

Faculty Mentor Information

The Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning requires participants in the Certificate to choose a Saint Louis University faculty member to serve as a teaching mentor to provide guidance and feedback as the participant completes the requirements of the program. The faculty mentor cannot be a current participant in the Certificate Program and should be from the same field that the participant plans on teaching in the future. The purpose of having a faculty mentor for the Certificate is to help the participant learn discipline-specific pedagogical information and best practices in their field. Additionally, having a faculty mentor allows the participant to have a designated person with whom to discuss teaching related topics as they arise. Beyond the Certificate, having a faculty mentor to discuss teaching related topics is a good practice to keep when transitioning to academic employment positions. A mentor can assist with the transition and continue to provide guidance on teaching and pedagogy.

The information provided here is meant to be a helpful guide for Reinert Center teaching mentors and participants, clarifying expectations and encouraging positive and successful mentoring.

Primary Responsibilities: Mentor

1. Read and discuss a draft of the participant's Teaching Philosophy statement.
2. Review a video recording of the participant's teaching and discuss it with the participant. During or after viewing the recording, the mentor should complete the Faculty Mentor Feedback form.
3. Review the participant's Certificate Teaching Portfolio.
4. Write a letter that will become part of the Teaching Portfolio. This letter should address the participant's teaching and summarize interactions during the completion of the Certificate.
5. Where appropriate, support the participant in other ways, such as visiting one of his/her classes, assisting with discipline-specific course design, and/or meeting for informal discussions of teaching.

Primary Responsibilities: Participant

1. Choose a faculty mentor as soon as possible when beginning the Certificate (we recommend the first semester or year, depending on the participant's expected timeline for completing the program). The mentor should be a faculty member in the participant's home department, who the participant feels would make a good mentor in matters of *teaching*. While this often is the dissertation or thesis advisor/director, it need not be.
2. Complete all requirements for the Certificate. See the Reinert Center website for more information.
3. Schedule meetings with the mentor. See the Guidelines for Mentor Meetings below.

4. Provide the mentor ample time to review the Teaching Philosophy, the video recording, and the Teaching Portfolio. Summarize the faculty mentor's feedback on the classroom teaching video, and include their feedback in your Reflection on Teaching Feedback, in the Teaching Portfolio.
5. Request the mentor's final summary letter in advance of portfolio deadline.

Guidelines for Mentor Meetings

Participants are required to meet with their faculty mentors at least four times while working on the full Certificate in University Teaching Skills. These meetings can be divided into the following tasks.

First Meeting: *Getting Started*

An initial conversation between the mentor and the participant presents a good opportunity to discuss the participant's goals for pursuing the Certificate and to have the mentor sign the Mentor Agreement Form. Possible topics of conversation include: the participant's ideas about teaching and learning; her/his sense of the place of teaching in the profession/discipline; types of pedagogies that are most common in the discipline/field; and/or the participant's developing philosophy of or approach to teaching.

Second Meeting: *Reviewing the Teaching Philosophy Draft*

The mentor should read the participant's teaching philosophy draft beforehand and be prepared to offer feedback, both on content and form. Generally, effective Teaching Philosophy Statements:

- Are brief (1-2 pages), written in the first-person, in non-technical language;
- Convey what one teaches, how one teaches, and why one teaches in the way he/she does;
- Reflect on one's teaching experience and on one's teaching style;
- Offer concrete examples of what it is like to be inside the teacher's classroom;
- Communicate one's own vision of how learning occurs and the teacher's role in learning;
- Articulate goals for students and perhaps for the teacher.

Note: This list of characteristics is adapted from two useful sources on writing statements of teaching philosophy: Nancy Chism's "Developing a Teaching Statement," Essays on Teaching Excellence, 9:3 (1997-1998), and from Chris O'Neal et al, "Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy for the Academic Job Search," CRLT Occasional Papers 23 (2007).

Third Meeting: *Reviewing the Video Recording of a Teaching Situation*

The participant should arrange for a class or other teaching situation to be video recorded (see the guidelines on the Video Recorded Teaching Requirement for more details). The purpose of this assignment is for the participant to watch him/herself teach and have an opportunity for self-reflection. The conversation with the mentor should support that reflection. Both the participant and the faculty mentor should view the video recording, and then meet to discuss the participant's teaching. During or after viewing the recording, the mentor should complete the Faculty Mentor Feedback form.

The Faculty Mentor Feedback Form:

The primary purpose of this form is to provide a provisional structure to the conversation between the mentor and the Certificate participant about the video recording of teaching. Answers to the questions should be provided by the mentor, and we encourage the mentor to ask these questions of the participant also, as part of a dialogue about teaching specific to the participant's experience and discipline. The participant will include this form with his/her final portfolio.

When reviewing the video recording, the following questions might provide a good starting point for conversation:

- What comments does the *participant* have on her/his teaching session?
- What did the participant do well?
- What might she/he do differently next time?
- What aspects of teaching should the participant work on improving?

In most cases, the mentor will highlight a few areas for suggested changes and will concentrate on different strategies for making these changes. Concentrating on a few areas will focus the analysis of the video recording. Specific areas of analysis might include: organization and preparation; style of presentation; instructor clarity; questioning skills; student interest and participation; classroom climate; and/or quality of discussion.

Barbara Gross Davis's *Tools for Teaching* provides some useful strategies for preparing for and analyzing a video recorded teaching performance. This information is also available at the following website: <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/videotape.html>.

Fourth Meeting: *Reviewing the Teaching Portfolio*

When all of the components of the Certificate Teaching Portfolio have been completed, the mentor should read through it carefully and offer feedback. Although teaching portfolios differ, depending on context, and although the Certificate Portfolio has certain elements that other such portfolios might not (e.g., the Reflection on Teaching Development), the mentor should be able to provide the feedback on some or all of the following questions:

- Is the portfolio reader-friendly and professional in appearance?
- Is there a solid teaching philosophy incorporated into the document?
- Are course descriptions and materials included? Are they appropriate for the discipline?
- Is there ample evidence of critical reflection on teaching throughout the portfolio?
- Are any instructional innovations or experiments described?
- What revisions might improve the quality of the portfolio?

Note: Questions are adapted from Barbara Gross Davis' Tools for Teaching; offers additional guidance for reviewing teaching portfolios.

This meeting provides a good opportunity for the mentor to review and sample course materials designed by the participant, if they have not already done so. As an expert in the discipline, the mentor is in the

best position to provide feedback on discipline-specific course materials, such as syllabi, learning outcomes, assignments, and exams.

Writing the Final Summary Letter

After the mentor has reviewed the complete Teaching Portfolio, she will write a summary letter to be included in the portfolio. Some suggestions of what this letter might contain include:

- An introduction: how long you have known the participant and in what context.
- Reflection on mentoring activities: how often you met with the participant; what was accomplished at these meetings; what you think was beneficial (or less useful) in them; other ways you engaged the participant beyond the required activities (e.g., visiting her/his class).
- Commentary on the participant's Teaching Philosophy.
- Discussion of the participant's teaching. Comments might focus on: organization, content mastery, classroom presentation style, use of technology, active learning, assessment of student work, etc.
- Recommendation about whether the participant should receive the Reinert Center's Certificate in University Teaching Skills.