



Creating a Memorable Teaching Philosophy Statement

Simply understood and defined, a teaching philosophy statement is a one to two-page document that provides a clear and concise account of an instructor's:

- beliefs about teaching and learning,
- goals for students,
- practices used in instruction, and
- methods of assessment to ascertain the achievement of teaching and learning goals (Kearns & Sullivan, 2010).

*However, it is much more than that. It serves as a **concrete illustration** of the thinking, intention, and teacher identity of the instructor. It represents what students and colleagues can expect to encounter when the actual individual shows up to campus and the classroom.*

Thus, for any reader, teaching statements are a tool to aid in helping to envision who the instructor is and what they will bring to the institution (Lang, 2010). Additionally, the teaching philosophy statement can help the individual to regularly consider teaching effectiveness and goals. Moreover, it can help the instructor plan for professional development opportunities (Chism, 1998). Since teaching philosophy statements are seen as providing decision makers with a sense of the individual who is being considered for hiring and promotion, it is vital that the teaching philosophy you develop, authentically and memorably reflects who you are as an instructor and what your students, colleagues, and institution can expect will take place in the classroom.

The document will provide you with a process for developing and writing a memorable teaching philosophy statement. The process has three steps:

1 Reflect on Past Teaching & Learning Experiences

2 Answer Key Questions

3 Craft Your Story

Step 1: Reflect on Past Teaching & Learning Experiences

You can draw significant inspiration about who you want to be as an instructor by reflecting on your past teaching and learning experiences. For example, thinking upon your experiences as a student who was learning a new subject can help you identify practices, attitudes, and environments that either facilitated or hindered your learning. This can lead to developing approaches you strongly believe help you reach the teaching and learning goals you have for your students. Likewise, you might consider your favorite teacher (keep in mind they need not be a teacher in the formal sense) for inspiration as to characteristics and methods you could employ in your teaching. Finally, you might also reflect on any experience where you acted as an instructor (formal or informal). Considering such occurrences may help you identify what ways of being and engaging with students feel natural to you.

Step 2: Answer Key Questions

In most teaching philosophy statements, some combination of the next five components are included or discussed. They are:

- **Conceptualization of Teaching** (What teaching means or looks like to you)
- **Conceptualization of Learning** (What learning means or looks like to you)
- **Goals for Students** (What knowledge, attitudes, and/or skills you help your students attain)
- **Implementation of Teaching Philosophy** (How you operationalize your beliefs about teaching and learning in the course)
- **Evaluation or Assessment of Goals** (How you measure your effectiveness and your students' learning and attainment of your goals)
- **Inclusive Learning** (How you foster an environment where all students find a place where they can learn and develop) (Boye, n.d.)

To develop these components, there are a series of question that you might consider answering:

- What gives teaching meaning to me? Why?
- What do I want my students to achieve? Why?
- What do/would I do to help my students achieve my goals for them? Why?
- What tools do/would I use to verify that students have achieve my goals for them? Why?
- What tools do/would I use to verify that I am teaching well? Why?
- What types of inclusive learning experiences do/would I create for my students? How do I know they are inclusive?
- What is the evidence that my students are achieving the goals I have set for them?
- How do I want to grow as a teacher?

It has been suggested that to get the most out of answering these questions, you might ask a colleague or two to think about these with you (Haave, 2014). After the aforementioned steps, you are ready for the final step, crafting your story.

Step 3: Craft Your Story

To make your teaching philosophy stand out, think about how you can put it in the form of a narrative. For instance, craft a story out of the experience of identifying your goals for students. Alternatively, when you describe how you engage in certain practices, don't just list them but weave them together to show how they lead to a particular goal. Additionally, if you had the experience of a student who you saw come to deeper understanding about the content through the practices that you employed in class, write it as a mini story arc indicating where the student started out and where they ended up due to the practices. Another approach is to craft your story by using data. For example, you might show that by employing a particular pedagogy, there was a significant change in outcomes. This could be represented by statistics or quotes.

Conclusion

In this document, you will find just a few suggestions that might be helpful in developing a memorable teaching philosophy statement. Keep in mind that each statement is unique. It should reflect who you are and who you will be in the classroom. This requires spending some time reflecting on what you want to accomplish as an instructor.

Additional Resources

For additional guidance on how to write a teaching philosophy statement, please review resources at the [Center for Research on Teaching and Learning at the University of Michigan](#). For samples of teaching philosophy statements, please go to the [Center for Teaching and Learning at Yale University](#).

References

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