

\* Do it quarter-by-quarter

## Building Your Teaching Portfolio

The time to start preparing your teaching portfolio is now. You should begin systematically collecting portfolio materials when you begin assisting in your first course, and revise and update the materials as you gain more experience.

A teaching portfolio is a concise, organized narrative that presents your teaching accomplishments and strengths. Each summary in the portfolio is about 1-2 pages. The narrative is followed by a set of appendices that provide documentation in more detail. The summaries and the appendices show how your teaching methods and goals have developed over time. Many colleges require a teaching portfolio for hiring, promotions, and tenure selections.

- **To be successful, the portfolio should:**
  - ❖ include examples of student and teacher work,
  - ❖ demonstrate a structure based on professional standards,
  - ❖ provide a reflective commentary of your work as a teacher,
  - ❖ feature a selection of examples to illustrate your teaching experience,
  - ❖ demonstrate collaboration with colleagues.
- **Documents you are likely to include in your portfolio are:**
  - ❖ a statement of your teaching philosophy (see below),
  - ❖ samples of your work; these may include lessons plans, exams, and syllabi,
  - ❖ samples of work done by your students (e.g., photocopies of projects,

↑ get permission from student.

journals, papers, and completed assignments),

- ❖ summaries that briefly explain the samples you have included,
- ❖ commentaries that reflect your teaching and learning.

### Writing a statement of teaching philosophy

If you are planning a career in academia, at some point you will undoubtedly be asked to provide a statement of the goals, methods, and philosophies that guide your teaching. This statement is the most important document in your teaching portfolio. It paints a picture of who you are as a teacher and should reflect your personality and interest in teaching. Think long and carefully about what you write, and remain true to who you are as a teacher. Expect your teaching philosophy to change over time as your knowledge, experience, and goals change.

*"Once your teaching philosophy is formulated, it will help you to reflect on your teaching... (it) will change over time because your teaching knowledge, experience, and goals will (change)... (it) is a work in progress."*

-Alessia Zanin-Yost,  
TA, Art History

**Format** – The statement should be one or two pages long (not more!), well organized, and written in a narrative format. First person style is standard. Avoid technical terms that may not be understood by a reader not in your field.

**Content** – There is no single formula for writing a successful statement of teaching philosophy. However, most statements include the following information.

- ❖ *Your objectives as a teacher* - Your objectives need to be realistic and relevant to your teaching. A primary goal of course is to have your students learn the basics of the subject you are teaching. However, you need to think further than this. What do you hope your students will gain from your teaching? Critical thinking skills? Problem-solving skills? Communication or writing skills?
- ❖ *Achieving your objectives* - Once you have established your objectives as a teacher, think about how you will achieve those objectives. Demonstrate to readers that you have a concrete understanding of the teaching techniques, pedagogy, and strategies that you have used and will use in your teaching. Relate these techniques to successfully achieving your goals as a teacher; specific examples are invaluable. For example, if you prepared a reader for your students, how did you select the materials, and why? What do you expect your students to have gained from this selection of readings?
- ❖ *Why do you want to teach?* Here you can express yourself and show the reader your personality. Why are you interested in teaching? Why is teaching important? What are the rewards of teaching? How do you inspire your students?
- ❖ *Personal growth plan* - Demonstrate to the reader how you have grown as a teacher over time, and what you intend to do to continue growing as an instructor. How has your teaching philosophy changed over time? What have you done to increase your teaching skills? What are your strengths and how will you correct your weaknesses?

***For more information on writing a statement of teaching philosophy and preparing a teaching portfolio talk to a TA Consultant.***

*Adapted from information contributed by Alessia Zanin-Yost, Art History, a graduate student participant in the 1999-2000 Program in College Teaching, and by Alexis Blackmer, TA Consultant, 2001-2003.*

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