



Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

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Anonymous Gift Funds Teaching Portfolio Workshop

Thanks to the generosity of an alumna of our French Department, the Teaching Resource Center is undertaking a project to deepen and broaden the self-reflection faculty and TAs engage in when writing their teaching portfolios. Since 1995, over 150 faculty and TAs have participated in the TRC's three-day spring workshop that helps individuals take a multi-faceted look at their teaching as they analyze why, what, and how they teach. Fifty colleagues have served as coaches. Writing a portfolio gives instructors a chance to think hard about their teaching and present it concisely. People write portfolios for a variety of reasons:

- As an analytical self-reflection designed to enhance their teaching
- To document their teaching effectiveness
- To articulate connections between their teaching and research
- As supporting evidence of their professional expertise
- As a legacy for their department

With this anonymous gift, we are surveying U.Va. portfolio writers with an eye to discovering both how helpful their portfolios have been to them over time and what they now— with some distance from the event— would recommend as improvements. We also plan to ask coaches about what they gained from that experience, how we might enrich coaches' training, and whether they think that

peer coaching could enhance collegiality and improve teaching. After collating and analyzing these data, we will consider them as we develop our May Teaching Portfolio Workshop (see "Workshops" for details).

Workshop participants have already told us, though, that they wish they had known early about what to save for their portfolios. If you are interested in getting a head start on a compelling portfolio to analyze and demonstrate your teaching (and, perhaps, your research), you might find the following suggestions useful:

Before writing your portfolio, some basic points to consider and documents to gather, summarize, and/or analyze:

Student evaluations:

- Keep copies of your students' evaluations.
- Re-read the comments and decide how best to summarize the main points.
- Consider how you could present student evaluation data in your narrative statement and in an appendix.
- Include only comments that relate to teaching strategies or methods you will discuss in your narrative.
- Include with selected comments course numbers and titles, the number of students enrolled and number responding, core questions and answers, and a summary or average of numerical ratings.

Your efforts to improve:

- Keep notes or records of what you do to improve your teaching: for example, attending workshops, asking peers to observe and consult about your teaching, working on course development, requesting students' comments during the semester.
- Note course changes you make or new understandings you reach because of a Teaching Analysis Poll, consultation about a videotaped class, students' mid-semester comments, and so on. The TRC offers those and other means of analyzing your teaching.
- Ask peer observers if you may include their notes or reports in an appendix.
- When referring to observers' comments, include the observer's name and position, as well as the course observed and date.
- Keep a record of conferences you attend, what you learned, and how you applied it.

Evidence of students' learning:

- Ask students if you can keep anonymous copies of their work to document your teaching. (NB: Such models of excellent work can educate and inspire future students, too.)
- When you see significant improvement in a student's learning, note what you did to help. These reminders will be invaluable in helping you explain how you facilitate students' learning.
- Save summaries of one-minute papers (in which students anonymously note what they found to be the main point of a lecture) or muddiest points (in which they note, again anonymously, what they did not understand). Keep records of what you did to correct any confusion or to enhance students' understanding.

For more ideas, see "Products of Good Teaching" on the TRC website under "Workshops / Teaching Portfolios."