

# The Statement of Teaching Philosophy

*NOTE: Consult with your faculty members and departmental resources for field specific advice*

## Writing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Many students wait until they are asked to provide a Statement of Teaching Philosophy before embarking on the journey of creating one. If you do your best work under pressure then this approach might work for you, but for most students there is value in taking time to reflect on one's teaching philosophy and conducting research about the institutions to which one is applying.

## Know Your Audience

The members of your audience are looking for their next colleague, each with different agendas, but with a shared desire to hire someone who feels like a "good fit." They are quite likely wondering about:

- Will you be able to handle all aspects of the job?
- Do you really want to teach or is it a means to another end?
- What pedagogical methods do you employ?
- What influences your teaching?
- What do you bring to the department?
- What opportunities do you bring to the students you will teach?
- How will you respond to the day-to-day tasks associated with teaching?
- How will you navigate competing priorities?

Consider researching the institutions to which you are applying by:

- Visiting an institution's web site and exploring the words and phrases used to capture its mission and to describe the educational experience and learning environment;
- Looking at web pages in the department to which you are applying and gathering an understanding about what aspects of the academic experience are emphasized;
- Viewing the curricula vita of various faculty members within the department. These can often be found on faculty web pages or with a Google search;
- Identifying the professional associations in which faculty members have involvement and also looking for indications of expectations for involvement outside the department and classroom;
- Using LinkedIn as a tool to learn more about your potential future colleagues.

## What Do I Write About?

It often feels like there are so many different directions in which you can take your Statement of Teaching Philosophy, but there are some key questions that you can ask yourself to give focus to your writing. Before writing your first draft, consider reflecting on how you would answer the following questions:

- What are your objectives as a teacher?
- What skills do you desire to facilitate in your students?
- What are your responsibilities and what are the responsibilities of your students?
- In what ways do you orient your students to the nuances of the discipline?
- Are there national issues and trends that need to inform your teaching of your discipline? What are they and what impact have they had?
- What are the methods you use to reach or exceed your goals?
- What are the methods you use when you encounter challenges in delivering content?
- Identify detailed examples of how you have utilized specific strategies, under what circumstances and what were the outcomes or results?
- How do you make decisions about what to teach and the content you will use?
- How does your teaching adapt to learners and environments?
- How do you measure your effectiveness?
- What mechanisms do you use to assess students and evaluate levels of performance?

- What do you need to improve upon in your teaching?
- What is the fit with your teaching, research, publications and presenting?
- What is your view about your role outside the classroom?
- What approach would you take to teach a course you have never taught before?
- What lasting impressions do you want to have on your students, within your department and discipline?
- What prompted you to go to graduate school?
- What have you learned about teaching?
- What have you learned about students?
- What's your approach to diversity in the classroom?
- What is the role of academic technology in the classroom?

You won't write about everything on which you reflect, but as you take time to think about what defines you as a teacher and candidate you can make note of content that you would like to include in a first draft version of your Statement of Teaching Philosophy.

## Content Areas

### Introductory Paragraph

Your teaching goals, values, purpose, principles,  
preferred pedagogical methods

### Main Body Paragraphs

Strategies, examples, challenges and responses, outcomes,  
realizations about your strengths and competencies, growth in  
knowledge about teaching and learning

### Concluding Paragraph

What this all means and where you are heading, future goals,  
what you intend to accomplish

## Tips

- Write a couple of drafts well before you ever need a final version of your Statement of Teaching Philosophy
- Do your research and know your audience, the department to which you are applying, the discipline, and how the faculty members describe their work
- Involve others, who have experience in your discipline, in reading your Statement and actively seek their input
- Invite others, who do not know you well, to read your Statement and ask them to share what they learned about you
- Follow guidelines and page length if provided to you (typically not more than 2 pages)
- Focus on creating a vivid impression of what makes you unique
- Make sure you have used evidence based examples
- Ask several people to proofread your writing