

# Frequently Asked Questions About The Philosophy Of Teaching Statement

Perhaps because the Philosophy of Teaching Statement is the first piece in a Teaching Portfolio, it seems to generate the greatest number of questions and concerns. Here are most commonly asked questions and general responses.

## What is a Philosophy of Teaching Statement?

A Philosophy of Teaching Statement is a brief reflective essay concerning one's understanding about how students learn, how instruction can best assist that learning, and actions that you take to enact such instruction. It may also include your teaching goals, your learning goals for students, and areas in which you would like to further improve your teaching abilities. More specifically, it could include any of the following:

- a non-technical description of how the instructor believes learning occurs, in general, within a particular discipline, or through a description of a specific learning situation;
- a non-technical description of how the instructor believes teaching can facilitate the student learning processes as described by the instructor;
- specific ways that the instructor enacts his/her learning and teaching beliefs and goals in the instructional design, course implementation, and/or evaluation of student learning;
- the instructor's goals for students including such goals as learning to appreciate or enjoy the academic discipline, developing critical thinking, improving problem-solving abilities, improving writing within the discipline, working effectively in groups, and developing interests for life-long learning; or
- areas of instruction that the instructor would like to learn more about or just beginning to use in the classroom, e.g., experimenting with collaborative learning groups, problem-based learning, the case approach or writing across the curriculum.

## What is the expected length of a Philosophy of Teaching Statement?

A Philosophy of Teaching Statement is approximately one page in length and absolutely no longer than two pages. It should cover a lot of ground, but be

succinct. Although it is usually more difficult to write a well-written short essay than a long one, a brief but cogent essay will be well received by faculty, search committees, and others.

## **What is the purpose of a Philosophy of Teaching Statement?**

There can be many purposes. You can think of it as a way of introducing yourself as instructor to your colleagues. You can think of it as an exercise in concisely gathering together your beliefs about teaching and learning so that you can easily articulate them to your students, your peers, and search committees. The Statement is also an introduction to your teaching portfolio thus setting the stage for the reader of that portfolio. Additionally, the Statement can be a means to professional growth in that it requires you to give examples of how you enact your philosophy, thus requiring you to consider the degree to which your teaching is congruent with your beliefs. You may realize that to fully enact your beliefs about teaching and learning, there is a lot of room for growth.

*For examples of Teaching Philosophies as part of faculty Teaching Portfolios from around the country see:*

*<http://www.utep.edu/~cetal/portfoli/samples.htm>*

## **How do I begin writing a teaching philosophy statement?**

Just as you start with a goal when you teach a lesson, you need to start with a goal in writing your teaching philosophy. Ask yourself what you want to emphasize, why you want to emphasize it, and what does your audience need to hear? You may want to write a few philosophy statements for varying audiences.

If you are applying to a variety of types of institutions (i.e., research universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges) or various types of faculty positions (e.g., teaching theory vs. performance or lecture vs. lab classes ) , you may want to write more than one philosophy statement each directed at or focused on a particular type of institution or faculty position.

*For ideas on how to write a Teaching Philosophy statement, see:*

*<http://www.cte.iastate.edu/tips/philosophy.html>*

## **Do I need to discuss my Philosophy of Teaching with faculty in my department?**

Yes, absolutely. Each academic discipline has its own culture, and even subcultures. What might be appropriate tone and emphasis for one discipline, might be less so for another. You will want one or more faculty from your discipline to review your Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Portfolio before you consider sending them out as part of a job application.

## **Should I include a Philosophy of Teaching Statement with my CV if it is not requested?**

Generally, you will probably not want to include an *unsolicited* Philosophy of Teaching Statement with your CV when applying for a faculty position. But having it on hand for when it is requested is an excellent idea because you don't want to be under pressure to turn one out quickly without the benefit of reflection and review.

See more about Teaching Portfolios.

Reference: Nancy Van Note Chism. 1998. "Developing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement." Essays on Teaching Excellence. 9 (3). Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

URL: <http://www.oic.id.ucsb.edu/TA/port-FAQ.html>

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