Teaching Statement for a Teaching-Focused Institution

Teaching Statement

As new psychology major my sophomore year of college, one of the first classes I took was statistics. I read, I took notes, I went to the professor for help—nothing made the concepts stick in a way that made sense to me until, midway through the semester, the professor gave the class raw data and assigned us to enter, clean, and analyze it. What I expected to be an overwhelming task caused all of the random statistical facts to coalesce in my mind, and, unbelievably, I was finally learning statistics. This experience imparted a lesson that I carry into all of my classes to this day: People learn through preparation and experience.

Because of how people learn, my role as a teacher is to ensure that students gather important information and then to use that information to accomplish meaningful tasks. Rather than trying to force student learning through direct instruction, I arrange the elements required for learning and provide them to students. The pedagogical technique I rely on most frequently is cooperative learning; this method requires students to work in small groups where each student has a specific role to play in the accomplishment of a shared task, typically one involving a real-world problem. Students are held individually accountable for learning by their teammates, who need them to come to class prepared to contribute to the team task, and by me during later tests and writing assignments.

Abnormal psychology best illustrates how I implement my teaching philosophy. Students prepare for class by completing a textbook reading, watching brief lecture videos, and writing a summary of facts about one mental disorder to share with their teammates in class. I provide all of the required materials at no extra cost to students using the course management software. Teams cooperate in class on reaching understanding of all the disorders from the reading and on identifying concepts they do not understand. Next, I give mini lectures explaining any concepts they have questions

Paragraph one outlines how people learn in general.

Use a more personal and informal tone in teaching statements than the other application materials.

Paragraph two outlines the role of the teacher based on how people learn.

Highlight specific techniques to show pedagogical knowledge but avoid overuse of educational buzzwords.

Establish how rigor is maintained in courses to avoid an overly effusive personal tone.

The final paragraphs outlines specific examples of how the teacher ensures that people learn in the classroom.

Show knowledge of barriers to student success and outline methods that allow students equal access to resources.

This material is a companion to *Becoming a Psychology Professor: Your Guide to Landing the Right Academic Job*, by Guy A. Boysen. An overview of the book can be viewed on the American Psychological Association website (https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4313054).

Additional supplemental material is available on the book's companion website (http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/boysen/).

about. Then, the teams collaborate on using what they have learned to make a diagnosis and treatment plan for a realistic case study of mental illness. Finally, we discuss the merits of each diagnosis and treatment plan as a large group.

Emphasize methods that engage students actively in the learning process over meth-ods of direct instruction.

With my extensive use of cooperative techniques, how do I know that individual students are learning? The strongest evidence comes from research, both mine and others'. I pride myself on using empirically-supported methods in class, and the efficacy of cooperative learning is supported by hundreds of studies of learners at all levels. What is particularly important to me is that research indicates that students from underrepresented groups and less-academically-prepared students thrive under cooperative methods. In my own research, I presented a scholarship of teaching poster at the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology summarizing an investigation of the method's effectiveness in abnormal psychology.

Point out empirically-supported methods that engage students of various back-grounds.

Emphasize scholarship of teaching and learning in terms of both conducting re-search and use in the classroom.

The other major way that I know students learn is that I assess their learning individually throughout the semester. Although class activities are mostly cooperative, student take all quizzes and tests individually. In addition, students write papers individually; lower-level classes include short application papers, and upper-level classes include research papers that require a literature review. Because I define course objectives and map assignments onto those objectives, I can use assignments as embedded assessments of learning to determine the percentage of students who are achieving each objective; this practice is essential for course, major, and institutional assessment. Most importantly, I also know that students learn because I interact with them during office hours and every class period. I can ask them by name what they understand and do not understand and provide them with individualized guidance as needed. Although my teaching philosophy emphasizes preparation and experience, it is the connections with individual students in and out of class that often end up being the most impactful and rewarding.

Emphasize the development of liberal arts skills that are consistent with class sizes and the institutional mission.

Emphasizes model teaching in both course design and assessment of student learning.

Demonstrate knowledge of the importance of contributing to departmental and institu-tional assessment efforts.

Emphasize interest in providing students with individual mentorship that fosters their success.