Example Four: Teaching Philosophy Statement

TPD Facilitator Context:

The goal of this assignment is to familiarize TAs to Statements of Teaching Philosophy, and to scaffold their learning as they create a first draft, provide peer feedback, revise their initial drafts based on peer- and instructor feedback, and reflect on what they learned about their teaching (and the purpose and value of teaching philosophy statements) over the course of writing their statement.

This assignment works especially well as a "capstone-like" assignment in a set of TPD experiences. While the assignment is valuable for TAs at any point in their development, in this case it is especially important to consider your audience when framing it. Brand new TAs often have far more immediate concerns than Philosophy in the first weeks as they are learning to teach, and rightly so. They also have less insight into the values and methods that inform their teaching when they are just starting out. Once TAs get through the steepest part of the learning curve, however, there is great value in stopping to reflect on exactly that. Thus, even with a moderate amount of teaching experience (e.g., at the end of a first term/year), this can be an invaluable assignment.

In setting up the assignment, try to convey the parallel benefits that come from writing a teaching philosophy. First and foremost, drafting a teaching philosophy statement is a highly informative experience, especially when coupled with collaboration and reflection. In structuring the assignment around generally agreed-upon expectations for teaching statements (e.g., the CRLT rubric), TAs are required to think earnestly about the goals for their teaching, the methods they use to enact those goals, the means by which they formally assess student learning and their own instruction, and the ways in which they work to establish an inclusive learning environment. Early in one's teaching development, we don't always stop to think explicitly about all four of those components, and it is valuable to do so at any experience level. Thus, TAs almost unanimously report that they found the assignment a very informative experience for thinking about *how* they teach and *why*.

The second main benefit is a practical one: this is an assignment that is highly relevant to (many of) their careers. TAs will very likely need such a statement soon (if they are pursuing academic positions). Again, consider the audience when considering how to frame it: some early-career TAs may see less immediate value in this practical benefit. The same is true for TA populations in which few plan on entering academic positions. In these cases, you can stress the value of the first benefit: developing an intentional approach to their teaching early on in their career. Experienced TAs, on the other hand, often greatly appreciate such an authentic assignment. In this case, you can stress the importance of creating an effective philosophy statement for the next steps in their careers. Overall, TAs at all levels are generally appreciative of the chance to learn that these statements exist at all (some TAs), or to learn more about expectations for these statements beyond their previously-vague conceptions (many TAs).

Lastly, as anyone who has ever created one knows, crafting these statements is also a very difficult thing to do. It is very challenging to distill everything we care about and do strategically in our teaching to achieve all our many goals into a single 1-2 page document. It is normal to hear in the reflections that TAs found the experience extremely challenging. Help normalize this experience while reminding TAs of the many reasons it's such a valuable process.

TA Assignment Instructions:

As the culmination of our professional development this year, you will create a personalized "Statement of Teaching Philosophy." These are often requested of job applicants, even for research positions, and are used for other types of personnel decisions (e.g., promotion, tenure, grants, awards, etc.). This statement is an essential document for your career, but is also extremely helpful for being mindful and intentional in your teaching, and for continuing to improve in your craft.

For this assignment, you are required to:

1. **Learn about teaching philosophy statements and complete a "First Draft".** Note that this draft is not labeled as "rough." In this stage, you will read through a helpful (and widely-used) rubric, find and read some examples for your discipline, and create a well-developed first draft of your statement. To do so:

   a) **Consider the format.** While there is no "rule" on this per se, philosophy statements are typically expected to be 1-3 pages, but for the sake of this assignment you should aim for two pages (single-spaced) as a maximum.

b) **Explore strategies and examples.** This site linked below has a variety of useful resources for drafting a teaching philosophy statement (http://www.crlt.umich.edu/category/tstrategies/tstpts). Feel free to explore these on your own, to familiarize yourself with the goal and structure of your teaching philosophy.

c) **At minimum, read and familiarize yourself with this teaching statement rubric** from the UM-CRLT (https://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/CRLT_no23Revised_Rubric.pdf). This rubric is well-regarded and widely used; we will use it for our peer review, as well as for evaluation of the final draft. While you do not need to speak to the rubric components (rows 1 - 4) in chronological order, your draft statement should clearly address all of them at some point.

d) **Create and submit a first draft of your teaching philosophy statement.** While everyone may have their own process, I would suggest taking some time to really think about your goals, methods, and examples before you start writing. The goal of your rough draft is to prepare the statement to be the best draft that you possibly can. In this way, it will truly benefit from peer review. Upload your draft electronically as a word document.

2. **Complete a thorough and constructive "Peer Review" of another TA's teaching philosophy.** After submission of your first draft, you will each be randomly and automatically assigned a partner. To access your partner's draft, revisit the first draft assignment and follow the link to peer review [adapt this for your own LMS peer review structure]. To complete the peer review assignment:

   a) **Download and complete the teaching philosophy rubric (see links above).** You may do this by editing it digitally, editing it manually and scanning it in, or by compiling the scores for each row in a new document. In any case, it must be entirely clear to the author how you have scored their draft according to the rubric. Upload your completed rubric file as an attachment in the "comments" box in the peer review window.

   b) **In the document viewer, provide in-line edits and comments on the draft.** These should be detailed and thorough - as invested as if you were putting your own name on this product. Remember the golden rule of peer review: provide the type of feedback (in detail and tone) that you would hope to receive for your own draft. Do not focus only on what needs improvement, but be sure to also highlight things that you like or that are working well.

   c) **Provide a brief written synthesis of your feedback.** Summarize your overall impression of the draft and any other concrete ways to improve it as a comment on the submission. This is a place to provide any general feedback beyond the in-line edits and comments.

3. **Revise your statement based on peer input and further reflection, and submit a "Final Draft."**

   a) Having received input from your peers, and after taking more time to reflect on your philosophy, revise your statement and resubmit it as a final draft.

   b) Your final draft should be significantly improved over the rough draft; it should be evident that you took feedback and your own reflections seriously, and that you used them to improve the draft.

   c) Note that the rubric for the final draft is the same as the one we have used for the rough draft and peer review process.

4. **Create a "Self-Reflection" video blog** on the process of developing and revising your Statement of Teaching Philosophy. To do so:

   a) **Create a video blog that is <u>no longer than [15 minutes]</u>.** You will not be evaluated on length, but by the quality and thoughtfulness in which you address each of the prompts.

   b) **In your reflection, discuss the following prompts (<u>explicitly</u> and <u>in order</u>):**

      i. *What did you know about teaching philosophy statements at the beginning of this process (the beginning of the term)? What were your views toward them?*

      ii. *How did you approach developing the first draft in general? Specifically, how did you identify and prioritize your teaching goals? Lastly, how did you identify and prioritize concrete examples of how you put those goals into practice?*

      iii. *How did your statement evolve as a result of peer feedback and input?*

      iv. *Having gone through the writing and revising process, what are your current views about why teaching philosophy statements are useful for college teachers? Have those views changed since the beginning of the term? Do you feel like the process of articulating your philosophy helped you reflect on and improve in your teaching? Why or why not?*

See [LMS] for full assignment rubrics. Briefly, Teaching Philosophy assignments will be evaluated in terms of:

- The quality, thoughtfulness, and timeliness of the "First Draft" [5 pts; due week #N]
- The quality, thoughtfulness, timeliness, and tone of the "Peer Review" feedback you provide your partner [5 pts; due week #N]
- The quality, thoughtfulness, and timeliness of the "Final Draft" [10 points; due week #N]
- The quality, thoughtfulness, and timeliness of the "Self-Reflection" [20 pts; due week #N]

[In this example, the assignment series is worth a total of 40 points in a 100-point course (40% of grade).]

Assignment Rubrics [adjust point values to your context]:

Teaching Philosophy: First Draft [5 pts in this example]			
Criteria	**Exceptional**	**Satisfactory**	**Cursory**
Timeliness	A draft is submitted on time and demonstrates a genuine attempt at a complete first draft. [1 pt]	A draft is submitted late or does not appear to be a complete attempt at a comprehensive draft. [0.5 pt]	No draft is submitted. [0 pt]
Alignment with Goals	It is clear that the author understands the goals and structure of the statement of teaching philosophy, and addresses all components of the rubric provided (see assignment description). Specifically, it addresses the author's teaching goals, methods, ways they evaluate the effectiveness of those methods, and how they are inclusive of diverse learners. [2 pt]	It is not entirely clear if the author understands the goals and structure of the statement of teaching philosophy. One or more components of the rubric may not be included, or is underdeveloped. [1 pt]	It is not clear that the author understands the goals and structure of the teaching philosophy, or if they are familiar with the rubric provided. The statement does not align with the rubric. [0 pt]
Thoughtfulness	The rough draft is a genuine, thoughtful effort to articulate the philosophy and practice of the author's teaching. The draft is developed sufficiently, to the point where it will clearly benefit from peer review. [2 pt]	The draft is complete, but is underdeveloped in places. It may have needed more time reflecting on the author's philosophy, and/or planning in order to communicate that philosophy clearly to a reader. The peer review process will help, but could have been more helpful with further development on behalf of the author. [1 pt]	More effort could have been spent on behalf of the author to develop the draft to the point where it will benefit from peer review, and be a valuable use of the peer reviewer's time. [0 pt]

Teaching Philosophy: Peer Review [5 pts total in example]			
Criteria	**Exceptional**	**Satisfactory**	**Cursory**
Timeliness	A draft is submitted on time and demonstrates a genuine attempt at a complete first draft. [1 pt]	A draft is submitted late or does not appear to be a complete attempt at a comprehensive draft. [0.5 pt]	No draft is submitted. [0 pt]
Alignment with Goals	It is clear that the author understands the goals and structure of the statement of teaching philosophy, and addresses all components of the rubric provided (see assignment	It is not entirely clear if the author understands the goals and structure of the statement of teaching philosophy. One or more components of the rubric may not	It is not clear that the author understands the goals and structure of the teaching philosophy, or if they are familiar with the rubric provided. The

	description). Specifically, it addresses the author's teaching goals, methods, ways they evaluate the effectiveness of those methods, and how they are inclusive of diverse learners. [2 pt]	be included, or is underdeveloped. [1 pt]	statement does not align with the rubric. [0 pt]
Thoughtfulness	The rough draft is a genuine, thoughtful effort to articulate the philosophy and practice of the author's teaching. The draft is developed sufficiently, to the point where it will clearly benefit from peer review. [2 pt]	The draft is complete, but is underdeveloped in places. It may have needed more time reflecting on the author's philosophy, and/or planning in order to communicate that philosophy clearly to a reader. The peer review process will help, but could have been more helpful with further development on behalf of the author. [1 pt]	More effort could have been spent on behalf of the author to develop the draft to the point where it will benefit from peer review, and be a valuable use of the peer reviewer's time. [0 pt]

Teaching Philosophy: Final Draft [10 pts total in example]			
Note: This stage is assessed with a rubric created by Kaplan, M., O'Neal, C., Meizlish, D., Carillo, R., Kardia, D. (2005). *Rubric for Statements of Teaching Philosophy.* University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. See https://crlt.umich.edu/resources-publications/teaching-philosophies-statements			
Criteria	**Exceptional**	**Satisfactory**	**Cursory**
Goals for Student Learning *What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your discipline? What are you preparing students for? What are key challenges in the teaching-learning process?*	Goals are clearly articulated and specific and go beyond the knowledge level, including skills, attitudes, career goals, etc. Goals are sensitive to the context of the instructor's discipline. They are concise but not exhaustive.	Goals are articulated although they may be too broad or not specific to the discipline. Goals focus on basic knowledge, ignoring skills acquisition and affective change	Articulation of goals is unfocused, incomplete, or missing.
Enactment of Goals *What teaching methods do you use? How do these methods contribute to your goals for students? Why are these methods appropriate for use in your discipline?*	Enactment of goals is specific and thoughtful. Includes details and rationale about teaching methods. The methods are clearly connected to specific goals and are appropriate for those goals. Specific examples of the method in use within the disciplinary context are given.	Description of teaching methods not clearly connected to goals or if connected, not well developed (seems like a list of what is done in the classroom). Methods are described but generically, no example of the instructor's use of the methods within the discipline is communicated.	Enactment of goals is not articulated. If there is an attempt at articulating teaching methods, it is basic and unreflective.
Assessment of Goals *How do you know your goals for*	Specific examples of assessment tools are clearly described. Assessment tools are aligned with teaching goals and teaching methods. Assessments reinforce	Assessments are described, but not in connection to goals and teaching methods. Description is too general, with no reference to the motivation behind the	Assessment of goals is not articulated or mentioned only in passing.

students are being met? What sorts of assessment tools do you use (e.g., tests, papers, portfolios, journals), and why? How do assessments contribute to student learning? How do assessments communicate disciplinary priorities?	the priorities and context of the discipline both in content and type.	assessments. There is no clear connection between the assessments and the priorities of the discipline.	
Creating an Inclusive Environment *How do your own and your students' identities (e.g., race, gender, class), background, experience, and levels of privilege affect the classroom? How do you account for diverse learning styles? How do you integrate diverse perspectives into your teaching?*	Portrays a coherent philosophy of inclusive education that is integrated throughout the philosophy. Makes space for diverse ways of knowing, and/or learning styles. Discussion of roles is sensitive to historically underrepresented students. Demonstrates awareness of issues of equity within the discipline.	Inclusive teaching is addressed but in a cursory manner or in a way that isolates it from the rest of the philosophy. Author briefly connects identity issues to aspects of his/her teaching.	Issues of inclusion are not addressed or addressed in an awkward manner. There is no connection to teaching practices
Structure, Rhetoric, and Language *How is the reader engaged? Is the language used appropriate to the discipline? How is the statement thematically structure?*	The statement has a guiding structure and/or theme that engages the reader and organizes the goals, methods, and assessments articulated in the statement. Jargon is avoided and teaching terms (e.g., critical thinking) are given specific definitions that apply to the instructor's disciplinary context. Specific, rich examples are used to bolster statements of goals, methods, and assessments. Grammar and spelling are correct.	The statement has a structure and/or theme that is not connected to the ideas actually discussed in the statement, or, organizing structure is weak and does not resonate within the disciplinary context. Examples are used but seem generic. May contain some jargon.	No overall structure present. Statement is a collection of disconnected statements about teaching. Jargon is used liberally and not supported by specific definitions or examples. Needs much revision.

Teaching Philosophy: Final Reflection [20 pts total in example]			
Criteria	**Exceptional**	**Satisfactory**	**Cursory**
Timeliness	The self-reflection is submitted by the deadline. [2 pt]	The self-reflection is submitted after the deadline without prior instructor approval. [1 pt]	The self-reflection is not submitted. [0 pt]

Initial Perceptions	The TA describes their knowledge and perceptions about statements of teaching philosophy at the beginning of the term. This is thoughtful enough to provide context as to how they employed what they knew and learned about teaching philosophy statements. [3 pt]	The TA briefly discusses what they knew about teaching philosophy statements at the start of the term, but more detail is needed to provide context as to how they employed what they knew and learned about writing a teaching philosophy. [2 pt]	The self-reflection is not submitted, or the TA does not describe their knowledge and perceptions of statements of teaching philosophy. [0 pt]
Rough Draft Development	The TA describes how they approached the rough draft process, and how they identified and prioritized teaching goals, methods, and specific examples to include in the draft. This demonstrates a thoughtful and intentional approach to developing a high-quality rough draft. [5 pt]	The TA discusses some aspects of rough draft development, but more detail is needed. They may omit discussion of some prompts, or the discussions are too superficial to describe how they approached developing key components of their rough draft. The TA comes across as perhaps needing to have spent more time proactively reflecting on their approach to the rough draft. [3 pt]	The self-reflection is not submitted, or the TA does not adequately discuss how they approach the development of the rough draft. [0 pt]
Draft Revision	The TA discusses in detail how they moved forward from the rough draft to improve upon their philosophy statement. They discuss what they learned from peer review feedback, as well as how they integrated that feedback with their own reflections on the rough draft. The discussion includes specific details about how the author improved their draft. [5 pt]	The TA discusses some aspects of how they revised their rough draft, but more detail is needed. They may not share specific insights from the peer review feedback, and/or their own views about how the rough draft needed further improvement. More detail is needed to illuminate specific steps the author took to improve their statement for the final draft. [3 pt]	The self-reflection is not submitted, or the TA does not sufficiently discuss how they revised their rough draft to improve the statement. [0 pt]
Final Perceptions	The TA summarizes their reflections by discussing how their current views about the purpose and value of teaching philosophy statements. They come "full circle" to synthesize what they knew about them, and how those perceptions may or may not have changed over the process of developing a teaching philosophy. They describe in their own words how philosophy statements are useful for aspiring college educators. They also reflect on how the process of developing and articulating their teaching philosophy did (or did not) help them reflect on and improve upon their teaching. [5 pt]	The TA provides some final summary of their current views on teaching philosophy statements, but more detail is needed in one or more regards. They may not discuss how they currently view the purpose and value of a teaching philosophy, how their views did (or did not) change as a result of creating their statement, or discuss how the development process did (or did not) help them reflect on and improve their teaching. [3 pt]	The self-reflection is not submitted, or the TA does not adequately summarize the purpose and value of a teaching philosophy and how their perceptions did or did not evolve as a result of developing one over the term. [0 pt]