THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO

INTRODUCTION

Today, the nation’s colleges and universities are attempting to respond to new understandings about what elements define effective teaching. At the same time, they are beset by public pressures to improve their systems of teaching accountability. This introduction briefly describes both challenges and suggests that both can be met, at least in part, through the use of the teaching portfolio.

No one doubts that we are still short many answers to the teaching-learning process. But we do have some of the answers. More than 10,000 studies have been published on one phase or another of teaching effectiveness, and from them we have gleaned some reasonably consistent findings about the general characteristics of good teaching. Briefly, these findings indicate that effective teachers are masters of their subject, can organize and emphasize, can clarify ideas and point out relationships, can motivate students, and are reasonable, open, concerned and imaginative human beings.

There are now fresh understandings about what goes into effective teaching. Shulman (1989a) says that effective teachers recognize the impact of prior knowledge on subsequent learning. They, therefore, connect new information with what students already know through a set of metaphors, analogies, examples, stories and demonstrations. They bridge new and already learned subject matter. Shulman’s research leads him to conclude that there is a kind of knowledge uniquely possessed by effective teachers of particular disciplines. Thus, he says, pedagogical content-knowledge transcends
The Teaching Portfolio

3

The Teaching Portfolio

4
PREPARING THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO

PREPARATION
In theory, a teaching portfolio can be prepared by the professor working alone, but this isolated approach has limited prospects for improving classroom performance or contributing to personnel decisions. The reason, according to Bird (1989), is because portfolio entries prepared by the professor working alone enlist none of the collegial or supervisory support needed in a program of teaching improvement. It also provides none of the control or corroboration of evidence that may be needed to sustain personnel decisions.

In practice, the teaching portfolio is best prepared in consultation with others. A department chair, a colleague or a teaching improvement specialist on campus can discuss with the professor such important questions as: (1) why they are preparing the portfolio; (2) what they hope to learn from it; (3) which areas of the teaching-learning process they expect to examine; (4) what kinds of information they expect to collect; (5) how the information can be analyzed and presented.

Some may argue that the portfolio contents will be colored by second-party assistance and therefore is less useful because it represents “coached” performance. But Shulman (1988) disposes with this objection by arguing that portfolio development should involve interaction and mentoring in the same way that a doctoral dissertation reflects both the efforts of the candidate and the advice of the advisor. The solution to the so-called problem of coaching, he says, is to turn it around and treat it as a virtue. Agreeing, Bird (1989),
Preparation of Teaching Portfolio

Steps to Create a Teaching Portfolio

1. **Define the Teaching Portfolio**: Start by defining the scope and purpose of the portfolio. What does it represent? Is it a comprehensive record of your teaching philosophy, methods, and outcomes? What will it be used for? Teaching portfolios can serve various purposes, such as self-assessment, job applications, or faculty reviews.

2. **Select the Content**: Choose the content that best represents your teaching philosophy and practice. This may include lesson plans, student assessments, reflections, and teaching strategies. Ensure that the content is organized and accessible.

3. **Gather Evidence**: Collect evidence that supports your teaching effectiveness. This includes student evaluations, peer evaluations, observations, and any other forms of assessment. Make sure to include both qualitative and quantitative data.

4. **Write Reflections**: Write reflective essays or journals to accompany your teaching materials. These should provide insights into your teaching practices, challenges, and successes. Reflections help in demonstrating continuous improvement.

5. **Organize the Portfolio**: Organize the portfolio in a logical and easy-to-navigate manner. Consider using a digital platform if it suits your needs. Ensure that each section is clearly labeled and accessible.

6. **Update Regularly**: Teaching portfolios are dynamic documents. Regular updates are necessary to reflect your ongoing development and changes in your teaching approach. Include updates on new teaching strategies, student feedback, and any other relevant changes.

7. **Present and Share**: Once your teaching portfolio is complete, consider how you will present it. This could be through a digital platform, a hard copy, or a combination of both. Sharing your portfolio can provide opportunities for feedback and can be a valuable tool for professional growth and development.
Step 4: Assemble the Support Data. Supportive evidence for items referred to in the portfolio should be safeguarded by the professor. Included might be such things as student workbooks or logs, journals on improving teaching, original student evaluations of teaching, invitations to contribute articles on improving teaching performance. The professor should give written assurance in the portfolio that such support data are available for review upon request.

Step 5: Incorporate the Portfolio Into the Curriculum Vitae. The teaching portfolio is then inserted into the professor's curriculum vitae under the heading of "teaching." The intent is to provide a record of teaching accomplishments so they can be accorded their proper weight with other aspects of a professor's role.

How much evidence is needed to represent equitably the professor's teaching performance? There is no simple answer. Knapper (1978) believes that the portfolio should not exceed three pages. Seldin (1987) suggests five to seven pages should be sufficient. Vavrus and Calfee (1988) point out that the professor must set the balance scale between "not enough" and "too much." Who can argue with that?

Before its preparation, it might appear that putting together a teaching portfolio would take more time than teaching itself. In practice, this has not proved to be the case. As preparation of the portfolio becomes routine and faculty members gain experience and skills, portfolio preparation wins an accepted place in institutional life. Generally, professors appear willing to invest time in an evaluation process over which they have some control (Berquist and Phillips, 1977; Seldin, 1987). If professors know that their teaching portfolios will be carefully scrutinized by tenure and promotion committees, it stands to reason that they will take greater pains to collect material along the way and develop the portfolios in the years prior to personnel decisions.

ITEMS THAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE PORTFOLIO

The following list is not composed of items a professor must include. Rather, it lists the many possibilities from which the professor can select items relevant to his or her particular teaching situation. To some degree, the items chosen depend on the purpose for which the portfolio is prepared (improvement or personnel decision).

Since the portfolio is a highly personalized product, like a fingerprint no two are exactly alike. The content and the organization differ widely from one professor to another.

A word of caution. All college professors have seen poor student work dressed in fancy covers. The point of the teaching portfolio is not a fancy cover. Instead, it is a careful, thoughtful compilation of documents and materials that make the best case for the professor's teaching effectiveness.

This list of possible items for inclusion in a teaching portfolio is compiled from the work of Shore and others (1986), Sorcinelli (1986), Seldin (1990), and Bird (1989). These items are conveniently cross-referenced with the sample portfolios detailed in Chapter Eight. Please note the varying importance assigned by different professors to different items. Some professors discuss an item at length while other professors address the same item with just a sentence or two, or even omit it. Each teaching portfolio is a different, individual document.

MATERIAL FROM ONESELF

1. Statement of teaching responsibilities, including specific
Material From Others

(6) Documentation of research group activity (see portfolio by Bloom and Buckingham)

(10) Presentation of articles by members of the teaching team of independent

(1) items that might be included

The Teaching Portfolio

(2) (see all portfolios)
THE PRODUCTS OF GOOD TEACHING

(24) Student scores on professor-made or standardized tests, possibly before and after a course, as evidence of student learning. (See portfolios by Annis, Bloom, and Buckrop.)

(25) Student essays, creative work, field-work reports, laboratory workbooks or logs and student publications on course-related work. (See portfolios by Corso, Hodlofski, and Shackelford.)

(26) Information about the effect of the professor's courses on student career choices or help given by the professor to secure student employment. (See portfolio by Bloom.)

(27) A record of students who succeed in advanced courses of study in the field. (See portfolio by Bloom.)

(28) Statements by alumni on the quality of instruction. (See portfolios by Annis and Bloom.)

(29) Student publications or conference presentations on course-related work. (See portfolios by Hodlofski, Ober, and Shackelford.)

(30) Examples of graded student essays showing excellent, average, and poor work along with the professor's comments as to why they were so graded. (See portfolio by Corso.)

USES OF THE PORTFOLIO

PERSONNEL DECISIONS

S
ome argue that professors should be given unrestricted freedom to select the items best reflecting their performance. This approach may work reasonably well if the portfolio is used for improving performance. But it works less well if the portfolio is used for personnel decisions. Because each portfolio is unique, the lack of standardization makes comparability impossible for professors from different teaching contexts.

One answer, perhaps, is to require portfolios being used for tenure and promotion decisions to include certain mandated items along with elective ones. Such mandated items might include, for example, a reflective statement on the professor's teaching, summaries of student evaluations, representative course syllabi, and the chair's assessment of the professor's teaching contributions to the department. All additional items included in the teaching portfolio would be selected by individual professors.

Receiving Credit for Teaching Effectiveness

Although candidates for promotion or tenure may seek credit for effective teaching, usually only scraps of such information are available. The result is that the professor's teaching is often neglected in favor of research and scholarship where data are generally more plentiful.

Thus, professors wishing to receive recognition for teaching effectiveness stand to benefit by providing evaluation committees
The Teaching Portfolio

Uses of the Portfolio

**13**

### Improving Teaching Performance

Teaching performance decisions are essential. The primary use is to improve the professor. It is important to remember that use of the portfolio for personal

If the portfolio is a success, then the professor will not grow. The portfolio will not grow. The portfolio will not grow. This is a problem. This is a problem. This is a problem.

The portfolio offers hard data to inform your improvement decisions. The portfolio offers hard data to inform your improvement decisions. The portfolio offers hard data to inform your improvement decisions.

The portfolio helps you to improve your teaching. The portfolio helps you to improve your teaching. The portfolio helps you to improve your teaching.

### Obtaining a Different Position

Required to submit their teaching portfolios:

- Applicants for faculty positions could submit their portfolios prior to interview. Such a process would enable the applicants to
- Applicants for non-faculty positions could submit their portfolios prior to interview.

### Teaching Awards or Merit Pay

In obtaining these items:

- Incentive and non-incentive awards: They also use wins counselors.

The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance. The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance. The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance.

### Outcomes of Teaching Improvement

In overcoming these items:

- Incentive and non-incentive awards: They also use wins counselors.

The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance. The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance. The portfolio can be a great tool for improving teaching performance.

If the teaching portfolio is to improve teaching performance, it must have multiple items and data must be detailed. Thoughtful.

Your teaching performance improvement help you in:

- Your teaching center now in the future.

I would be learning how much this helps your teaching performance. I would be learning how much this helps your teaching performance. I would be learning how much this helps your teaching performance.

### Uses of the Portfolio

- Uses of the Portfolio

**14**
SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS IN THE PORTFOLIO

Adding a teaching portfolio to a curriculum vitae generally flags an administrator's attention because it fills the large gaps in teaching information needed for tenure and promotion decisions. Consider the following summary of elements in a sample teaching portfolio prepared by a professor who is to be considered for tenure. The examples given below are intentionally general since actual circumstances vary so widely. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are mandated for personnel decisions at this professor's institution.

TEACHING PORTFOLIO
Robert W. Harper
Department of Literature and Communications

Statement of Teaching Responsibilities*
Following a discussion, my department chair and I exchanged memos on our agreement about my teaching responsibilities. A year ago I gave up an introductory composition course, which I had taught for several years, and began an elective seminar in advanced writing. A student term project involving field-work and library research is part of that elective course. I also teach a required course in speech communication and an elective course in creative writing. I judge the performance of students in speech communication largely on in-class presentations. Students in creative writing are judged on language and dramatic development in their writing. I also serve as academic advisor to about 20 communications majors.
Appendix

(2) Speech Communication (Communications 216)

- Designed and led by the Audio Visual Department.
- A presentation of teaching methods by my colleague, Professor Paul G. Johnson.

(1) Advanced Writing Seminar (Communications 420)

- An observation report on my teaching methods by my colleague, Professor Jane Doe.
- Three letters from students.
- Three letters from me on campus.
- Three letters from the department.
- Three letters from me to the center.

Teaching Statement

Teaching Statement

- Our students' satisfaction continues to exceed expectations.
- The speech communication course and 4.5 in my creative writing.
- Advanced writing seminar has exceeded 4.0. It was averaged 3.95 in a 5-point scale.
- Over the course of the semester, the teaching in my elective course is continued.

Summaries of Student Course Evaluations

- The appendices contains copies of syllabi for all my current courses.
- The syllabi for all courses taught.
- Plan for the next few years.

The Teaching Portfolio

- A personal reflection statement about my teaching.
- A statement of my teaching philosophy.
- A personal reflection statement about my teaching.
- A personal reflection statement about my teaching.

Appendix

(3) Creative Writing (Communications 295)

- Six examples of graded student essays showing excellence.
- Six examples of graded student essays showing excellence.
- Six examples of graded student essays showing excellence.
- A letter of invitation to discuss my approach to teaching.
- A letter of invitation to discuss my approach to teaching.
- A letter of invitation to discuss my approach to teaching.
- A letter of invitation to discuss my approach to teaching.

Appendix

To those I use in my course:

- A letter from Professor Robert Smith of the English Department.
- A letter from Professor Robert Smith of the English Department.

Copies of all appendices materials and other printed items related to the teaching portfolio are on file and are available upon request.

19

18

Summary of Elements
Statements from Peer Observations of Rehearsals

As indicated above, the teaching of theatre must go beyond the classroom experience by putting into practice the principles learned in course work. A part of this co-curricular extension exists in the rehearsal situation for actual theatrical productions. I am directly involved in such co-curricular teaching since I normally direct at least one major production a year. Appendix F includes statements from two of my directing colleagues and one from a colleague in the area of technical theatre regarding my conduct and accomplishments during rehearsal periods for major productions over the last three years.

Statement from Departmental Chairperson

I have solicited a statement from my departmental chairperson regarding my contributions to the department as a faculty member. This statement is appended in Appendix G. Particular note should be taken of comments concerning not only classroom teaching, but also my work in the areas of curriculum and course development and, additionally, of the fact that I have been appointed by the chairperson as both Chairman of the Departmental Curriculum Committee and Primary Departmental Advisor for the Department of Theatre based upon my experience and expertise in these areas.

Statements from Students and Alumni

Appendix H contains unsolicited comments from both currently enrolled students and alumni attesting to the significance of my teaching. Comments are favorable.

Record of Students in Graduate Programs

Appendix I includes a listing of former students who have pursued advanced degrees following the completion of the Ball State degrees, together with an indication of their individual successes.

Record of Supervision of Graduate Degrees

Appendix J contains a four-year record of my participation in the supervision of students involved in graduate education at Ball State. During this time I have served as a cognate member of two committees for doctoral degree candidates, one in English and one in Music. I have

Sample Teaching Portfolios

also, prior to that time, served on several additional doctoral committees as an at-large member. Prior to the separation of the discipline of Speech Communication and Theatre into individual departments, I also served on a considerable number of committees of Master’s Degree candidates and chaired a substantial number of these committees.

Record of Student Performance in Advanced Courses and Production Assignments

A substantial number of students who have experienced my course in Stage Lighting have gone on to not only do well in advanced design courses, but have also been given design assignments for individual plays presented as a part of the departmental production program and at Muncie Civic Theatre. A record of such students is included in Appendix K.

Record of Students in the Profession

Several of our graduates have gone on to graduate work at other institutions and, further, proceeded to work in the profession. Some are practicing actors, directors and designers, while others have chosen to continue their theatre work in the educational setting, either in secondary schools or at the college and university level. Appendix L contains a summary of these students and their accomplishments in their chosen realms of the theatrical profession as both practitioners and educators. In all cases these persons have been students in my classes in the history of theatre, and in many cases in acting, directing, and technical theatre courses as well.

Appendices

Appendix A: Six Representative Course Syllabi
Appendix B: Fourteen Student Evaluation Summaries
Appendix C: Testing Instruments and Results
Appendix D: Peer Evaluations: Teaching Performance
Appendix E: Peer Evaluations: Teaching Materials
Appendix F: Peer Evaluations: Rehearsal Observations
Appendix G: Chairperson’s Statement