

How to Write Your Teaching Statement

Michael J. Leibowitz, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor, Medical Microbiology & Immunology

University of California-Davis

One Shields Avenue

Davis, CA 95616

Email: mjleibowitz@ucdavis.edu

Universidad Central del Caribe

May 21, 2015

Faculty Job Application Package

- Cover Letter
- CV
- Research Statement (current research and future plans)
- Letters of Recommendation (separate)
- Teaching Statement or Philosophy

Importance of Teaching Statement

- Teaching Intensive schools: obvious
- Research & Comprehensive Universities: need good teachers & clear thinkers!
- Evaluate applicants clarity of thought and writing
- Fit to needs of school and department
- Majority (not all) of academic jobs require it, as do most applications for promotion

What to Show in Statement

- You care about teaching
- Approaches you think work (and why)
- Experience as teacher (and student)
 - Workshops and training can help
- Recognition of diversity of students in interest and learning styles
- What you can teach (including outside comfort zone)
 - Fit department needs
- You wrote it yourself!
- Different statement for each job!

Keep it Short!

- Reviewers are busy, long essays make them cranky!
- 1-2 double-spaced pages
- Clear and grammatically correct
- Your own words
- Fit the job
 - Do your homework
 - Different for each job

Don'ts

- “I will use PowerPoints”
- Don't write a philosophy paper; be practical
- Don't pretend to know it all! You do not! Show enthusiasm to learn to better pedagogy.
- Don't repeat cv or research statement, but refer to specifics where relevant
- Don't present teaching as second priority

What You Might Include:

- Experience as teacher and student
- How to engage introductory and advanced course students
- Recognition of differences among students in learning style
- How to engage students in “Active Learning”
- What do you know and what would you like to learn about teaching
- Plans to use primary sources (science literature and data) in teaching

Don't Try to Do It All!

- It will not be believable
- If you get the job, you can't do it

Targeting the Institution

- What size classes are taught?
- Which courses offered could you teach?
- What new courses might you develop?
- Primarily Undergraduate Institution \neq Research Institution
- Easy: Offer advanced course or seminar in your research area (also a way to recruit students to your lab)
- But more important: How will your research make you a better teacher

Other Issues to Consider

- How to run a class addressing differences in learning styles
- Keeping interest of advanced students while helping slower students
- Maintaining interest (all courses, but especially introductory undergraduate)
- Problems you have faced and how you addressed them

Practical Advice

- Write in first person
- No empty statements. If you will use active learning, student centered classroom, encourage collaboration, etc., explain how
- Humility is good, don't claim to be an expert, avoid claiming to be "best teacher"
- Show enthusiasm for students, not disdain (even for problem students)
- Try to integrate teaching and research

Follow Up: The Interview

- Everyone counts! Including secretary, students, lunch companions, drivers, etc.
- Look up interviewers if known in advance
- You may be asked about anything you wrote
- Teaching evaluation includes:
 - Research Seminar
 - Short research presentation without slides
 - Invited lecture for first year course
 - Research Seminar for undergraduates

Resources

- <http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/industries/academic-job-search-grad-students/>
- <http://chronicle.com/article/How-to-Write-a-Statement-of/45133/>
- <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/teaching%20statement.pdf>

List of More Resources and Examples

- KD Kearns & CS Sullivan, Resources and practices to help graduate students and postdoctoral fellows write statements of teaching philosophy, *Advan. in Physiol. Edu.* 35:136-145 (2011)
- The following slides are suggestions for questions to address from this publication.

Learning goals

- What most interests you about your discipline?
- What do you hope students will appreciate about your discipline?
- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your discipline?
- How are these disciplinary knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to students' academic, personal, and professional success?

Teaching methods

- What do you see as relationship between the student and the teacher?
- What do you see as respective responsibilities of the student and the teacher?
- How are these relationships and responsibilities reflected in your teaching methods?
- How do these methods contribute to your learning goals for students?
- Why are these teaching methods appropriate for use in your discipline?

Teaching Methods (cont.)

- What pedagogical resources (disciplinary and general) support your teaching methods?
- How do your teaching methods address diverse student expectations and needs?
- How do your personal characteristics and values relate to your choice and implementation of teaching methods?

Assessment of student learning

- What learning assessment tools do you use (e.g., tests, papers, portfolios, and/or journals) and why?
- How do you know your learning goals are being achieved using your teaching methods?
- What do the learning assessments say about your teaching?

Assessment of teaching

- What do your teaching assessments say about your teaching?
- What are your strengths as a teacher?
- How will you improve students' achievement of these learning goals?
- What aspects of your teaching are you working on now?