



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Office of Human Resources

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## Document Your Teaching

It's important to maintain a record of your teaching experience. Saving copies of syllabi, tests, assignments, student work, etc., will not only mean you don't have to recreate these documents, but will also help you prepare for departmental reviews of teaching effectiveness.

Mandates from the University Senate require that student evaluations of teaching and peer review of teaching be considered in tenure and promotion decisions. However, each department has created its own plan for how these two elements will be used in decision making. Before you begin the process of documenting your teaching, it's important that you learn how your department will evaluate your teaching. (Refer to the Understanding Your Teaching Responsibilities section of your departmental guide for specific questions you may wish to ask colleagues and administrators.)

### Why create a portfolio?

A teaching portfolio is similar to an artist's portfolio: it is a material record of things you create in the practice of your profession. It contains both primary material, documents produced in the course of teaching; and secondary material, documents produced in reflection upon teaching. Portfolios generally have two major goals: your development as a college-level teacher, and your employment or promotion as a faculty member. Creating portfolios allows teachers to think seriously about their teaching goals and strategies, and to present those thoughts in a cohesive manner to others.

### Self-development through reflection

Creating a reflective portfolio allows you to ask sensible questions about your methods, goals, and expectations. Reflecting on these things allows you to develop your courses further, to figure out and fix mistakes, to better connect your teaching interests with your research interests, and to provide some structure for conversations about teaching among your peers and mentors. A collection of teaching artifacts and relevant reflections shows the connections between your intentions, strategies, and success as a teacher.

### Self-promotion in employment

A teaching portfolio demonstrates teaching achievements in an organized and convincing way. Therefore, portfolios are used increasingly by as a basis for decisions hiring, retention, promotion, merit increases, and awards. It is second nature for you to document your articles, conference papers, and research awards on a C.V. With only slight changes in your regular pattern of documentation, it will become second nature to document your teaching and reflections on teaching as well.

### Philosophy of Teaching

Discuss your ideas about teaching: your beliefs about good teaching, how you have tried to accomplish your objectives, how they have changed, and how good you are by these criteria. This is perhaps the one item which is universally expected in a teaching portfolio.

### Creating a Philosophy of Teaching statement

Some questions to ask may be:

- How readily can you explain your approach to teaching?
- How congruent is your philosophy of teaching to your practice of teaching?
- In what ways are you currently working toward new goals in your teaching practice?

To begin drafting a statement of teaching philosophy, try jotting down some ideas (or write a brief statement) about your teaching ideas. Explain the goals, behaviors, strategies, and processes that are most important for you, as a teacher, to consider when creating and implementing a course. Define how these core values are conveyed through your teaching.

### How to build a portfolio

A teaching portfolio can be kept in a loose-leaf binder for flexibility. Teaching is dynamic, and reflection on teaching makes it even more dynamic, so you can expect your portfolio to grow and change over time. Moreover, you'll want to be able to take your portfolio apart and put it together in different configurations for jobs, grants, or awards you might apply for. For your own purposes, consider keeping a table of contents, and be sure to provide one whenever you submit your portfolio with an application.

### What to include

Each portfolio is unique - the content varies from discipline to discipline, person to person and changes over time - however, there are common elements. Most portfolio entries are reflective, whether they reflect on the primary documents of teaching or reflect on larger concerns. At the minimum, entries should include:

- Table of contents
- Philosophy of teaching (2 pages)
- Professional biography (i.e., brief narrative highlighting key developmental stages, and the campus or department contexts in which you have been operating)
- Course planning and preparation including work samples (e.g., syllabi, series of assignments, lecture notes, maps), and reflections and rationale
- Actual teaching including work samples (e.g., video, notes from colleague observation, solicited student journals)
- Evaluating student learning and providing feedback; these may include revised drafts by a student with your comments on them, a collection of student papers for the same assignment, student evaluations of teaching, or one-minute papers by students about a single issue
- Proof of continuing updates in areas related to teaching performance including documents (e.g., paper from a conference that you plan to incorporate into your work, agenda from a conference or workshop in which you participated, letters soliciting your participation on committees or boards), and reflections rationale

## Other ideas for entries

### Teaching Materials Paired with Reflections

- A syllabus you've used; reflection on what your goals were, how well the syllabus worked, and changes you might make.
- Student evaluations represented graphically or quantitatively; reflection suggesting how you might use this data to support your improvement.
- Class material you created; reflection as to why you produced it, how well it worked toward your goals, how you might change it or why retain it.
- A journal of your teaching or someone else's teaching in a particular class; reflection on your own journal, each other's journals, or a dialogue between the two of you about what you see in these journals.
- Descriptive information about a specific context in which you worked: courses taught, class sizes and attributes, the institution's expectations, your expectations; reflection on how your teaching took these things into account and what you think of the results.
- Information about your wider involvement in teacher development such as other programs in which you've participated, teaching materials you've developed, involvement in curriculum development; reflection on why you chose to do these particular things, what you got from them, and how you might apply them.

### 2-3 Page Autobiographical Statements

- Inquire into, diagnose, make sense of, and actively experiment with the toughest aspects of your teaching experience.
- Explain how teaching has affected you. How have you responded in different teaching contexts? What has interested and motivated you about teaching? What challenges and rewards have you found or do you anticipate finding in teaching?
- Describe and assess your learning style-what is your own process, what makes you succeed or fail as a learner?
- Sketch your competence as a scholar teaching in a particular content area - how do you connect scholarship and teaching?

## Choose a portfolio model

### Loose-leaf model

This model includes documents, reflections, letters - solicited and unsolicited, a comprehensive record of courses (e.g., syllabus, ads, lecture notes, materials, student ratings), and student work. The flexibility of this model allows you to choose different pieces to include when addressing a specific job or grant application. Everything must be labeled and should be divided with tabs.

### Development

A 6-8 page narrative (with empirical evidence in appendix) in which you show change over time in a particular content area or philosophical approach.

### Issue-based

An in-depth exploration of one aspect of your teaching (e.g., integrating multiculturalism into your curriculum, developing a capstone course for majors in your discipline, your various uses of writing - formal and informal). While this portfolio may include the same variety of materials as Model I, it is focused on one primary issue.

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