Stating Your Teaching Philosophy

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Stating Your Teaching Philosophy
Outline of Workshop

• The Statement of Teaching Philosophy
  – Purpose
  – Content (Key components)
  – Issues to consider

• Overview of Key Points in Supplementary Readings
  – Key questions to ask of yourself in writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy
  – Key questions others will ask in reviewing and interpreting yours
  – Suggestions for possible topics to include
  – Example Teaching Philosophy Statements

• Discussion of Examples
  – From Teaching Philosophy Statements prepared by USC TAs
  – Disciplinary preferences

Questions to Help You Frame Your Statement

• Does your approach to teaching and learning demonstrate reflective thinking and careful planning or flexibility when appropriate?

• How does your statement articulate openness to different perspectives? And how will you demonstrate this?

• Does your statement show awareness of disciplinary conventions/expectations?
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Purpose

• **Key Component of a Teaching Portfolio**
  – Provides a natural organization scheme for the teaching portfolio
  – In large part determines the content of the teaching portfolio
    • Support for key statements

• **Key to Establishment of Individual Teaching Goals and Objectives**
  – Opportunity to focus on those aspects of teaching that you value most highly
  – Opportunity to showcase reflective thinking about teaching and learning
  – Opportunity to develop your own individual set of teaching approaches and skills

• **Required Document for Employment, Promotion, Awards**
  – A living document evolving over time
Statement of Teaching Philosophy
Content. I

• **Who** are you, as a teacher, and who do you want your students to become?
• **What** are:
  – Your goals, objectives, values, interests?
  – Your approaches to teaching and learning?
  – Your assessments of student’ learning outcomes?
  – The environments that you create that are favorable to learning?
• **When** have you accomplished key teaching activities?
• **Where** have you been influenced, and from where have you learned valuable lessons?
  – Special teachers, significant quotes, unusual classes
• **Why** do you want to teach in the first place?
• **How** do you propose to grow as a first-rate teacher/educator?
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Content. II

- **Order of key components**
  - **Goals and objectives** (values)
    - Personal goals as a teacher
    - Goals for your students
  - **Teaching methods and approaches**
    - Unique to you, reflect fundamental values
    - Specific to your discipline
  - **Methods of assessment**
    - Self, student
  - **Path to Improvement**
  - **New Ideas**
    - Vehicle for trying them out
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. I

- A Teaching Philosophy Statement need not be comprehensive
  - But it had better be interesting!
- What is the purpose of any education?
  - Purpose/value of a teacher in the process
- Something special that you have been taught by one of your own best teachers
  - Or even worst!
- Something special that you have learned from your own teaching experience
  - An unforgettable lesson
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. II

- **Fundamental values**
  - Creativity
  - Inventiveness
  - Reflective thinking
  - Analytical skills
  - Breadth of knowledge
  - Depth of knowledge in **one or more specific areas**
  - Individual achievement
  - Ability to collaborate and **work in groups effectively**
  - Challenge (**personal growth, ability to overcome**) 
  - Knowledge
  - Independence of thought and action
  - Leadership
  - Decision making ability
  - Cultural sensitivity
Statement of Teaching Philosophy:
Issues to Consider. III

Unique Teaching Methods and Approaches (Examples)
Teaching the Humanities
• Teacher as student: an ongoing discovery
  – Heraclitean nature of the humanities (Heraclitus 500 B.C. Early Greek philosopher who maintained that strife and change are the natural conditions of the universe.)
• Development of creativity
• Mixing methods of inquiry and reasoning
  • Rational inquiry
  • Critical thinking
  • Reflective thinking
  • Textual analysis or interpretation?
• Educating the emerging "world citizen”
  – Critical (socratic) self-examination,
  – Moral reasoning (Harvard requirement)
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. IV

• An Array of Teaching Methods in the Humanities
  – To lecture or not to lecture?
  – Questions of style vs. content (importance of rubrics, providing guidelines and structure)
  – Cooperative (group) Learning
  – Experiential Learning
  – Role of discussions
  – Effective questioning techniques
  – The impact of the audio and visual (multi-media)
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. V

Teaching Science - Methods and Approaches

- Scientific method vs. the scientific approach
  - Well-formulated problems
  - Concept of the multiple working hypothesis
- Art of scientific presentation
  - Separating observation (data) from hypothesis
- Incorporation of design problems - plan for change
- Ability to deal with ambiguity - the quality of data
- Development of creativity - the challenge of the researcher
- Development of leadership skills
  - Collaboration and team building
Statement of Teaching Philosophy:
Issues to Consider. VI

• Intimate coupling of Teaching and Research
  – Teaching research skills - keeping an open view
  – Researching teaching methods - the value of “hands-on” approaches
  – Laboratory experiences - the personal discovery of new findings
  – Critical literature searches
    • The foundation of new discoveries
• Unique Subject Matter - relating the abstract to the common experience
  – *e.g.* Geol 215 (Petrology) - Minerals that Matter
    • Depth-temperature-time history of the Earth’s crust
  – *e.g.* Geol 108 (Crises of the Planet)
    • Systems perspective - the growth of interdisciplinary research
    • Global warming - a model problem?
    • Earthquake prediction - how real is when?
    • Natural disasters (landslide, floods, earthquakes) - a time perspective
Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. VII

- **Interdisciplinary Teaching**
  - Shows academic breadth
  - Major goal of many universities and colleges in 2004

- **Collaborative (Team) Teaching**
  - Cooperative nature; differences I perspective

- **Emphasis Matched to the Institution**
  - Research universities
    - Departmental, disciplinary differences
  - Universities
  - Selective colleges
  - Liberal arts colleges (scientists, mathematicians)
Statement of Teaching Philosophy:
Issues to Consider. VIII

- There is no one formula
  - Literally thousands of variants
  - Many degrees of freedom

- This is your teaching philosophy
  - Not anyone elses!

- The Key to Success
  - Write what you believe
  - Follow the consequences!
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