

Teaching Statement: Teaching-focused Institutions

PDCO Career Resources

If you are applying to a teaching-focused institution, search committees will expect that you will have taught your own self-contained course (or courses) prior to applying for a faculty position within their department. Having prior teaching experience will allow you to elaborate more fully on your teaching philosophy, your approaches to student learning, and pedagogical strategies that have been effective in your classroom in the past. Teaching statements for teaching-focused institutions ask you to reflect on your prior teaching experience and articulate the ways in which your past experience has prepared you to effectively teach students at the university to which you are applying.

Your teaching statement should take a student-centered approach and focus on strategies you have used to successfully facilitate student learning. This will encourage you to consider the ways your students engage with and comprehend new material and concepts.

- First, outline your central teaching objectives. What do you want your students to take away from the courses that you teach? What kinds of scientific concepts or skills do you want your students to master after taking your courses?
- Second, what specific pedagogical methods and strategies have you used in the classroom to achieve your teaching objectives? Have you used a student-centered classroom and/or constructed assignments and projects that encourage active or experiential learning? Have you incorporated collaborative work and/or individual projects?
- Third, how do you assess student success and your own success as an instructor? Do you have any specific examples of student success that indicate the effectiveness of your teaching approach? Finally, what does teaching mean to you? What kind of impact have you had on the lives of your students? What kind of future impact do you hope to have?

Compelling teaching statements for teaching-focused institutions will draw connections between the significance of your research and how it informs your pedagogical approach. For example, if your research in the biological sciences centers on pathology, you may choose to engage your students on subjects of general interest related to health and disease. Formulate a teaching philosophy that demonstrates your ability to innovate and adapt, both in the classroom and in the laboratory.

Tailoring your teaching statement

As with your curriculum vitae and cover letter, you should tailor your teaching statement to the department and university you are planning to apply to. Consider the following questions as you construct your teaching statement for a teaching-focused institution:

- Will you primarily be working with undergraduate students?
- What are the average class sizes for courses you will be expected to teach?

Johns Hopkins Medical Institute Professional Development and Career Office

<http://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/>

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- At a liberal arts college, for example, you may teach 15-20 students per class.
- At a larger state or regional university, you may teach hundreds of students in a lecture-style class that does not allow for much one-on-one engagement.
- Will you be expected to work with and manage teaching assistants for your courses?
- Will you be expected to work with graduate students? If so, in what capacity?

Make sure that your teaching goals and strategies line up with the mission of the university and department to which you are applying. If you are applying to a liberal arts university with small class sizes, indicate the ways in which you will be able to directly engage your students and offer one-on-one mentorship for motivated undergraduates. Market yourself as an advocate for advanced undergraduate research and indicate how you will mentor undergraduate research projects at their institution. If you are applying to a state or regional university with large class sizes, think about constructing your lectures in a way that will reach a broad range of students. Perhaps you can use teaching assistants to reinforce particularly difficult concepts in laboratory or discussion sections.

In addition, you should research the department's course catalog and take note of courses they offer that you would be willing and prepared to teach. You should also think about what courses you would like to develop as a member of faculty, and identify professors with whom you would be interested in co-teaching.

The DON'TS of Teaching Statements

- Don't make the teaching statement entirely about your ability to teach. Show that you are thinking about student learning and indicate the key skills and concepts you want your future students to learn.
- Don't discount your experiences as a Teaching Assistant or mentor to undergraduate or graduate students. This experience can be valuable in helping you to think through how you will engage your future students in the classroom and laboratory.
- Refrain from using contrived phrases about your "love" of teaching or how you would be "thrilled" to teach courses at their institution. Your teaching statement will read as overly emotional and lacking in depth. Provide specific examples that demonstrate your commitment to teaching.

General tips for formatting your teaching statement

- Teaching Statements should be no longer than two pages
- Do not use academic letterhead for your teaching statement
- Use a professional font (Times New Roman, Arial), with appropriate margins (at least .5 inches on all sides)

What you should include in your teaching statement

Unlike your cover letter and research statement, teaching statements do not follow a standardized format. This allows you to privilege areas of your teaching portfolio you feel most effectively relate your commitment to student learning, the connections between your research

and your pedagogical approach, as well as to indicate courses you plan to teach at the institution to which you are applying.

- 1-2 sentences expressing your commitment to teaching and mentoring students
 - Why does teaching matter to you? What impact have you had on your students? What impact do you hope to have on your future students?
- Draw connections between your research and your teaching philosophy
- Indicate previous teaching and mentoring experiences
 - Name specific courses and key concepts taught
 - Include quotations or quantitative data from course reviews, where relevant
 - What student populations have you taught? Full-time students? Part-time students? Underrepresented groups?
 - Showing that you have the ability to teach a broad range of students is crucial at teaching-focused institutions
- Cite 1-2 specific examples of effective teaching and strategies that you have used as an instructor in the past
 - Outline your teaching objectives
 - Provide examples of strategies or methods you have used to achieve those objectives
 - Think about how these strategies can be implemented for students you will teach at the department to which you are applying
 - How do you measure student success? How do you measure your own success as an instructor?
- Show that you have done your research on the department and university and have an understanding of the populations of students you will be expected to work with
 - How will you engage undergraduate students who do not consider themselves to be research scientists?
 - Indicate how you will advise or mentor graduate students if that is an expectation for your position
- Indicate courses within the department's course catalog that you would be willing to teach
- Propose courses you wish to develop that could expand the department's course offerings
- Identify professors with whom you would be interested in co-teaching
- Conclusion Statement

Resources

- ['Writing the Teaching Statement'](#)
- ['Six Tips for Writing an Effective Teaching Statement'](#)
- [Teaching Toolkit- Center for Education Resources, Johns Hopkins University](#)
- ['Samples for Academic Positions'- University of California, San Francisco](#)
- Chapter 25: 'Just Say No to the Weepy Teaching Statement', pgs. 164-172