How to Effectively Communicate Your Teaching Philosophy

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"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say."

Cartoon courtesy of Windi L Whitson
Developing a Teaching Philosophy & Statement–

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• Many Universities do not provide insight/direction about what they want to see in a Teaching Statement from applicants.

"Writing a teaching philosophy is like trying to photograph a dense fog…"
Overarching Questions–

• What format and approach should you take in writing a teaching statement?

• How much of your teaching statement should illuminate your ‘philosophy’?

• What should a teaching statement include? What should it exclude?
Four Tiers of Information–

• 1) The Strategic

• 2) The Basics

• 3) Process & Policy

• 4) Metacognitive Elements

“Just as thinking about thinking evolves your thinking, thinking about teaching evolves your teaching…”
Understand the Landscape –

- What kinds of institutions are out there and which are you applying to?
  - Private vs. Public
  - Research-Intensive vs. Primarily Teaching
  - Graduate vs. Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI)
  - Minority- or Hispanic-Serving (MSI/HSI)
  - Historically Black College/University (HBCU)
Example –

• Mission: The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) is a comprehensive four-year university offering bachelor's and selected master's degree programs and providing strong academic and career preparation as well as life-long learning opportunities. Located in the heart of the city, the University reflects the diversity of the Greater Houston Area, and through its academic programs, engages with the community to address the needs and advance the development of the region. UHD is an inclusive community dedicated to integrating teaching, service and scholarly research to develop students' talents and prepare them for success in a dynamic global society.

• Vision: UHD will be a premier city university engaging every student in high-impact educational experiences and ensuring that students graduate with 21st century skills.
Speak to the Mission and Vision –

• The Mission and Vision of a school/department drives the Strategic Plan.
• The Strategic Plan drives the budget.
• The Budget dictates resource allocation and decision-making.
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- Dedicate a paragraph to speak to the school you are applying to.
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"COMPLETE SENTENCES"
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• Not an exercise in the conceptual and theoretical metaphysics of teaching and what you believe.
  – Avoid opinions
  – Let your declarative statements betray your philosophy
  – Let your examples betray your pedagogical knowledge
What is your Pedagogical Archetype?

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• Will you be the same person in front of a classroom as you are when you are in the lab, in a meeting, or hanging out with friends and family?

I make sure my students have time for creative activities like coloring everyday, with #2 pencils, bubbling in circles, on standardized tests!
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• Can you describe how you envision your ‘teaching persona’?
Why Do You Want It & What Can You Do?

• What are your motivations for teaching?

A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others.

~Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
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• What courses can you teach without threatening someone else’s job security?
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• How will you:
  – make what the students are learning relevant?
  – make the competencies developed in students applicable to the liberal arts curriculum and their eventual profession?
What Will You Do and Avoid In the Classroom?

• How will you tie course goals to student learning and course/program learning outcomes?
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• What are the most significant challenges you have faced, or anticipate facing as a college instructor, and how did/will you meet them?
What Will You Do and Avoid In the Classroom?

• How will you articulate a relationship between your teaching of content, teaching of skillsets, and student learning?
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• How will you address current issues important to student learning environments?
  – Online, hybrid and other asynchronous learning communities
  – Competency-based education
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• How will you engage students and facilitate students engaging course content?
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• What aspects of your teaching will transcend disciplinary boundaries?
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• How will you promote students creating and fostering a love affair with learning in your classes?
Demonstrate A Metacognitive Approach to Teaching & Learning—

• How will you make your classes the ones:
  – Where learning captivates their attention;
  – That arouses their curiosity;
  – That stretches their minds;
  – That challenges their beliefs;
  – Empowers them with feelings of accomplishment?
1). National Science Foundation.
2). U.S. Census Bureau.
4). Bureau of Labor and Statistics.