Creating Peer Writing Groups for Faculty Applications

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Goals: Peer Writing Group for Faculty Applications

Establish a community in the form of small groups to:

1. **Critique** each other’s application documents
2. Provide **support** and **accountability** throughout the application process
3. **Connect to faculty mentors** for input on application documents such as:
   a) Research Statement
   b) Teaching Statement/Teaching philosophy
   c) Chalk talks/Interviews
Research Statements:

Interested Postdoc sign up

1. We assign to small groups (2-4 people)
2. Each small group will work out their own plan
3. Designated writing/meeting time and place
4. Online collaboration/communication
5. Daily writing habits
6. Accountability structure to help motivation
7. Whatever you like....

Once groups have a presentable draft we connect each small group with a faculty mentor to offer expert advice on the statements.
Dividing into groups: Sort by Disciplines

**Pros**

- Better understanding of each others research.
- More technical feedback on quality of research ideas.

**Cons**

- May be applying for same positions (potential conflict of interest)
- Diverse disciplines might give different insights (e.g. higher level insights) from a non-expert point of view.

Weigh the pros and cons and divide groups accordingly.
Research Statements

• Many different styles across disciplines/type of schools
  • Length may vary
  • Past research: Future research ratio may vary
• Compiled list of blogs/online resources with examples
  • see handouts (make sure we have proper references on all the handouts)
• Other options
  • Ask your advisor/mentor/others in your field for examples
  • Talk to new faculty – may be willing to share their statement/experiences with you
  • Ask about the search committee point of view about selection process, expectations and potential redflags!
Research Statement Resources

1. From Universities:
   1. vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/writtenmaterials/researchstatements.php
   2. Careers.uw.edu/ifiles/all/files/docs/gradstudents/pdfs/AcademicCareers-Research_Statements_07-08.pdf
   3. Postdocs.cornell.edu/research-statement

2. Blogs
   1. Theprofessorisin.com/2012/08/30/dr-karens-rules-of-the-research-statement/
   2. chemistry-blog.com/2013/04/20/get-a-job-ken/

3. Professional writing groups
   1. Academiccoachingandwriting.org/academic-writing/academic-writing-blog/vi-writing-the-research-statement-how-and-why-you-research-what-you-do
Teaching Statement

1. From Universities:
   1. vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/writtenmaterials/researchstatements.php
   2. Careers.uw.edu/ifiles/all/files/docs/gradstudents/pdfs/AcademicCareers-Research_Statements_07-08.pdf
   3. Postdocs.cornell.edu/research-statement

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What is a Statement of Teaching Philosophy?

1. Codifies your thinking at a particular time
2. Gives you a starting point to examine your teaching practices
3. Allows you monitor your development as a teacher
4. A personal document that should reflect and represent you as an individual
Some guiding questions

1. What do I believe about teaching?
2. What do I believe about learning? Why? How is that played out in my classroom?
3. What do I still struggle with in terms of teaching and student learning?
4. What motivates me to learn about this subject?
5. What are the opportunities and constraints under which I learn and others learn?
6. What do I expect to be the outcomes of my teaching?
7. What is the student-teacher relationship I strive to achieve?
8. How do I know when I have taught successfully?
9. What habits, attitudes, or methods mark my most successful teaching achievements?
10. What values do I impart to my students?
Some more guiding questions

1. Has my approach to teaching changed?
2. What role do my students play in the classroom (listeners? Co-discoverers? Peer teachers?)
3. What have I learned about myself as a teacher?
4. What excites me about my discipline?
5. How has my research influenced my teaching?
6. What does teaching mean to me (coaching, leading, guiding, telling, showing, mentoring. Modelling?)
7. What teaching practices do I use and prefer (lecture, lead discussions, guide problem solving, provide demonstrations?)
8. What are my plans for developing or improving my teaching? (learn new skills, try our new approaches?)
Teaching Statement Resources

1. Center of Research and Learning and Teaching (CRLT) (crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tstpts)
2. Center of teaching university of Vanderbilt (cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-statements)
Conclusions/Impressions/Issues:

1) Some feedback about writing/group experiences, what questions came up? What worked/didn’t, which pitfalls were common?
2) We can start building resources for next year’s postdocs since we’ll all get awesome faculty jobs...😊
3) Start similar process for teaching statements (many universities have writing centers with great resources on this topic!)
Closing Remarks

• Accountability
  • Small group model lends itself to accountability. Without accountability, easy to put off writing. Helps set consistent writing habits
  • Each group can cater needs to its members:
    • Frequency of meeting
    • Ways of communicating, providing feedback (video conferences, shared writing time, face-to-face meetings, google docs)
• Support
  • Daily/weekly writing reports (did I write, what approaches worked for me, where and why did I get stuck etc.)
  • Mindful group strategies (check in with your communication/writing strategies for the group, is it working? Should you change things up to keep you on your toes?)
• Faculty Mentors
  • Valuable source of information. Offer insight into search committee process
  • Feedback on statements & interview advice
Questions?