

## Preparing a Teaching Portfolio in Higher Education

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### Why are you here? (20 second intros)

- + What is your name?
- + What college/program do you represent?
- + What has been your teaching assignment?
- + What is a word or phrase that represents your feelings about teaching?

### What is a portfolio?

- + A portfolio is a way to provide substantial, representative evidence about teaching.
- + At their best, portfolios provide stronger, richer evidence about teaching quality than quantitative, student evaluation data.
- + The quality of the teaching portfolio depends on two things:
  - + High quality teaching by the instructor
  - + Substantive, on-going collection of evidence about instructional quality

### High quality teaching is the starting point

#### Thinking about teaching: Question 1

**What is your thinking about the connection between teaching and student learning?**

## High quality teaching

### Thinking about teaching: Question 2

**What is the connection between teaching and covering content?**

## High quality teaching

### Thinking about teaching: Question 3

**What challenges or tensions do you feel around providing high quality teaching?**

## What does research tell us about high quality teaching?

- + Two major research studies about quality teaching in higher education:
  - + Beyer, C. H., Taylor, E., & Gillmore, G. M. (2013). *Inside the undergraduate teaching experience: The University of Washington's growth in faculty teaching study*. Albany: SUNY Press.
  - + Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- + Research synthesis of what we know and pedagogical tips
  - + Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors (4th edition)*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

## Key caveats

- + Disciplinary distinctions impact perceptions of effective teaching methods.
- + There is no generic best practice across disciplines.
- + There is NO one best method.

## What do effective teachers believe?



## Effective teachers believe:

- + Teaching is intimately connected to student learning
- + Teaching is a continual process of improvement
- + Knowledge is not fixed and cannot be transferred or deposited (i.e., covering content is not necessarily equivalent to teaching)
- + Knowledge is constructed

## Effective instructors' views of students

- + Have abiding respect for students
- + Believe students are their partners in the learning process
- + Believe instructors play a strong role in student motivation and engagement
- + Demonstrate respect for students' personal and professional growth
- + Speak positively about students



## How do effective instructors think about teaching?



## Effective instructors:

- + Know their content very well
- + Can simplify complexity of their content
- + Can think meta-cognitively about their content and what is involved in learning it
- + Know that students need foundational knowledge and goals related to thinking in every course

## What do we know about effective pedagogy?



FIRST:  
ANY method can be done well or poorly!

Active Pedagogy



Lecture



## Effective teachers

- + Know that less is more! (They reduce amount of content to focus on learning more deeply)
- + Focus on big picture more than details
- + Use a variety of texts (lecture, video, images, readings) to convey foundational knowledge and then foster deeper thinking
- + Develop skill in posing questions and encouraging student response (but overall questions asked still tend toward general and lower order and are focused on motivating student participation)

## Kinds of questions...

- + Remember
  - + Recognizing
  - + Recalling
- + Understand
  - + Interpreting
  - + Exemplifying
  - + Classifying
  - + Summarizing
  - + Inferring
  - + Comparing
  - + Explaining
- + Apply
  - + Executing
  - + Implementing
- + Analyze
  - + Differentiating
  - + Organizing
  - + Attributing
- + Evaluate
  - + Checking
  - + Critiquing
- + Create
  - + Generating
  - + Planning
  - + Producing

## Incorporate active learning



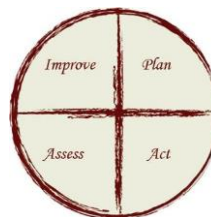
- + Incorporate active learning strategies (even within lecture)
- + Report more use of cooperative, team based or problem centered teaching.

## Effective teachers and assessment



## Effective assessment

Is an essential component of instruction



How assessment is used

- + Aligned with course objectives
- + Used to determine what students are learning
- + NOT simply a way to assign grades

## Common assessments: Formal and Informal

- + Exams, quizzes, term papers, homework
- + Writing is used increasingly as a way to assess:
  - + Extended response in exams
  - + Writing tasks that ask students to grapple with big ideas
  - + Ungraded writing assignments
  - + Exit cards
  - + Parking lot

## Effective teachers are driven to improve

- + Effective instructors use an iterative process of continuous improvement
- + They are driven to improve by their passion for their content and for student learning
- + They use formal and informal assessment to inform their day to day instruction
- + They use "data" about course impact on students to inform needed changes in their teaching over time



## Questions? Comments?



## Considering your teaching self



- + Think about these beliefs and practices of effective college instructors:
  - + What are your teaching strengths?
  - + What might you want to work on in your teaching for the future and why?

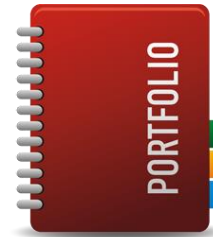
A portfolio captures your strengths AND your growth as an instructor?

Where do you see opportunities for growth as an instructor?

Guidelines for preparing a teaching portfolio

Content drawn from:

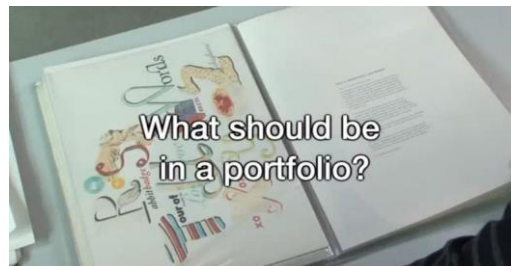
Ross, D., Bondy, E., Hartle, L., Lamme, L.L., & Webb, R. B. (1996). Guidelines for portfolio preparation: Implications from an analysis of teaching portfolios at the University of Florida. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20(1), 45-62.



Preparing your portfolio

- + A portfolio is a presentation of data in order to "display [your] teaching accomplishments for examination by others" (Seldin, 1993, p. 2).
- + Materials should be organized around themes or instructional principles. That is, your portfolio should TEACH others about your teaching.
- + Each theme should be supported with empirical evidence.
- + Portfolio includes "carefully selected" data.
- + Just as in teaching, less is more when assembling a portfolio.

Decisions. Decisions.



## Six key guidelines

1. Include institutional context data
2. Include a teaching statement (and this is MORE than philosophy)
3. Present evidence of recent efforts to improve instruction
4. Present evidence from multiple sources to support claims of teaching excellence
5. Explain all evidence included in the portfolio
6. Limit the amount of evidence provided

## Guideline 1: Include Institutional Context Data

- + List all courses taught over the time period specified--level, when taught, number of students, instructional format (seminar, lecture, online, blended), audience (required, majors, elective), average student grade
- + Brief summary of course content and goals
- + Brief summary of role of each course in the curriculum
- + Brief summary of other instructional responsibilities
- + Letter from department chair about how your teaching serves needs of department
- + Quantitative student evaluations for all courses listed

## Guideline 2: Include a teaching statement

Purpose: To demonstrate the scholarly expertise of the instructor and to introduce **the themes** used to organize the portfolio.

Content to include:

- + Knowledge of content
  - + Aims for students and why these are important for the field and for students
- + Knowledge of pedagogy
  - + Detailed examples that show how teaching practices fit aims of the course and "context factors"



## Teaching statement: Questions to answer

1. What do you want students to learn and why is this learning important?
2. How do you believe students best learn the course material?
3. What do you do to help students learn (provide descriptions of in-class and out-of-class strategies)?
4. Why did you select these teaching strategies? (How are these strategies linked to your aims and beliefs about student learning?)

Recommended Length: 2-3 pages

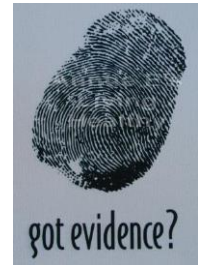


### Some ways to describe teaching practices

- + Detailed description of how instructional practices were implemented
- + Description of student assignments and their purpose
- + Description of general principles of teaching and examples of how implemented
- + Description of how general principles of teaching are adapted to the needs of particular students and/or particular courses
- + Description of development of an unusual course

### Guideline 3: Present **evidence** of **recent** efforts to improve instruction

- + **Evidence:** It is not enough to SAY that your instruction has improved; you must provide evidence
- + **Recent:** Instructional improvement is an abiding commitment. It must be on-going.



### What might count as evidence

- + Provide two versions of a syllabus and explain the reasons for changes
- + Take a course or read literature on college teaching and explain changes you made in your course
- + Provide analysis of student evaluations and describe subsequent changes to the course
- + Conduct and publish studies of student learning in the course
- + Receive grant related to teaching and describe subsequent changes in your practice

### Guideline 4: Present **evidence** from multiple sources to support claims of excellence

- + While many faculty collect evidence related to their teaching, it is less common for faculty to SAVE this evidence.
- + The strongest teaching portfolios present longitudinal evidence about teaching
- + Multiple pieces of evidence combine to provide an overall picture of instructional quality.



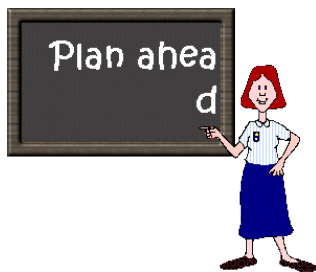
## What kinds of evidence?

- + Descriptive evidence (sample lesson plans, course materials)
- + Self evaluation (Research studies about own teaching, reflective reports of reasons for and impact of changes, documentation of student learning)
- + External evaluation (e.g., letters submitted by graduates, colleagues, or external consumer)
- + Student evaluations—especially comments or unsolicited letters
- + Peer evaluation/observation
- + Sample student papers to demonstrate substance of learning and/or instructor feedback

## BEST evidence focuses on student learning

- + Letters from graduates or external consumers that document the results of the instructor's teaching
- + Sample student products
- + Studies that document student learning
- + Results of juried exhibitions of students' work
- + Information from exit interviews (focus groups) with students
- + Sample student publications or awards

## Planning for a portfolio is key!



## Plan Ahead!

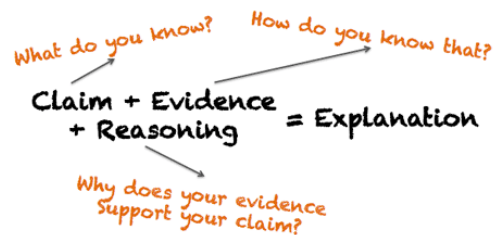
- + Guidelines 3 & 4 require evidence.
- + This means your data gathering must be on-going and should begin now.
- + Student evaluations are the starting point on a journey to excellence. Documenting your progress is the story of your journey.
- + The highest quality instructors are ALWAYS seeking to improve.

## Thinking about your own teaching

Look at the examples of evidence talked about in the power point. What kinds of evidence are you already collecting that might be useful? OR, What kinds of evidence can you start collecting and why?



## Guideline 5: Explain all evidence presented in the portfolio



## Explain your evidence!

Dumping evidence into a file (paper or online) is not a portfolio!

Two types of commentary are important:

- + Information about **the source** of the evidence (e.g., letters are solicited or unsolicited)
- + Commentary that links the evidence back to the teaching statement:
  - + What does this evidence show?
  - + How does the evidence link to aims, view of learning, claims of innovation?

## How to provide explanation

- + Any viable strategy is acceptable. Three examples:
  - + Reference and explain evidence as each claim is made in the teaching statement (and then include all evidence in Appendices)
  - + Include all evidence in appendices with a cover page that explains the connection between the evidence provided and the teaching statement
  - + Attach a brief (one paragraph) explanation to each piece of evidence provided in the portfolio.

## Guideline 6: Limit the amount of evidence included

- + Weigh each piece of evidence and ask what it adds to your description of your knowledge, skills, and impact. If it repeats, don't add it!
- + A long portfolio is often LESS effective because the reviewer can get lost in a long and poorly organized document
- + Aim for a small amount of well selected and well explained evidence.



## Electronic portfolio—It's a format

- + Why make it electronic
  - + Easily accessible
  - + Broader possibilities for evidence (e.g., video, exemplars of websites)
  - + Clear organization makes it easy to read
  - + Useful for job applications
- + Be sure to secure permission for any copyrighted material and any student work

Source: Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-portfolios/#electronic>

## When can I find guidelines and examples of electronic portfolios

- + University of Virginia Teaching Resource Center--  
<http://trc.virginia.edu/resources/developing-a-teaching-portfolio/>
- + Columbia College--  
<http://www.columbiasc.edu/academics/resources/faculty-development/teaching-portfolio>

## Any questions?

When somebody writes, "call if you have any questions," Do they really mean ANY questions? Because I'm really wondering about platypuses.



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Thank you!



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