Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Teaching Assistant

Application Requirements

Applicants must assemble an e-portfolio (Google Sites is recommended, but not required) with the following components named as indicated below (do not deviate by using "creative" names instead). Submissions of LinkedIn pages, USF department profile pages, Github pages, or anything that is not an e-portfolio will not be judged.

Curriculum Vitae. The curriculum vitae is an academic resume, and typically is much longer than a standard job resume, since it includes all relevant work, publications, teaching, employment, service, and professional development to academic life. Applicants are strongly urged to collect and examine CVs from professors in their own disciplines to serve as a model. There are also many online sites that offer suggestions, such as this one from Purdue. Remember that all documents including the CV must be presented on the page directly – not as attachments – so there may be formatting issues to resolve after the material is pasted into the page.

Teaching Philosophy. A statement of Teaching Philosophy is typically 400-600 words. There is no single formula for writing an effective Teaching Philosophy statement, but at a minimum applicants should explain their beliefs about what constitutes good teaching. A basic outline for a teaching statement would have a three-paragraph structure and be limited to one-page in length.

The first paragraph provides readers with your beliefs about teaching and forecasts what your classroom would be like if they visited. Would they see students engaged in group work? Peer-sharing? Presenting their work in front of the class? Mini-lectures followed by group discussions? You can also use this paragraph to outline your teaching experiences/responsibilities. In the next paragraph you can offer further evidence of your teaching and provide examples of your beliefs in action. Descriptions such as these allow readers to "see" your teaching in action as opposed to reading only general statements about your teaching philosophy. In the final paragraph, you should sum up your thoughts on education and the role that you have to play in developing students to be successful in their discipline, career, and life.

In addition, it may be helpful to consult tenure-earning faculty in your discipline to gain a sense of the range of styles that exist. Here are a few resources that might help you organize and maximize your statement: Chism 1998 Developing a Philosophy, Schonwetter et al 2010 Conceptual Model, and Medina & Draugalis 2013 Evidence-based Steps.

Narrative. The narrative is an essay that offers detail about the applicant's specific teaching examples and choices. If the teaching philosophy (see above) provides a glimpse at the applicant's THEORY of teaching, the narrative explains the PRACTICE, as well as how the theory is transferred to practice. One of the main elements of a paper-based teaching portfolio is the collection of documents typically held in an appendix. These documents offer examples of the teacher's practice, and typically include items created by the instructor (sample syllabi, lesson plans, test questions, essay prompts, grading rubrics, etc), items created by others (student evaluations, unsolicited notes from students, observation forms, etc), and evidence of student learning ("before and after" student essays, pre-and post-tests, etc). Note that not EVERY item listed above needs to be present; this is simply a list of possible inclusions. Since the e-portfolio supports links and attachments, the documents in applications for the USF Teaching Assistant Award will come as attachments to the Narrative page. The narrative essay itself can make references to these attachments throughout. Think of the narrative as an opportunity to "guide" the viewer's eye when looking at those attached documents–what elements need explanation or deserve to be pointed out as exemplary practices? The narrative can be anywhere from 2-10 double-spaced pages long when typed in word-processing software (about 2,500 words maximum, but as few as 500 is acceptable).

Innovation/Improvement. This page is a short essay (maximum of 400 words) in which applicants describe what makes their teaching unique, and how they are innovative instructors. This may refer to any element of the teaching process: content delivery, opportunities for practice, and assessment. Or, applicants can describe an occasion when teaching did NOT originally go well. What was the applicant's reaction, and why? What was done to remedy the situation? Applicants are encouraged to provide specific examples, starting with the context and problem statement, and including details about the solution. The highest scores will go to essays that demonstrate a fundamental understanding about the roles played by instructors in the teaching and learning process.

Student Evaluations. Provide summary information about all student evaluations during your time at USF. This could take the form of just a simple chart of numbers (be sure to also include relevant student commentary). You may wish to include a few short paragraphs explaining your evaluation scores in context (such as relationship to GPA or the rigor expected in your various courses. One option is to provide visual charts, so that your evaluations are seen in context. In addition to providing a more-accessible visual reference, these charts can be fruitfully combined with other data, such as relative class sizes or average GPA by class, which can shed light on summary student evaluation numbers. See instructions here that show one way of assembling relevant data visually.

Bonus. Applicants may also provide a video of themselves teaching an actual class. The video **should not exceed five minutes**. The goal is to provide reviewers with an accurate representation of their teaching style, their choices when teaching, and how well they communicate. In other words, show how you conduct class normally; do not adopt a particular activity or delivery that is artificial for you. If you lecture, then show a lecture. If you facilitate groupwork, show your facilitation of groupwork.

Note that the video need not be broadcast-quality; a simple smartphone will usually provide adequate quality. Captions and fancy introduction "slides" are not necessary; simply start the video inside the classroom. Videos embedded directly within the page on your portfolio website.

Presentation. E-portfolios may also wish to have a "home" page (sometimes referred to as a "welcome page", "landing page" or a "splash page") that is separate from the required pages listed above. If no separate home page is created, applicants should use the Teaching Philosophy page as the home page. Note that Google Sites may alphabetize the pages by default; it is acceptable for pages to appear in a different order online than presented here.

Note: all the required materials must be created as pages, with content visible directly on the page (rather than uploaded as an attachment). The only exception to the rule about attachments is the primary documents linked by the Narrative.

Each section of the e-portfolio should be formatted consistently and offer a professional appearance. The use of first-person prose ("I", "me") is allowed. Photos are allowed. Photos are neither explicitly rewarded in their presence nor punished in their absence. The grading rubric (see below) does offer some points for presentation.

Permissions

If you are using Google Sites, be certain that you set the privacy setting to "public" and double-check that a link to your site will be visible to the judges--the best way to ensure this is to open a new browser where you are not logged in to Google and paste the URL of your portfolio. **If the judges cannot access your site, you will not receive any points (and for reasons of fairness, we do not contact applicants whose sites are still in private mode).** It is also important to make sure that your browser used for double-checking is not logged in to Gmail, as this will show the site as accessible when it may not be for others.

Sample E-Portfolio

Click here to view an example e-portfolio from a previous winner. Note that this is not provided as an example of effective teaching nor is it a perfect e-portfolio, and applicants should take care not to simply imitate the language of the essays in this sample.

More Assistance

Email citl@usf.edu for more information.