Teaching Statement and Teaching Portfolio

(Prepared by Professor Gary Harrison, Spring 2008)

The teaching statement and portfolio provides a ready overview of your goals and practices as a teacher, as well as documents your achievements and practices by collecting a representative sample of syllabi, assignments, and assessment instruments (exams, rubrics, etc.). Remember that you are addressing potential colleagues, most if not all of them experienced teachers and scholars, whose interest is in bringing to their department someone who values teaching and learning, who has some clear ideas about teaching and learning, and who has a personal stake in doing the job well, thereby enhancing the teaching mission of their department and college.

Teaching Statement.
The teaching statement, a reflective essay of one to no more than three pages (some employers will stipulate the length), delineates your ideas about teaching and learning, the principles that guide your teaching goals and methods, and the classroom practices you use to achieve your teaching objectives and student learning outcomes. While teaching the content of your work is important, you should also give some consideration to the cognitive skills and habits of mind that you hope your students to acquire. You may, and probably should, support your ideas with a few ideas or statements from recognized scholars whose teaching philosophy enhances or influences your own. Nonetheless, the teaching statement should read less like a journal article and more like a reflective essay. Hence, your statement needs to strike a balance between abstract principles and specific examples, and like your letter of introduction it should give some sense of your personal character and even teaching style. A tall order!

Some teaching statements revolve around a central metaphor—teacher as facilitator, as guide, as learning partner; some around a central idea—beginner’s mind, dialogue, critical thinking. Whatever you choose, avoid being hackneyed and clichéd; be as original and as true to yourself as possible without seeming cute, cavalier or quaint.

The teaching philosophy statement basically addresses four basic questions: 1) What do I teach?) 2) Why do I teach? 3) How do I teach? 4) What makes me an effective teacher? In today’s learning environment, however, those questions might better be framed in terms of student learning outcomes and assessment:

1. What are my student learning outcomes (what will they learn)?
2. Why are those student learning outcomes important and valuable?
3. How do I get students to achieve those learning outcomes?
4. How do I assess the effectiveness of my teaching efforts?

However you frame your discussion, it all comes around to offering your readers a profile of what we might call your pedagogical imagination: your vision of yourself as an
effective teacher focused upon student learning and a glimpse at the way your classroom practices aim to realize that vision.

**Teaching Portfolio.**

The Teaching Portfolio contains your teaching statement, as well as documents that evidence your teaching practices and effectiveness. The items you choose may vary, depending upon the college or university to which you are applying. You should have a variety of sample syllabi, sample assignments, sample assessment tools, and evidence of successful teaching. Note that you may not send everything to each school. Sometimes prospective employers will ask only for the Teaching Statement; at other times they will ask for more. If you don’t know, it’s now easy and okay to ask them via e-mail.

*A Teaching Portfolio Checklist:*

1. Teaching Statement  
2. Sample Syllabi  
3. Sample Assignments  
4. Sample Assessment instruments (including student learning outcomes and rubrics you use for assessment, exams, quizzes).  
5. Evidence of teaching effectiveness and teaching administration (generally a letter from one of your faculty teaching supervisors, teaching evaluation (e.g. ICES/FACE/IDEA scores—generally NOT student comments unless requested), teaching awards, notable student accomplishments directly related to your class (e.g. Best Student Essay publication, prizes won at Undergraduate Research Fair, etc.).

**References:** There are many internet sites and books that can get you started on your teaching statement and portfolio. Here are a few:

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Iowa State University  
[http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/philosophy.html](http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/philosophy.html)

Center for Instructional Development and Research, University of Washington  


University of Chicago Writing Program. Teaching Portfolio Resources.  
[http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/jobs/portfolio.htm](http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/jobs/portfolio.htm)