive documents. They should be used to complement other materials for the hiring or tenure processes.
- **Be humble**. Mention students in an enthusiastic, not condescending way, and illustrate your willingness to learn from your students and colleagues.
- Describe your teaching development. Acknowledge who and what has influenced your teaching philosophy and practices. This may include formal or informal training, mentorship, literature, student feedback and teaching experiences.
- Align your beliefs and teaching philosophy with the mission of the institution where you are seeking employment. Show them that you've done your homework – make sure you understand their mission and demonstrate how you can support it.

- **Revise.** Teaching is an evolving, reflective process, and Teaching Statements can be adapted and changed as necessary.

Questions to help guide your reflection

These questions and exercises are meant to be tools to help you begin to reflect on your beliefs and ideas as a teacher.

- Why do you teach the way you do?
- What should students expect of you as a teacher?
- What is a method of teaching you rely on frequently? Why do you use this method as opposed to another method?
- What do you want students to learn? How do you know your goals for students are being met?
- What should your students be able to know or do as a result of taking your class?
- How does your teaching approach facilitate student learning?
- How do you create an engaging and inclusive learning environment?
- What specific activities or exercises do you use to engage your students? What do you want your students to learn from these activities?
- How has your thinking about teaching changed over time? Why? What experiences have shaped your evolution as a teacher?

Writing Tips

- Make the introduction attention grabbing and your statement easy to read, as you will only have the reviewer's attention for a few minutes.
- Organize the information in a way that adds value to your application. Share examples of your teaching through personal stories (However, take caution not to make it *too* personal! Keep it professional.) and anecdotes. It should provide a picture of your capabilities as an instructor to your future employers. They will ask themselves, can we see this person teaching *our* students?
- Be sure to highlight different ways that you foster an inclusive classroom environment and address the diverse learning needs of your students.
- Remember the information in a teaching statement is to be found nowhere else in your application. It is self-referential. It is a statement of your personality, style and reflection.

References

[Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching](#)

[4 Steps to a Memorable Teaching Philosophy](#)

[Dr. Richard Brown's Teaching Statement Presentation](#)