

**BYU-
Idaho**

Teaching Portfolio

**Language and
Letters**

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INSIDE FEATURES

Improve Teaching	2
Step-by-Step	2
Reflection	3
Portfolio Contents	4
Theory of Learning	4
Assembling Items	5
References	6

Teaching Portfolios:

- Provide evidence of teaching
- Increase professional accountability
- Increase reflection and discussion
- Foster a culture of teaching and learning
- Support faculty self-definition

What is a Teaching Portfolio?

Giving a precise definition of a teaching portfolio is somewhat elusive. The vitality of a teaching portfolio rests in the user's ability to make of it what he or she will.

Peter Seldin (1991) writes that a teaching portfolio is "a factual description of a professor's major strengths and teaching achievements. It describes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance." Seldin's definition strongly suggests that a portfolio is a document that showcases what is good about a professor's teaching. Floyd Urbach (1992) adds that the goal of "a teaching portfolio is to describe, through documentation over an extended period of time, the full range of your abilities as a college teacher."

What does all of this mean in practice? In a rudimentary sense, a teaching portfolio is a

collection of documents and reflections that represents a faculty member's teaching ability. Yet, a portfolio is much more than a random selection of documents. It represents a moment in one's teaching life and the examining of that moment to achieve a greater understanding of one's teaching. Teaching portfolios "provide a connection to the contexts and personal histories of real teaching and make it possible to document the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time" (Kenneth Wolf, 1991).

However, simply documenting one's teaching would neither justify the effort required to put a portfolio together nor unleash its potential to improve one's teaching. A teaching portfolio is a collection of documents that represents the best of one's teaching and

provides one with the occasion to reflect on his or her teaching with the same intensity devoted to scholarship or research.

(Murray, John P., "Why Teaching Portfolios?" *Community College Review* 22 (Summer 1994): 33-43.



The Use of a Teaching Portfolio

A teaching portfolio is an education tool, which is primarily used in two ways. First, portfolios are used as a means of authentic assessment in evaluating the effectiveness of a teacher for licensure and/or employment decisions. Second, teaching portfolios are used to provide feedback to teachers so that they may im-

prove their teaching and level of professionalism.

The use of teaching portfolios for high-stakes decisions, such as advancement, is not universally endorsed.

The majority of programs use portfolios to increase reflection and provide an ongoing record of a teacher's growth.

The portfolio provides a vehicle for assessing the relationship between teacher choices or actions and their outcomes.

(Peter Doolittle. "Teacher Portfolio Assessment." *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation* 4 (1). <<http://ericae.net>>)

Teaching Portfolios Improve Teaching

Although faculty members can realize abundant benefits from using teaching portfolios for evaluation purposes, the greatest benefits are to the reflective practitioner. Although this benefit may be too intangible to explain to a tenure or promotion review committee, it is probably the only motivator capable of sustaining the faculty member who undertakes to develop a teaching portfolio. For many, developing a portfolio provides an opportunity to reflect on teaching. Many of us have never been given this opportunity. One professor wrote, "I taught for 18 years without really thinking about it. When I wrote my personal teaching philosophy for my portfolio, for the first time I thought about WHY I do what I do in the classroom."

Moreover, when we seize the opportunity, we also gain control and responsibility for our teaching. The portfolio

developer decides what goes into the portfolio. He or she states *his* or *her* teaching philosophy, how that is to be put into action, what the proper student outcomes should be, and most importantly, what standards of success he or she will be judged against.

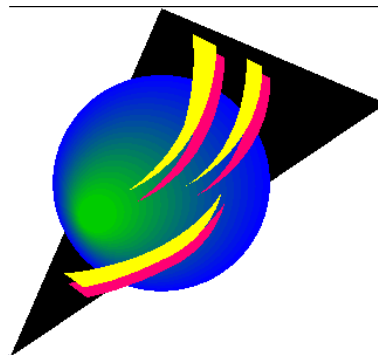
(Murray, John P., "Why Teaching Portfolios?" *Community College Review* 22 (Summer 1994): 33-43.

In teaching portfolios, teachers are encouraged to examine their specific actions within the context of classroom situations, to reflect on

their decisions, and to explore their development in light of their teaching experience and professional development activities. Patricia Hutchings notes that the very process of constructing a teaching portfolio contributes to a teacher's development and learning.

She quotes one teacher which whom she worked as acknowledging, "I never realized why I do a particular activity in my classroom until I did the portfolio."

(Newton, Camille. "Teaching-Portfolio Potential and Concerns." *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*. Ed. Duan Roen, Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2002. 495-500.)



Teaching Portfolio Rationale

The rationale for having teaching portfolios is that they can:

1. Provide evidence of teaching. Display better, more authentic, more robust evidence of teaching—for reflection, discussion, evaluation.
2. Increase professional accountability. Put faculty in charge of monitoring, improving, ensuring the quality of teaching;

"Teaching portfolios display better, more authentic, more robust evidence of teaching."

accountability.

3. Increase reflection and discussion. Prompt individual and collective reflection and discussion of teaching purposes, strategies, results, standards.
4. Foster a culture of teaching and learning. Cultivate a culture in which teaching and learning are valued, talked about, inquired into, and continuously improved.

5. Support faculty self-definition. Allow faculty to have control over his/her teaching.
6. Provide the reader with insight. Give the reader of the teaching portfolio a sense of what the faculty member is thinking about teaching.
7. University contribution. Contribute to continued development and excellence in education at the university.

(University of Washington. "Teaching Portfolio." <www.fish.washington.edu/

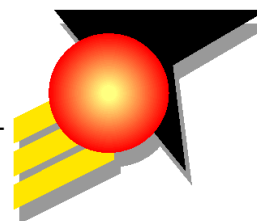
Seven Steps to Create a Teaching Portfolio

Most faculty members rely on the following step-by-step approach in creating their portfolios.

1. Summarize teaching responsibilities.
2. Describe your approach to teaching.
3. Select items for the portfolio.
4. Prepare statements on each item.

5. Arrange the items in order.
6. Compile the supporting data.
7. Incorporate the portfolio into the curriculum vitae.

Although it may appear that putting together a portfolio might take more time than



teaching itself, in practice this is not the case. Most professors can complete their portfolio in twelve to fifteen hours spread over several days.

(Seldin, Peter. *The Teaching Portfolio*. 2nd ed. Bolton, MA: Anker, 1997.)

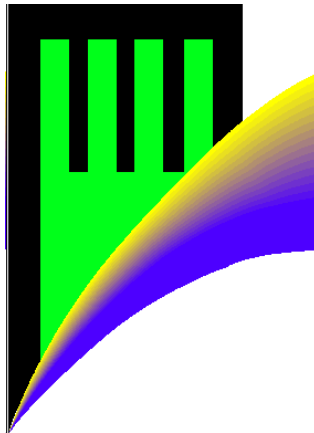
Professional Reflection on Teaching

What are the ends of teaching? How does one's views on this shape one's teaching activities (broadly construed) and the methods or approaches that one uses in a classroom? Ultimately, how can one know good teaching without knowing its intended purpose? Since teaching is a scholarly, professional activity, its backbone is a thorough reflection on ends and means. Teaching, therefore, will be shaped by how an individual characterizes these three basic elements that govern practice:

1. Personal values and the goals of education (Teaching Philosophy)
2. The scope of one's activities (Roles and Responsibilities Adopted)
3. The approaches that one adopts or develops towards those desired ends (Methods and Teaching Strategies).

One might pause to consider how they work together as elements of professional reflection.

The foundation for any planning or assessment of teaching begins with a clear reflection on and a public statement of teaching philosophy. This does not define some theory of learning, but expresses the individual's personal values in a professional context. What is the goal of teaching? In a sense, all other aspects of teaching—and the teaching portfolio—revolve around this hub.



Having defined one's values and goals in teaching, one can then articulate the appropriate scope or type of one's teaching activities.

Finally, the goals and the scope of one's activities frame a context for developing the means to fulfill them. In particular, what methodologies and teaching strategies does one learn, adopt and develop?

A teacher's methods and teaching strategies form a toolbox, of sorts.

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Portfolios.")

<www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>

Teaching Philosophy

Feeling like "I don't have a teaching philosophy—where am I gonna get one?" Try this:

Develop what you want to say about teaching.

Write what happens when you teach. Write why you teach the way you do. Describe your thinking. Include your rationale. State your justifications.

"Everyone acts with an operational teaching philosophy, whether it is explicit or not."

Reflect Further. Examine the following questions: what *motivates* you to learn? Why do you value certain characteristics in teachers and then *express* those in your own teaching. Why does what you do in your teaching make a *difference* in the lives of others? What *values* do you impart to your students and why? Why do you develop the learning environ-

ment(s) and the relationship with students that you do? What are your *favorite* statements to make about teaching? Why are they favorites? What other questions might I ask myself to examine why I teach the way I do.

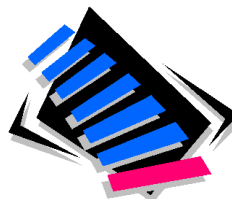
(Gail Goodyear. Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, University of Texas at El Paso. <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/cube/>.)

Roles and Responsibilities

A teacher's roles and responsibilities become an active and concrete expression of one's personal teaching philosophy. One aim of professional reflection is to clarify the meaning of each role and responsibility, as well as one's place within an institution, given your goals.

Possible items to address under roles and responsibilities include:

1. Teaching courses.: number of students; types of students; level of student preparedness; course load;
2. Mentoring and advising students.
3. Training or guiding other teachers.
4. Managing instructional resources. Do you oversee studios, labs, resource centers?
5. Securing funds for edu-



cation.

6. Mentoring other teachers. To what degree do you promote good teaching through supporting peers?

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Potfolios." <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)

Teaching Portfolio Content

What is Taught. List of courses taught; descriptions of grading standards; reflections on the goals of each course.

Who is Taught. Characteristics of student; learning styles of the students; motivation for taking the course.

Why They are Taught. Students' goals; institutional mission related to course goals; department goals; a statement of the essential content of the course.

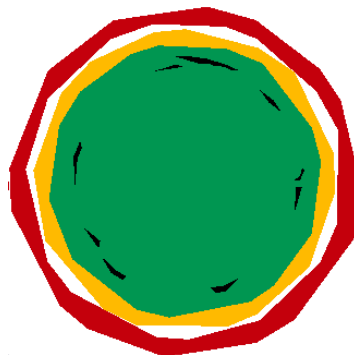
Documentation of Teaching Strategies. Examples of assignments and exams; techniques used to assess students' learning styles; course materials prepared for students; a list of teaching strategies used; reflections on how assignments and exams reflect on the faculty member's goals; classroom research techniques used to assess student learning.

Assessing Teaching Effectiveness. Pre- and post test scores; student evaluations, notes or other testimonials from students; interview/survey data from students who have completed the class; teaching awards won; reports from students' employers; scores on standardized national or department exam; annotated copies of representative graded papers, projects, and exams; statements from colleagues who have visited classes; statements from colleagues who have reviewed syllabi and course materials; statements from

administrators who have visited the professor's classes.

Teaching Improvement Plan. Student evaluations from a previous term compared to a current term; a list of readings on improving teaching and changes resulting from reflection on them; a record of changes that result from self-reflection; a record of on-campus faculty development activities attended; contributions to professional journals; a description of new teaching strategies used.

(Murray, John P., "Why Teaching Portfolios?" *Community College Review* 22 (Summer 1994): 33-43.



Theories of Learning

Theories of learning are important guides to teaching. What an individual has learned about how students learn, how they grow cognitively, emotionally, etc., is certainly an important asset. At the same time, one ought not to confuse descriptions of theories of learning as substitutes for clear thinking about one's own methods of teaching.

On occasions, it may be appropriate to consider the complete repertoire of teaching skills and

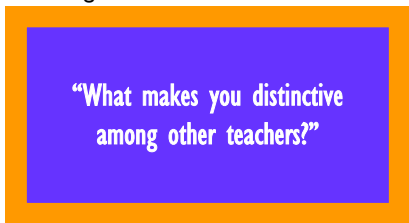
intellectual resources that one has at one's disposal—therefore to document one's teaching capital. This may apply to reaching one's goals outside the classroom as much as in the course of formalized instruction. This section may be the place to record what one has learned about collaborative learning, active learning, authentic assessment, etc.

Where do these methods lead? A long-term objective should be to analyze

teaching practice to show that actual teaching reflects teaching goals through the methods and strategies one adopts.

What makes you distinctive among other teachers? How does this reflect your teaching philosophy?

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Potfolios." <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)

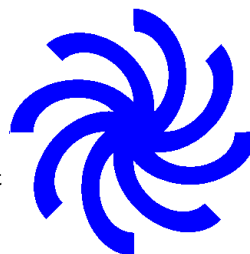


Mapping Future Goals

In a professional context, one major reason for reflection and self-analysis is to identify strengths that can be amplified and built on, while noting possible weaknesses to mend and opportunities for further growth. These might be made explicit in a statement of future goals.

Goals may be short-term (revising a course the next time it is taught, or introducing a new teaching technique in the upcoming year) or long-term

(overhauling a curriculum to adapt to new teaching strategies, learning about and refining innovative teaching methods, or developing a major instructional resource). They may focus on specifics regarding courses or teacher-student relations, or on general teaching skills or development of "teaching capital." Indeed, at some point in the future, we



might want to use a teacher's own goals as a benchmark for assessing that teacher's later achievements.

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Potfolios." <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)

Assembling a Teaching Portfolio

So, you have these fragments of a teaching portfolio, various reflective exercises, letters from peers and students, etc. Now what?

Conceptual Organization. Recall that a teaching portfolio may serve many different roles. The ultimate purpose, of course, shapes its organization.

First, what organization to use? Consider that this is one way to convey your creativity and your conception of teaching. There are no rules.

Second, to the degree that portfolios are unique to each individual, you need to make the overall organization explicit to the reader. You might include a table of contents, abstract, or one-page summary. Note that this is the opportunity for you to highlight elements that are especially significant to you. Provide the reader with a map (visual or

descriptive) and perhaps comment about what you consider the most interesting or relevant sections.

An important element of portfolios is that they are selective. Be prepared for the reader who may only have the time to invest reading five pages. Also, DO NOT include everything. A good reflection on your scholarly approach will be how you can distill important data or evidence and present in concise form.

Physical Organization. Consider also the physical arrangement of the portfolio. Perhaps you can't judge a book by its cover, but

many people do anyway.

What will be the first impression of your prospective reader? Perhaps simply demonstrate that you care about

this review of your work, as reflected in the quality of its presentation. Once can easily imagine that someone with a flashy presentation and no substance will probably leave a scholarly audience unimpressed.

(<www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)



Professional Development

A major competent of treating teaching as a scholarly activity is professional development. This involves a commitment to continued growth in knowledge and skills, participating in scholarly dialogue about teaching, and sometimes sharing one's acquired expertise with colleagues.

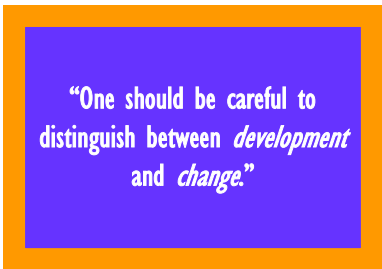
Forms of professional development

might include: observing peers and discussing observations, taking post-graduate courses or seminars on teaching; reading literature on teaching; participating in workshops on teaching methods or perspectives; peer review and teaching circles; mapping future goals; leading workshops on teaching; diagnosis of past evaluations for strengths and weaknesses, and future

plans based on these; innovation; research on teaching, whether local for personal use or publishable; discipline specific education or activities that helps you remain current in your field.

One should be careful to distinguish between *development* and mere change. Development should increase one's teaching capital.

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Potfolios." <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)



Feedback from Students

Assessing your own teaching involves getting feedback from students. This takes many forms:

1. Inviting students to comment on your teaching performance or skills or on the learning environment of a specific course—both at the end of the semester AND during the semester.
2. Assessing what students have learned as a result of your efforts in context of your teaching objec-

tives, both in their own views and by more objective measures.

Common measures may include end-of-course student evaluations, interviews of students by other faculty, letters from students (both unsolicited and solicited), ratings in student-edited course guides, records of students who elect to take a second course with the same

teacher, records of students who change fields, majors, or careers based on an individual teacher, and student-based teaching awards.

(CETaL/UTEP. "Teaching Potfolios." <www.utep.edu/cetal/portfolio/>.)





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**Teaching
Portfolios**

“In my mind, the overarching theme for all our scholarly work at Brigham Young University-Idaho should be **INSPIRED INQUIRY AND INNOVATION**. . . . We are not like other institutions of higher education; we have access to the gifts of the Spirit, which cannot be quantified nor counted. There are simply things we cannot adequately define and describe about the process of learning and teaching with the Spirit. But, nonetheless, we should be excellent scholars; and our scholarship should be focused on the process of learning and teaching. . . . We will emphasize a wide range of scholarly endeavors and excel in and play a pioneering role in **understanding** learning and teaching processes.”

—David A. Bednar

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