

Advice for Writing Teaching Statements/Philosophies

My prompt on Twitter (June 2021): Gearing up for placement season. Last year I gathered very useful advice on Twitter about how to format CVs. This year I'm seeking your advice for teaching statements/philosophies. What are you looking for? What are some tips for making them better?

Answers from various folks on Twitter

Show me, don't tell me. Be specific about the skills you help your students develop and what you do (in concrete terms) to accomplish that.

This. Plus, don't start with the lecture model and say how you make it better if you are applying to a teaching school.

Avoid cliches: Yes, analytical skills. Yes, teaching research synergy. Be specific in ways that connect to the content of what you will teach. Add something about you as a person to make it unique.

Not about teaching statements, but, if you're trying for a teaching-focused job, consider getting a teaching-focused LOR. I had the coordinator of our campus writing program (where I was a TA) write one and all of my interviewers mentioned that it made my app stand out.

Clear examples of what your core ideas are - you like to promote information literacy? HOW do you do that? Make it lively. Consider adding quotes, figures, tables, etc to demonstrate.

(Also, it is bonkers that we expect people who have taught very little to tell us this. I barely understand my teaching philosophy now)

I basically rewrote mine from scratch after teaching at a different institution for one year (please to note that I had five years in the classroom before I landed a permanent job)

Just did a session with our PhD students that covered this. My #1 tip: memorable, specific examples of what makes your approach to and in the classroom *unique*.

100%! I keep my teaching statement up on my website for that reason:

<http://paulpoast.com/teaching/>

1) Read some pedagogy literature so you can become (a bit) conversant in the lingo around teaching and learning. Does your teaching approach already have a name? Does it give you ideas of what you might like to do in the future?; 2) go to the teaching center on campus for advice.

Our teaching center does one on one appointments with graduate students on teaching philosophies.

Be real. Use examples. Everyone says he/she is student centered, wants students to do critical thinking, etc etc. when they use common tropes, try to make it seem real.

*2 pgs single spaced is fine *Use section headings *Be specific w examples *I like to see a list of proposed courses+ a few sentences about each at the end; could be on 3rd page *Try not to be obvious and trite (e.g. "I teach critical thinking skills") *Address DEI w SPECIFICS

Maybe a little petty, but I would rather not hear you talk about the graduate courses you teach when applying to my SLAC. This is more true for the cover letter, though.

Give me information about how you approach different aspects of teaching: in-class activities, assignments, structuring course objectives, etc.

Also: ask a lot of people for examples. Candidates probably know that they should use specifics but don't necessarily know HOW to do that effectively.

<https://crlt.umich.edu/resources-publications/teaching-philosophies-statements...> has an incredible short paper on it, along with a rubric for evaluating them.

Tailor to unit and university. At X (like most places) we have our own values - access and excellence - echo that. In my unit, emphasis is on teaching outside/beyond classroom -talk about those education opportunities, e.g. research apprentice/intern. Also online is big for us.

Agree, mentioning of courses needed in cover letter seems to be almost necessary for some folks, even if it's not based on anything someone has taught yet.

Use your university's writing center. You want the document to be easy to follow and free from jargon, so having a generalist take a look at it can be valuable. Plus you can ask them to look at it again and again, and you might not feel comfortable asking your committee for that.

There should be a dedicated section on how you teach basic skills. There should be a focus on how you engage a diverse student body. There should be a focus on how courses lead student to next steps. A discussion on how you keep courses current.

Oh, and in job interviews when you are asked when you have had to deal with a challenging student, don't use an example about a student that disagreed with you politically or was disruptive in class.

Philosophy -> strategy -> goals -> outcomes, always supported with examples throughout.