

What is a Teaching Portfolio?

A teaching portfolio is a factual description of a professor's or TA's teaching accomplishments composed of relevant data and analyzed by the professor or TA to show the thinking process behind the artifacts. Most portfolios are NOT collections of everything that the professor has done in the way of teaching over his or her entire career. Rather they are selected samples that illustrate how that individual's teaching is carried out in the various venues in which teaching occurs. Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan (1991) describe portfolios as follows:

- Portfolios provide documented evidence of teaching that is connected to the specifics and contexts of what is being taught.
- They go beyond exclusive reliance on student ratings because they include a range of evidence from a variety of sources such as syllabi, samples of student work, self-reflections, reports on classroom research, and faculty development efforts.
- In the process of selecting and organizing their portfolio material, faculty think hard about their teaching, a practice which is likely to lead to improvement in practice.
- In deciding what should go into a portfolio and how it should be evaluated, institutions necessarily must address the question of what is effective teaching and what standards should drive campus teaching practice.
- Portfolios are a step toward a more public, professional view of teaching. They reflect teaching as a scholarly activity.

Steps for Compiling a Teaching Portfolio

Seldin (1993) suggests following the seven steps below when creating a portfolio:

- Clarify teaching responsibilities. Start with an understanding of the role the professor is expected to play in the department with regard to its various functions. This will help the professor determine what kinds of specifics need to be documented.
- Select items for the Portfolio. Based on the teaching responsibilities in step 1., the professor would select information relevant to those responsibilities rather than gathering every piece of data that can be found.
- Prepare statements on each item. The professor prepares statements on each item that show their relation to the overall responsibilities and how they reflect on his or her status as a teacher.
- Arrange the items in order. The order might be in terms of importance to that professor's responsibilities. It might be chronological to show growth over time. It might be categories of

types of teaching responsibilities to show breadth. The order should reflect the purpose of the evaluation. Check with your department for specific guidelines.

- Compile the supporting data. Evidence relating to the statements on each item should be gathered to support conclusions drawn. This evidence is best placed in an appendix.
- Incorporate the Portfolio into the curriculum vitae. Since the portfolio is about only one aspect of the professor's teaching responsibilities, it needs to be viewed in the total context for the most accurate interpretation.
- Physical presentation considerations. The primary consideration for presenting your portfolio is that the materials should be conveniently arranged for review by others. One possibility is a tabbed notebook. Another is arranging and indexing all of your materials on a CD, DVD, or website. In performance and visual arts, you may need to provide audio and/or video tapes to highlight some activities.

What Kinds of Material can be put into a Portfolio?

Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan (1991) drew from a study at Stanford to identify four domains a portfolio might address. They are:

- Course Planning and Preparation, represented by syllabi, handouts, lecture notes, problem sets, specialized software you've developed, etc.
- Actual teaching presentation, represented by comments from others, written comments from student evaluations, or tapes of actual class sessions.
- Evaluating students and giving feedback, represented by evaluation assignments and students' graded work along with a brief discussion by the instructor about how feedback was given.
- Currency in the field, represented by changes in the courses as new developments in the field arise, currency of reading materials assigned or drawn on for course presentations, attendance at professional conferences that resulted in changes in content or methods of teaching.

The lists below are from Seldin (1993) and by no means intended to be exhaustive of the possibilities. Note that Seldin indicates that there should be multiple sources of information on the same observation, known as triangulation of data. By providing several perspectives on the same event or course, the professor is able to give a clearer picture of the teaching than could be achieved with one source only. What is shown below is not intended to be a checklist of everything that should be included in a portfolio; the list is merely suggestive of what might be included.

Material from Oneself

- A statement of teaching philosophy reflecting the individual's view of the teacher's role and how the individual's activities fit with that philosophy.
- Statement of teaching responsibilities including course titles, numbers, enrollments and demographics, a brief description of the way each course was taught and how the courses fit into the overall mission of the department.
- Representative course syllabi detailing course content and assignments, teaching methods, readings, homework assignments and evaluation activities, possibly highlighting how courses have changed over the years in response to student feedback or instructor growth.
- Description of steps taken to improve teaching, either through the improvement of individual courses or in general through activities to enhance teaching skills or background knowledge.
- Descriptions of instructional innovations attempted and evaluations of their effectiveness.
- Descriptions of non-traditional teaching settings, such as work with laboratory assistants, special help sessions, work with students during office hours, out of classroom contact with all kinds of students.
- Descriptions of activities involving the supervision of graduate students and undergraduate honors thesis students, including names and completion dates, titles of theses or dissertations, works in progress, and an indication of your general approach to such supervision.
- A personal statement describing teaching goals for the next five years.

Material from Others

- Student course evaluation data, including present and former students, majors and nonmajors, graduates and undergraduates, assistants and mentorees, whatever groups constitute the individual's typical constituencies.
- Statements from colleagues who have observed the individual in the classroom or who have taught students in subsequent courses. If such data are not available, there may be alternative sources of similar information. For example, if the individual has been a guest lecturer in another instructor's course, that could be a source of an evaluation. Or if the individual has presented workshops for colleagues either locally or elsewhere, participants could be asked to evaluate the presenter.
- Evaluations from other faculty in team taught courses
- Statements from TAs you have supervised who have taught labs or discussion sections in your courses, etc.
- Documentation of teaching development activities, such as attendance at conferences or workshops on teaching either locally or at professional conferences.
- Statements from colleagues who have reviewed the professor's teaching materials, such as course syllabi, assignments, testing and grading practices. Data can be solicited from outside reviewers on these documents by inviting review from others teaching similar material at similar institutions.
- Honors or other recognition such as a distinguished teaching award or nomination for such an award.

Products of Teaching

- Samples of work along with the professor's feedback to show the range of student performance and how the instructor has dealt with it.
- Student journals compiled during the semester and reflecting student growth in a wide range of areas.
- A record of students who succeed in advanced study in the field or who become majors in the field and reflect back on the instructor's influence.
- Testimonials from the employers of former students.
- Student scores on class examinations, departmental exams, and/or national certification exams.

Some Items that Occasionally Appear

- Descriptions of curricular revisions, including new course projects, materials, and class assignments.
- Self-evaluation of teaching-related activities.
- Contributions to or editing of a professional journal on teaching in the discipline.
- Service on professional society committees or University committees dealing with curriculum or teaching issues.
- A statement by the department chair assessing the professor's teaching contributions to the department.
- Invitations to present at national conferences on the individual's teaching.
- A videotape of a typical class session.
- Participation in off-campus activities related to teaching in the discipline, such as working with local community groups in educational campaigns.
- Evidence of help given to colleagues leading to improvement of their teaching.
- Descriptions of how non-traditional materials are used in teaching.
- Statements from alumni.