Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy

“Just because you have never written a statement of your teaching philosophy does not mean that you do not have a teaching philosophy. If you engage a group of learners who are your responsibility, then your behavior in designing their learning environment must follow from your philosophical orientation…What you need to do is discover what [your philosophy] is and then make it explicit.”

*Brian Coppola, “How to Write a Teaching Philosophy for Academic Employment,” American Chemical Society, Department of Career Services Bulletin, 2000, p.1.*

Format and Basic Guidelines

- Brief (1-2 pages)
- Avoid technical terms and jargon
- Narrative, first-person approach
- Reflective and personal
- Tailored to your audience
- Representative of your experience and practice
- A showcase for your strengths
- A place that points to your development as a teacher
- The foundation for your teaching portfolio

Possible Components

- Beliefs about the teaching-learning process, e.g.,
  - Role of the teacher
  - How students learn/diversity of learning styles
  - Purpose of grades and evaluation
  - Disciplinary context
  - Issues of inclusion and retention
- Goals for students, e.g.,
  - Content goals
  - Process goals/skills (e.g., problem solving skills)
  - Goals for attitude/motivation
  - Career and lifelong goals
- Implementation of the philosophy
  - Concrete, discipline-specific examples
  - Examples of alignment between goals, methods, and assessment
- Growth and development
  - Changes made/obstacles overcome
  - Goals for the future
- Accomplishments in teaching
  - Curricular efforts
  - Professional development efforts
  - Grants/scholarship of teaching and learning projects
  - Teaching awards
  - Publications on teaching and learning

For sample teaching philosophy statements, see http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tstpum.html