

**Preparing a
Teaching Portfolio**

by

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University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Preface

Over the past decade, the Center for Teaching (CFT) and the Faculty Senate Council on Teaching, Learning and Instructional Technology have collaborated on several initiatives to assist faculty in assessing and enhancing teaching. The Council has advised in the development of an updated student and course evaluation system, the Student Response to Instruction (SRTI). And in an effort to supplement student ratings with a richer and more substantive kind of information about teaching, they have encouraged faculty members and departments to consider compiling teaching portfolios.

In 1993, the CFT and the Council prepared an introductory handbook for campus use: the *Teaching Portfolio Handbook*. At that time, only a handful of institutions across the United States were experimenting with teaching portfolios. On our campus, individual faculty mostly used the *Teaching Portfolio Handbook* as a general reference when documenting their teaching accomplishments for teaching awards, mini-tenure, and tenure and promotion review.

Over the past decade, however, there has been a growing body of knowledge about how to create and apply teaching portfolios. It is estimated that as many as 1,000 college and universities are now using and experimenting with portfolios (Seldin, 1997). On our own campus, several colleges and departments have sponsored workshops on the teaching portfolio, one school is piloting a portfolio project, the CFT offers assistance in portfolio development to graduate students through its Teaching Documentation Program, and individual faculty and teaching assistants increasingly consult with the CFT on portfolio development.

In addition, our Provost, Cora B. Marrett, has encouraged a fuller and more convincing assessment of teaching accomplishments for personnel decision making. In her 1998 Promotion and Tenure Recommendations, she placed a renewed emphasis on the “personal statement.” In a personal statement, the candidate for tenure and/or promotion describes his or her performance and future plans in the areas of research,

teaching, and service. In documenting teaching effectiveness, Marrett argues that the consideration of teaching should attempt to capture the total contribution of the candidate to the instructional mission. She further suggests that “. . . a teaching portfolio can be an effective document to connect teaching activity with the personal statement of the candidate.”

In this updated handbook, *Preparing a Teaching Portfolio*, we can now offer faculty members and administrators the kind of step-by-step, practical information necessary to get started, prepare, and maintain a teaching portfolio. Graduate students who are planning careers as faculty members should also find this handbook useful. Another important revision is the addition of sample items that have been used in real portfolios at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. They consist of a complete teaching portfolio and excerpts from other portfolios, including a summary of teaching responsibilities, sample teaching philosophy statements, and sample activities to improve teaching.

We encourage you to try this innovative method for reflecting on and documenting your teaching. You may contact the CFT if you are interested in assistance as you work through the process. Your experience will also contribute to the growing body of knowledge about how to build and use teaching portfolios.

We offer our appreciation to teaching and learning centers at The Pennsylvania State University and the University of Washington, and to Peter Seldin, on whose work this handbook has drawn.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Faculty Senate Council on Teaching, Learning and Technology, the Provost's Office, and faculty and teaching assistants in many departments for their encouragement and support of the development of this handbook. Special thanks go to Mary Andrianopoulos, Mary Anne Bright, David Kazmer, Ray Pfeiffer, and Stella Volpe for their thoughtful advice on this manuscript. Finally, a special note of appreciation is extended to Vanessa Blais, Francis Juanes, Mzamo Mangaliso, Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Ray Pfeiffer, and Clement Seldin for their generosity in sharing their teaching philosophies, personal statements, and teaching portfolios with us.

Mary Deane Sorcinelli
The Center for Teaching

What Is a Teaching Portfolio?

A *teaching portfolio* (or *dossier*) is a coherent set of material that represents your teaching practice as related to student learning. “Teaching practice” in its broadest sense extends beyond the obvious activities that go into teaching a course to include all activities that enrich student learning. (Appendix A, Items That Might Be Included in a Teaching Portfolio, reflects this broad view of teaching.)

Teaching portfolios vary considerably depending on their specific purpose, audience, institutional context, and individual needs. However, the body of a portfolio is generally about 5-8 pages long and is followed by appendices, which usually make up about 8-15 more pages. Your portfolio would likely include a summary of your teaching experience and responsibilities, a reflective statement of your teaching philosophy and goals, a brief discussion of your teaching methods and strategies, as well as activities undertaken to improve teaching, and a statement of goals and plans for the future. The appendices would consist of supplemental materials that further document or support the information you provide in the body of your portfolio.

A *course portfolio*, which focuses on a single course, has many features and benefits in common with a teaching portfolio. Although we do not discuss course portfolios in this handbook, much of the information here can be applied to developing one. Additional information on course portfolios is available from the Center for Teaching (also see Cutler, 1997a, 1997b; Hutchings, 1998).

Why Prepare a Teaching Portfolio?

Teaching portfolios are typically used for two purposes, which sometimes overlap: (1) as a developmental *process* for reflecting on and improving one’s teaching; and (2) as an evaluative *product* for personnel decisions such as tenure, promotion, or a teaching award. Whatever function they serve, teaching portfolios have several major benefits:

- They provide different sources of evidence of teaching performance. As teachers, we have often relied primarily on student evaluations for feedback about our

teaching. Although such student reviews contribute important information about teaching performance, they often reflect off-the-cuff feelings expressed in just a few moments at one of the final classes of a semester. The variety of sources of feedback in a portfolio provides a more comprehensive view of how a teacher is handling the diverse responsibilities of teaching. Thus they reflect more of teaching's intellectual substance and complexity.

- They make teaching more visible through their demonstration of a variety of teaching-related activities.
- They place the initiative for reflecting on and evaluating teaching in the hands of faculty. It is the teacher who explains and documents his or her teaching performance by selecting what goes into the portfolio.
- They give the individual an opportunity to think about his or her own teaching — to change priorities or teaching strategies as needed, and to reflect about future teaching goals. Putting together a teaching portfolio in itself often enhances one's teaching performance.
- They offer opportunities for faculty to work collaboratively. Teachers often work with other colleagues or mentors in developing portfolios, thereby opening the door to greater sharing among faculty of their views and approaches to teaching.
- As teaching becomes more visible and ideas about it are shared, teaching becomes a more valued subject of intellectual and scholarly discussion throughout the institution.

How Does One Develop a Teaching Portfolio?

Although how one develops a teaching portfolio is as unique as each portfolio itself, we have selected some very practical strategies that most faculty here at UMass can apply or adapt to their individual needs.

Getting Started

Before you begin to put together a teaching portfolio, it is helpful to develop and gather material that you might include in it. We say “might,” because at this preliminary stage you will likely be collecting more than you can include in a single portfolio.

- Establish a filing system specifically for material related to your teaching development efforts. Treat these files as separate from your normal course records. This means you will need to duplicate a set of material specifically for your teaching development files. Having double copies is a minor nuisance in the short run; but in the long run having a “portfolio set” cuts down on pillaging other files, keeps portfolio materials easily accessible when needed, and provides a clearer overall perspective of your teaching efforts and growth.
- Sketch out your reflections on your teaching (your beliefs, values, strategies) and how it relates to student learning in your field. These reflections will likely become part of your teaching philosophy statement.
- Talk to other faculty members you admire about their approach to teaching. Often such a dialogue can stimulate your reflective process and help you better articulate your priorities, values, and goals. (It can do the same for them as well.)
- Collect material on your teaching-related activities (see Appendix A for suggestions). *Note:* Even here it helps to be somewhat selective, to choose items that you might consider for your teaching portfolio.
- Write your goals for teaching development. Then seek out different opportunities that might support these goals, such as attending a discipline-based pedagogy seminar or workshop on campus, participating in a program offered by the Center for Teaching, or attending an off-campus conference related to teaching in your field.

Preparing Your Portfolio

Once you have gathered the supporting documents you need, it generally takes a total of 12 to 15 hours to prepare your portfolio (Seldin, 1997, p 19). When you begin to assemble it, you have many choices of material to include. Now is the time to be

selective. How do you go about choosing what will be most appropriate? One helpful strategy is to think about a teaching portfolio as an argument — much like one you would make in a scholarly article or monograph — in which you provide the reader with a context, state a main point or theme, and then select and organize the rest of the material around that point. Two of the greatest pitfalls in developing a portfolio are including too much material and inserting it in raw form (without explaining why it is there). Thinking of the portfolio as an argument can help you avoid these pitfalls by giving you a method for selecting and shaping the material that will go into it.

As you would with any argument, consider its purpose and audience:

- Why are you creating this portfolio? For tenure or promotion? For a teaching award? For your own developmental purposes? Or for some other reason?
- Who will be its primary readers? (Of course, if you are creating this portfolio for yourself, you will be its primary reader. But you may ask colleagues to review and discuss the material with you.)

Given your answers to these two questions, what main points about your teaching do you want to make? You will likely highlight these points in your teaching philosophy statement. What evidence do you have, or can you get, to support them? All the following material you include in your portfolio should provide evidence that in some way supports your main points. Remember that including supporting evidence does not mean you should eliminate “failures.” On the contrary, discussing why a teaching strategy did not work and how you have changed or will change it is evidence that you can adapt and improve as a teacher.

While preparing your portfolio, consider working with a mentor (or mentors). An effective mentor need not be someone who is evaluating you, but can be any faculty member — in your own or a different discipline — who is interested in enhancing the quality of teaching. A consultant from the Center for Teaching would also gladly assist you with your portfolio. If you are assembling a portfolio because you will be evaluated for a specific reason, it is very helpful to ask about your readers’ expectations. For example (as excerpted from Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, 1997), what are your reviewers’ beliefs about good teaching? How will those beliefs affect what you

say or include in your portfolio, especially if your beliefs differ? What kinds of evidence of teaching effectiveness will your reviewers expect to be included in your portfolio? About how much material would they like you to include?

As we have mentioned before, teaching portfolios are a highly individual product, whose content and organization vary from one institution, department, and faculty member to another. Especially if you have not developed a portfolio before, consider looking at samples, such as those in Appendices B and C or in Seldin's *Teaching Portfolio* (1997). Or some colleagues might share their portfolios with you. Even though yours will be different from others, the samples can help you visualize what a teaching portfolio might contain and how it might be organized, depending on its purpose, audience, and context. The following generic guidelines include components typical of most portfolios, although these components might be combined or separated in different ways.

Teaching experience and responsibilities. This section provides a context for the main points you make about your teaching. Here you summarize courses you are teaching or have taught in the recent past, including number of credit hours, whether the course was required or elective, number of students, and whether they were graduate or undergraduate (see sample in Appendix D). Teaching activities outside the classroom, such as advising graduate or undergraduate students, supervising students engaged in independent studies, and otherwise mentoring students, are also important to include. (Also see Appendix A, section titled Roles, Responsibilities, and Goals.)

Teaching philosophy and goals. Despite its typical brevity (about 1-2 pages long), this statement is the foundation on which the portfolio is built. Your aim here is to answer in some way one main question: Why do you do what you do as a teacher? Reflections on this question generally include four components, which may be discussed separately or be intertwined in some way (see samples in Appendices E and F):

- Your beliefs about how student learning in your field occurs.
- Given those reflections, your beliefs about how you as a teacher can best help students learn.

- How you put into practice your beliefs about effective teaching and learning. (If you discuss your teaching methods in a separate section, such as the one below, you might simply refer to that section in your philosophy statement.)
- Your goals for students.

Whether you are developing the portfolio for yourself or for evaluation by others, reflecting on these issues serves as a good basis for self-assessment and potential growth as a teacher. How you write about these issues again depends largely on your audience. Because this section of your portfolio is a personal statement, writing in first-person, narrative form is appropriate in most circumstances. Writing in broadly understood terms rather than in highly technical language is usually best. Even when writing for yourself, using common terms can help you better demonstrate your knowledge to yourself. If your audience is limited to others in your department who will be evaluating you, use of technical language might indicate your knowledge of the discipline. But even readers in one's own department may prefer minimal use of technical terms.

Teaching methods and strategies. As you describe how you teach, keep in mind what you have said in your teaching philosophy statement. It may help the reader if you explicitly state some connection (perhaps in a simple phrase) between what you are describing in this section and how it relates to your teaching philosophy statement. In the same or a separate section, also reflect on the *effectiveness* of your teaching. Select supporting materials that illustrate your teaching approach (i.e., that show you do what you are describing) and that provide evidence of your teaching effectiveness. You will likely place this supporting documentation, which includes information from yourself and from others (such as colleagues, supervisors, and students), in one or more appendices.

Activities undertaken to improve teaching. Your discussions and evidence from preceding sections may lead you to consider what worked, what did not, why, and how to change what needs changing to improve your effectiveness as a teacher. The material you have gathered so far might also lead you to consider what is missing: What have you not done that you think would be worthwhile trying? Although what you emphasize is likely to vary according to the purposes of your portfolio, in this section you

can also include a description of revisions you have made to an assignment or entire course and why you made them, participation in programs to improve teaching, consultation with the Center for Teaching, or time spent reading journals about pedagogy (see sample in Appendix G).

Goals and plans for the future. In relation to what you have so far included in your portfolio, what goals to improve your teaching would you like to accomplish in the next few years? How do you plan to accomplish them?

Shaping the Final Portfolio

Even if the portfolio is for your own developmental purposes, formally organizing it can help make it easier to use for later reflections. If your portfolio is to be evaluated by others, the following organizational material can make the portfolio easier for your readers to follow:

- Title page and table of contents.
- Headings and subheadings that clearly identify and separate the portfolio's components.
- In the body of the portfolio, references to material in the appendix, where appropriate.
- Brief explanatory statements accompanying each item in the appendix, where appropriate. (What is the item's context, purpose, or relationship to what you have said in the body of your portfolio?)

The following questions (excerpted from Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, 1997) can also be useful for your own reflections or for consideration before you submit your portfolio to a review committee:

- Have you selected, organized, and presented the data in a way that brings the most compelling evidence into focus for your readers?
- Does each piece of evidence serve a purpose, supporting a point you have made about your teaching?
- Does your portfolio give the reader a sense of who you are as a teacher?

Keeping Your Portfolio Up to Date

Periodically revising your portfolio is a good way to continue reflecting on your teaching, as well as to keep material readily available for a periodic multiyear review (PMYR), a teaching award, or other evaluative purposes. The end of each semester or school year is a good time to go through your teaching development files, discard outdated material, and add current data. Time and additional experience will likely offer you a slightly different perspective on your initial portfolio. Your priorities may have changed, or perhaps you would now articulate them differently. After you have achieved some of the goals you set forth in your original portfolio, you can note how you achieved them and reflect on how they have improved your students' learning and your teaching.

Assembling an Electronic Portfolio

Assembling an electronic portfolio can range from putting your portfolio on a computer disk or CD-ROM to developing a website on the Internet. If you and the readers of your portfolio have access to the appropriate equipment and know how to use it, you might consider the advantages of preparing an electronic portfolio. For example, you can include more kinds of information, such as animated graphics, in-class presentations that you developed on presentation software, or videoclips from your classes. You can also include information that might make a traditional hard-copy portfolio too bulky, such as a lengthy appendix or links to an entire course that you have posted on the Internet. In general, you can include more information on an electronic portfolio than is typical of a paper portfolio.

If you and your readers prefer an electronic portfolio, some cautions are still in order. For example, beware of including too much information. Although your readers can be free to select what they choose to read or skim, too many choices may still be overwhelming. Keep focused on the objectives of the portfolio rather than on the “bells and whistles” of the technology. Finally, be sure that *all* your readers have access and know how to use the hardware and software they will need for reviewing your portfolio material (Lieberman & Rueter, 1997, pp 46-48).

How Will My Portfolio Be Evaluated?

You may be wondering how your portfolio is likely to be evaluated if it will be used as part of a personnel decision-making process. In general, experts seem to agree that the content of a teaching portfolio and the evaluative criteria used to judge it should be related to the goals of the teacher's department and to the mission of the institution in which he or she works. Explicit evaluative criteria should be developed and agreed upon before portfolios are reviewed. And the decision of a review committee should be based on their general agreement about the quality of the portfolio (quality depending on the criteria that have been established). It seems reasonable, then, for you to have information from your review committee about what items must be included in your portfolio, an expected range of number of pages, and the criteria on which the portfolio will be judged.

Finally, authorities on teaching portfolios typically note that evaluators should also judge a portfolio according to its:

- Inclusion of *evidence* that backs up the claims a teacher makes — evidence of teaching accomplishments, of student learning, and of efforts to improve teaching.
- *Consistency* between the professor's teaching philosophy and accompanying evidence of teaching strategies, effectiveness, and efforts to improve.

If you would like additional information on evaluating portfolios, see Murray's *Successful Faculty Development and Evaluation*, pp 37-48, and Seldin's *Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios*, pp 71-86.

Conclusion

The Center for Teaching has received positive feedback from UMass faculty on the successful use of teaching portfolios, both for teaching improvement and for evaluation. For example, Peter Elbow, Professor of English and Director of the Writing Program, reports: "I try to squirrel away things that can help me think about my teaching — even when I don't have enough time to think. Not just what portfolio people call 'artifacts' — syllabi, assignments, handouts, student papers, plans — but also stray notes I write to myself after class (and sometimes in class while people are writing). I have a computer

subdirectory for every class, and there's always a file called 'NextTime' where I try to jot thoughts and feelings about what went well and badly — always with that sense of 'next time I'll finally do it right.' All this makes fodder for a portfolio.” And Stella Volpe, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and 1999 Distinguished Teaching Award winner, writes, “Developing a teaching portfolio helped me in preparing my dossier for tenure and for the Distinguished Teaching Award. It gave me a systematic way to think about my teaching and gave my colleagues in-depth information on my teaching responsibilities, goals, methods, and evaluation.”

Whether it is used for evaluative purposes or not, preparing a teaching portfolio almost inevitably leads to new ideas for improving one's teaching — as every source we have read on teaching portfolios seems to note. Students ultimately benefit from this process as better teaching enriches student learning.

A final note: We hope that the use of teaching portfolios at UMass follows the positive trend of portfolio use elsewhere. So that the Center for Teaching may continue to help you in this process, we welcome suggestions for the next revision of this handbook. You can also find additional information on teaching portfolios in the resource list at the end of this handbook. These resources, among others, are available at the

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<http://www.umass.edu/cft>

Appendix A:

Items That Might Be Included in a Teaching Portfolio

The following items, loosely organized into several categories, reflect teaching activities inside and outside the classroom. Although no portfolio would ever include all of these items, some are relatively common to all portfolios, and others can be selected to meet your particular needs. (The selections were compiled from several sources: Anderson, 1993, pp 48-49, 83-85; Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, 1993; Denham et al., 1996, p 23).

Roles, Responsibilities, and Goals

- Brief biographical sketch related to what has shaped your teaching
- Statement of teaching roles and responsibilities
- Reflective essay describing teaching philosophy, goals, and methods
- List of courses taught, with enrollments and comment as to if new, required or elective, team-taught, etc
- Roles and activities related to advising:
 - Description of advising responsibilities, goals, and approaches
 - Number of undergraduate and graduate advisees
 - Advising materials developed for students
 - Assistance with undergraduate program
 - Assistance with planning for employment or graduate school
 - Referral to other university services
 - Serving on graduate examination and thesis or dissertation committees

Representative Course Materials

- Syllabi
- Course descriptions with details of content, objectives, methods, and procedures for evaluating student learning
- List of texts and outside readings; rationales for selecting texts/readings
- Assignments
- Exams and quizzes, graded and ungraded
- Handouts, problem sets, lecture outlines
- Descriptions and examples of visual materials used
- Descriptions of use of computers or other technology in teaching

Assessment and Extent of Student Learning

- Student scores on standardized or other tests, before and after instruction
- Samples of student work, such as papers, essays, lab books, workbooks, publications, presentations, or other creative work

- Examples of graded exams from the best to the poorest students, with explanations of why the exams were so graded
- Your written feedback on student work (e.g., feedback on successive drafts of student writing)
- Information from yourself, colleagues, or others (e.g., students, parents) addressing preparation of students for advanced work
- Information from yourself, colleagues, or others (e.g., students, parents) addressing effect on students' career choices and employment

Descriptions and Evaluations of Teaching

- Summarized student evaluations of your teaching, including response rate, students' written comments, and overall ratings
- Results of interviews with students after they have completed a course
- Letters from students and alumni
- Videotape of you teaching a class
- Statements from colleagues about your:
 - Mastery and selection of course content
 - Suitability of course objectives, both in terms of student and departmental needs
 - Suitability of course materials for achieving course objectives
 - Suitability of specific teaching and assessment methods for achieving course objectives
 - Commitment to teaching as evidenced by expressed concern for student learning
 - Commitment to and support of departmental instructional efforts
 - Willingness to work with others on instructional issues
 - Ability to teach concepts (such as writing or critical thinking) in a way that allows students to use them in other courses
- Letter from head or chair describing your teaching performance

Course and Curriculum Development

- Designing new courses or development of sequence of courses
- Designing interdisciplinary or collaborative courses or teaching projects
- Administering a multisection course
- Working on curriculum revision or development
- Obtaining funds or equipment for teaching labs or programs

Activities to Improve Your and Others' Instruction

- Having colleagues observe your classes
- Serving as a team teacher or guest teacher
- Participating in seminars or professional meetings on teaching
- Conducting classroom research projects

- Using new methods of teaching, assessing learning, grading
- Using innovative audiovisual materials, computers, or other technology
- Assisting colleagues by conducting seminars or facilitating workshops on effective instructional methods
- Preparing a textbook or software for a course
- Mentoring other teachers or teaching assistants

Contributions to Institution or Profession

- Participating in local, state, regional, or national activities/organizations related to teaching and learning
- Publishing articles in teaching journals
- Developing student assistantship or internship program; arranging and supervising internships
- Participating in school-college partnerships to connect and improve learning across educational sectors

Honors or Recognitions

- Teaching awards from department/school/university
- Teaching awards from profession
- Invitations, based on your teaching reputation, to consult, give workshops, write articles, etc
- Requests for advice on teaching by committees or other organized groups

Appendix B: Sample Teaching Portfolio

The body of the following teaching portfolio, developed for both reflective purposes and promotion review, is complete. The end of the body indicates material that would go in the appendices to the portfolio, but we have not included the appendices here. (Used with permission from Clement A. Seldin, Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, UMass Amherst.)

Teaching Portfolio

Clement A. Seldin
Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

Contents

- Teaching Philosophy
- Teaching Responsibilities and Strategies
- Representative Course Syllabi, including Assignments, Examinations, and Supplementary Reading
- Advising
- Evaluation of Teaching
- Honors Related to Teaching During Review Period
- Major Award Prior to Review Period
- Teaching Improvement Activities
- Conclusion
- Appendices

Teaching Philosophy

The following eight principles provide fundamental structure for me as teacher and learner. They support a strategic filter through which I shape my courses, advising and supervision, writing and research, and other faculty activities. They help maintain my sense of balance and professional direction.*

- Growth is developmental and requires time and patience. We are the agents of our own growth.
- Teachers must focus on strengths and use positive feedback to help learners grow academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Critical thinking helps students internalize learning.
- Structure and shared decision making are significant to the learning process.
- Success stimulates further success.
- Teachers must strive to meet learner needs and be keenly aware of social, emotional, and physical variables that affect the learning process.
- Teachers and learners must value diversity and seek unity in a multicultural nation.
- All teachers must seek continuous renewal and growth.

**These eight principles are based on the "Belief System" developed by Professor Emeritus R. Mason Bunker.*

Teaching Responsibilities and Strategies

My teaching responsibilities are focused on undergraduate education, as stated in my Position Description dated September 1, 1991 [*CFT note: not included here*]. My teaching assignments are centered broadly on foundations of education and within the Elementary Teacher Education Program. Courses are framed on a knowledge/research base, and I use a blend of lecture, discussion, and problem solving in my classes. Students are actively encouraged to contribute to discussions and learning activities. All my classes utilize some form of the Socratic dialogue — a method of argument and proof using a question-and-answer approach. Substantial use of videotapes, slides, and computer graphics serves to stimulate discussion.

I make frequent use of learning projects in which students are grouped to explore issues. In addition, I designed case studies to use frequently in the foundation courses and the controversial issues course to generate debate and encourage critical thinking skills. These multifaceted case studies focus on contemporary problems to which students can easily relate. Given their rich, diverse backgrounds, students bring unique perspectives and insights to class which create a fertile environment to explore the various issues represented in the case studies. Using a multitude of teaching approaches, I guide students to appreciate the complexity of every issue. My aim is to illuminate the conclusion that being an absolutist on controversial issues undermines children and education.

I have taught the following undergraduate courses (the first three are key courses):

- Social Foundations of Education (two sections each semester)
3 credits, 50-60 students per semester
- Controversial Issues in Education (Honors)
1 credit, 8-12 students, fall only
- Pre-Practicum Field Experience I and II
1-2 credits, 25-30 students
- Foundations of Education: An Urban Perspective
3 credits, 10 students, fall only
- Developmental Education
3 credits, 25-30 students
- Principles and Methods of Teaching Social Studies
3 credits, 25-30 students

Although my focus is undergraduate education, I have also taught these graduate courses:

- Foundations of Education
3 credits, 6-12 students
- Controversial Issues in Education
3 credits, 6-12 students

SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION. This introductory course focuses on the culture of the American public school. The course explores the teaching/learning process, the sociology and history of public schooling, teacher roles, and philosophical and

psychological aims of education. In cross-departmental collaboration, I developed this course with Dr. Kevin Grennan, Director of Education Studies in the Department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration. In recent years, both Dr. Grennan and I teach sections of this course and regularly share ideas, perspectives, and materials.

By mid-semester, students apply to ETEP. I devote many hours to helping students prepare their ETEP application portfolios and plan for their interviews. In addition, I devote substantial energy to helping non-accepted students regain emotional equilibrium and refocus their academic direction.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION. I designed this course for university honors students. It explores controversial issues and investigates multiple solutions. The course attracts honors students from different university disciplines and involves extensive readings, discussion, presentation, and debate.

FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION: AN URBAN PERSPECTIVE. I developed this course specifically for inner city paraprofessionals in Springfield who are enrolled in a new program sponsored jointly by the School of Education and the University Without Walls. Completion of the program leads to certification and a liberal arts undergraduate degree. The course explores philosophical and historical foundations of public education and the social, political, and economic factors affecting schools in urban areas such as Springfield. Students investigate relationships between race, ethnicity, social class, and disability and equal access to education in an urban setting.

PRE-PRACTICUM I FIELD EXPERIENCE. This course is designed for students enrolled in Social Foundations. Working with a team of graduate student supervisors, I have constructed a comprehensive system to place my students with local teachers in elementary schools one morning each week for 10 weeks. In weekly meetings with supervisors, I coordinate their directed observations and teacher/supervisor/cooperating-teacher conferences (see Appendix C).

FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION (graduate). The course, designed for master's level students, was developed in response to a specific need for a foundations course by master's/certification students in ETEP. The course explores the social, historical, and political foundations of American education using both revisionism and traditionalism as filters for this examination.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION (graduate). Designed for graduate students enrolled in the I-CAGS (Interdisciplinary Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies) Program, this course focused on ten controversial issues. It explored multiple solutions from both the professional literature and the extensive experience of the students.

HONORS RESEARCH AND THESES. Given my focus on undergraduate education and my role as advisor to Kappa Delta Pi, the Education Honor Society, I have also chaired many undergraduate honors theses. This involves working closely with the honors student to design the thesis, direct its research and writing, and chair a thesis defense before an honors committee.

INDEPENDENT STUDIES. Every semester I work closely with many undergraduates and graduate students who wish to pursue independent study in areas in which I have knowledge and interest. My students explore an array of topics related to teaching and learning in the public schools.

Representative Course Syllabi, including Assignments, Examinations, and Supplementary Reading

My comprehensive syllabi include course descriptions, specific academic requirements and expectations regarding course organization, examinations, and papers, as well as a precise outline of how final grades will be awarded. I also identify required and recommended readings, and present a detailed weekly breakdown of topics and readings (see Appendix A).

It is my belief that a comprehensive syllabus is a fundamental teaching tool. For students, it provides essential information and expectations about the course. For the teacher, it is a formal vehicle that conveys a blueprint for the course and expectations for student learning and academic performance. For the academic department, comprehensive syllabi collectively describe the department's curriculum, its scope and focus, and its academic rigor and standards.

Advising

I announce to students in every class that my door is “always open.” In addition to maintaining regular office hours, I meet daily with students. My goal is to equip them with tools to find answers for themselves rather than to rely on my suggested solutions.

- In terms of **instructor availability** (CIRI Student Evaluation, fall 1991–spring 1996), my mean student rating for the question on availability on a scale from 1 (*hopelessly inadequate*) to 7 (*unusually effective*) is 6.55 (1-7 scale, N=357).
- In the new evaluation (Student Response to Instruction, fall 1997–spring 1998), question 6 relates to **availability**: *The instructor showed a personal interest in helping*. My mean student rating from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), is 4.95 (1-5 scale, N=210).

I currently serve as the primary academic advisor to 22 undergraduates and 21 graduate students. Although my responsibilities are at the undergraduate level, I have served on master's and doctoral committees in the School of Education, doctoral committees in the Psychology Department (Clinical Psychology Program), and recently on a Master's Thesis Committee in the School of Nursing. I have also chaired many undergraduate honors thesis committees.

Evaluation of Teaching

Student evaluations are vital to my efforts to improve courses. I have used a two-prong approach to gaining student perceptions. I have regularly administered the Center for Instructional Improvement (CIRI) evaluations since my initial part-time lecturer appointment in 1978, and I routinely request anonymous written student assessments at the conclusion of courses. I was part of a pilot effort to test a new evaluation instrument, Student Response to Instruction Report, which is now utilized university-wide.

As a result of my emphasis on evaluation, I have longitudinal statistical and descriptive data. Note that **all evaluations are consistently at the highest levels in all categories** (see Appendix D). Illustrative of the very positive student evaluations is the following student ratings summary, which assesses my teaching since receiving associate professor rank.

Mean student ratings on 7-point scale: 1 (*hopelessly inadequate*) to 7 (*unusually effective*)
Fall 1991 to spring 1996, N = 357 undergraduate students

6.52	Instructor is well organized	6.27	Instructor increased student motivation
6.53	Instructor welcomes participation	6.37	Instructor increased student learning
6.61	Instructor is enthusiastic	6.56	Instructor was well prepared
6.56	Instructor is well prepared for class	6.60	Students recommend course

Since fall 1996, I have used a new evaluation instrument, the Student Response to Instruction Report. Below are mean student ratings on a 5-point scale.

Mean student ratings on 5-point scale: 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*)
Fall 1996 to spring 1998, N = 211 undergraduate students

4.98	Instructor was well prepared for class	4.86	Instructor provided useful feedback
4.95	Instructor explained course material clearly	4.88	Instructor stimulated useful participation
4.95	Instructor used class time well	4.93	Overall rating of instructor's teaching
4.87	Instructor inspired interest in subject matter	4.93	Overall rating for course

Anonymous student evaluation narratives reveal significant strengths of my courses and instruction (see Appendix E). The following are representative examples from different classes that I have taught since receiving associate professor rank:

I cannot speak highly enough about what you have given to the class and myself. I love to learn, and this course has been the best experience I have ever had incorporating topics I love in an atmosphere where I felt genuinely at home.

What struck me as the most important aspect in this professor's personality was his belief in all his students. He successfully demonstrated his belief that we were all learning human beings who each had something powerful to contribute.

I found myself more than once at the library to find out more information on a topic that you mentioned, not because you required it of me, but because you sparked my interest and made me "have" to know. May other professors learn to work as you do!

Dr. Seldin is by far the most dynamic and captivating professor I have ever had. It is eminently clear that he loves teaching and is genuinely concerned with each and every one of his students. My only regret is that I will not be able to take another class taught by Dr. Seldin and that there aren't more professors like him.

Honors Related to Teaching During Review Period (see Appendix F)

Faculty Grant for Teaching, Council on Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Technology, Center for Teaching, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1998-1999.

Proposal to develop a new course for non-majors on contemporary educational issues.

College Outstanding Teacher Award, School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997-1998.

TEACHnology Fellowship, Center for Teaching, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997-1998.

Ten senior faculty (one from each school and college) were awarded fellowships to study technology in classroom teaching.

1994 Leadership Award, The David & Dovetta Wilson Scholarship Fund, New York City, May 21, 1994.

For contributions and leadership in the academic development of America's youth.

Mortar Board Award for Outstanding Teaching, University of Massachusetts Amherst, spring 1993.

For outstanding teaching at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Point of Excellence Award, Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education, Bloomington, Indiana, 1992.

For distinguished contributions to the field of education.

Major Award Prior to Review Period

Distinguished Teaching Award, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1984-1985.

Teaching Improvement Activities

As documented in my Teaching Philosophy Statement, *all teachers must seek continuous renewal and growth*. I work diligently to improve my knowledge base and instructional methodologies. The following briefly identifies my efforts:

- Portfolio Development, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, May 1999.

As a member of a six-person team, we trained 45 Emory faculty in portfolio development in a five-day workshop.

- Faculty Grant for Teaching, Council on Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Technology, Center for Teaching, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1998-1999.

Proposal to develop a new course for non-majors on contemporary educational issues.

- TEACHnology Fellowship, Center for Teaching, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997-1998.

Ten senior faculty (one from each school and college) were awarded fellowships to study technology in classroom teaching.

- Presented workshop, *Course Design, the Syllabus, and the First Day of Class*, at the University's Teaching Assistant Orientation, every August since 1989. Invitation from the Center for Teaching.
- Request mid-semester student assessments of my courses. These anonymous evaluations help determine course strengths and address student concerns.
- Search for materials and strategies to enhance my courses. Significant course changes occur every semester. This maintains currency of material presented and

interest among students.

Conclusion

I often reflect on how fortunate I am to have found a profession that provides a multitude of personal and professional rewards. I feel elated when I receive letters from former students who express genuine appreciation for my teaching, advising, and general support as they take aim at distant goals. I derive great pleasure from the challenge of designing a new component to a course and witnessing the nods and expressions of understanding on the faces of my students.

On the first day of every class, I tell my students, “You are my priority.” They are. My responsibility as teacher is profound. I strive to improve content and delivery and to teach at my highest level every day. John F. Kennedy said, “The exemplary teacher instructs in realities and suggests dreams.” That is my mission.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Course Syllabi
- Appendix B: Supplementary Course Materials
- Appendix C: Pre-Practicum Booklet
- Appendix D: Student Evaluations
- Appendix E: Student Evaluation Narratives
- Appendix F: Honors Relating to Teaching

Appendix C: Excerpts from a Teaching Portfolio

The following excerpts are from a teaching portfolio developed by an experienced teaching associate for her own reflective purposes and also as part of her preliminary preparation to enter the job market. (Used with permission from Vanessa Blais, former Teaching Associate, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, UMass Amherst.)

Teaching Philosophy

I love to teach and help my students learn. I believe in their infinite potential to learn and grow as individuals. My students are my top priority. I try to convey this to them in my methods of teaching and the time I devote to teaching.

I have high expectations of my students. They hear and speak German almost exclusively during each class and have written homework every night except before a test. I don't expect perfection, but I do insist on hard work and their best effort. When I know that students are putting their best effort into the class, I go out of my way to give them all the extra help and time that I can. I help students struggling with the language, as well as more gifted students who take it upon themselves to do extra work. There is always extra time for students who just want to ask questions about Germany. I am glad to satisfy their curiosity and genuinely like to be with my students. For me, the ultimate success comes not at the end of the semester when I count A's, but when a student asks me about becoming a German major or minor, or someone asks for a recommendation to study abroad. It is then that I know I have turned them on to learning.

I adhere to a proficiency orientation to foreign language teaching and believe firmly that all foreign language skills must be taught *and* practiced. I want my students to be active learners. Students spend time at home learning and practicing structures so that they can productively use the language in class. German is a living language and should be spoken by the students as much as possible. Role-plays and small-group work allow students to interact with each other, not just me. I use props and realia whenever possible to make topics come alive. Culture is integrated into the classroom so that the language has a context and isn't learned as an isolated set of rules.

Teaching is not static. Each class is different, as is each individual student. Although I have taught German 120 four times, I have written new lesson plans each time. I do not believe in reinventing the wheel each time. I certainly do reuse materials created in past classes — but class dynamics require different approaches to meet the needs of students. I also create many worksheets personalized for each class. Reading discipline-specific journals and visiting the classes of other foreign language instructors continually give me new ideas that I am eager to try out in my own classes. Just as I expect my students to be well-prepared, they can expect the same of me. Class begins and ends promptly, and homework and tests are always returned on the next day.

Most importantly, I care about my students as people. On the first day of class I ask my students to tell me about their hobbies and interests so that I may incorporate as much of this information into classroom activities as possible. I encourage them to talk about

themselves, and I share my daily life with them as well. Through enthusiasm, caring, and dedication, I create a positive learning environment for my students.

Summary of Teaching Experience — University of Massachusetts Amherst

Spring 1999: German 190G. From the Grimms to Disney. Grader. 190 students

Fall 1998: German 390A. Witches: Myth and Historical Reality. Grader.
210 students

Summer 1997: German 110. Elementary German. Instructor. 8 students

Spring 1996: German 390A. Witches: Myth and Historical Reality. Grader.
210 students

Spring 1995: German 120. Elementary German 2. Instructor. 13 students

Fall 1994: German 110. Elementary German 1. Instructor. 16 students

Summer 1993: German 120. Instructor. 10 students

Spring 1993: German 240. Intermediate German 2. Instructor. 22 students

Fall 1992: German 230. Intermediate German 1. Instructor. 24 students

Fall 1992: German 190A. Witches: Myth and Reality. Discussion leader.
42 students

Summer 1992: German 120. Instructor. 6 students

Spring 1992: German 120. Instructor. 29 students

Fall 1991: German 110. Instructor. 31 students

Other Teaching Experience

Spring 1991: German. Grades 9-12. Student teacher. Ithaca High School, Ithaca, NY

Fall 1990–Spring 1991: Elementary German 1 & 2. TA. Wells College

Teaching-related Experience — University of Massachusetts Amherst

August 1999–present: Assistant for a Hewlett Foundation grant to examine and redesign how large general education courses are taught at UMass.

1995–1998: I worked at the Center for Teaching, a professional development center for faculty and TAs at UMass Amherst. My primary project was an assessment project for new tenure-track faculty, which required good observation

and interpersonal skills. Faculty invited me to a class to gather information from students about their learning experience in that class. I then processed the information and reported it back to the faculty member. Together, we discussed strategies for implementing changes in the class to enhance student learning.

Spring 1998: Guest lecturer. Graduate course. School of Public Health.

Topic: Construction and use of teaching portfolios.

Fall 1996: Guest lecturer. Graduate course. Higher Education Administration department. Topic: Common forms of assessment used by faculty.

Teaching and Research

Foreign language pedagogy is my primary interest within German Studies. For me, research and teaching naturally complement each other. To fill the gaps that I feel exist in the instructional materials currently available, I regularly create worksheets to supplement

my students' materials. One of my PhD exams was actually a joint project with another PhD candidate in which we developed a unit for teaching two-way prepositions. The unit included the production of videos for use in the classroom, as well as worksheets and other handouts to be used by instructors to make the optimum use of class time in a proficiency-oriented classroom. . . .

Evaluations

Self-evaluation has been a part of the teaching process since I've been a graduate student. In my first semester as a TA I found that when a class went well, I went away with a positive feeling, but rarely thought about *why* it had been a successful class. Likewise, I often dwelled on a less-than-satisfying class for several days. Learning to step back and reflect on teaching helped me better understand the practices that lead to successful teaching. It also allowed me to rethink a lesson I was unhappy with and apply that knowledge to future classes.

Peer observation provides an opportunity to see your teaching through someone else's eyes. It provides feedback on overall organization and the effectiveness of individual activities.

The following self-evaluation and peer observation were selected to illustrate my overall effectiveness as an instructor with special emphasis on my proficiency-oriented approach to teaching. [*CFT note: This material is not included here.*]

Materials

I have chosen the following materials because they are representative of the kinds of materials I develop for my classes. [*CFT note: This material is not included here.*] Several examples of student work with my feedback are included to show the kinds of assignments I give to encourage exploration of the language. My feedback in the journal entries is not meant to be corrective, but serves as a way of having a dialogue with the students. I share my thoughts on what they have written and try to create a sphere in which the students feel free to create with the language. The essay shows my feedback over a series of drafts as I help the student correct and expand his composition.

Activities to Improve Instruction

Workshops attended:

- Expanding Our Teaching Resources Using the World Wide Web: A Faculty Member's Perspective, UMass Amherst, 1996
- New Faculty as Writers, Center for Teaching, March 1996
- Designing an Effective Syllabus, Center for Teaching. Sept. 1995
- Grammar in German as a Foreign Language, Goethe-Institut Boston. Dec. 1994
- TA orientations, campus-wide and departmental, 1994, 1992, 1991

Materials developed:

- Unit for teaching two-way prepositions (videos, worksheets, test)

Dissertation:

- I am currently writing my dissertation, an analysis of textbooks for learning beginning German-as-a-foreign-language from a proficiency-oriented perspective.

Appendix D: Sample Summary of Teaching Experience

A table is one way to make data on teaching experience easily accessible to readers. The following summary is part of a portfolio developed for tenure review. (Used with permission from Francis Juanes, Associate Professor, Department of Natural Resources Conservation, UMass Amherst.)

Classes Taught

Semester	Course name	Course number	Number of credits	Number of students
Fall 1993	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	44
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	37
Spring 1994	Wildl & Envir	W&FCon 250	3	311
Fall 1994	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	71
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	62
	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 565H02	1	9
Spring 1995	Wildl & Envir	W&FBio 250	3	310
	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 250 H02	1	24
Fall 1995	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	84
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	74
	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 565 H02	1	9
Spring 1996	Wildl & Envir	W&FCon 250	3	372
	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 250 H02	1	14
	Marine Fisheries	W&FCon 571	3	25
Fall 1996	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	65
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	57
	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 565H02	1	17
Spring 1997	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 250 H02	1	16
	Trophic Dynamics	W&FCon 697B	3	9
Fall 1997	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	60
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	46
Spring 1998	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 565 H02	1	4
Fall 1998	Honors Colloquium	W&FCon 250 H02	1	16
	Pop Dyn & Mgmt	W&FCon 565	3	45
	Pop & Hab Assess	W&FCon 597A	1	37

continued

Guest Lectures

- “Collapse of Marine Fisheries,” OEB graduate lunch discussion leader, March 1997
- “Sustainability and Natural Resources,” WFCOn 691R, Research Design, Feb. 1997
- “Prey Diversity and Predation,” OEB graduate lunch discussion leader, Oct. 1996
- “Using Dynamic Programming,” WFCOn 777, Advanced Systems Ecology, Nov. 1996
- “Individual-based Models in Oceanography,” WFCOn 577, Ecosys. model, Dec. 1995
- “Research in Marine Sciences,” UMass Wildlife Society, Sept. 1993

Guest Seminars

“The Conservation of Marine Ecosystems,” given as part of a series which combines a public lecture and a graduate course (Conservation 500) sponsored by the HR MacMillan Family fund in the Applied Conservation Biology Program at the University of British Columbia, November 1995

Student Supervision

(CFT note: excerpted to include only undergraduate student supervision)

Independent Studies

- Todd Numan, WFBio 596, Estimating carnivore population densities, 1994
- Ron Heun, WFCOn 396, The effect of enclosures on invertebrate drift, 1995
- Kristin McCarthy, WFCOn 596, Influence of simulated hurricanes on mammals, 1996
- Karin Fisher, WFCOn 498Y, Summer internship, 1996
- Dick Yetter, WFCOn 596, Reconstructing prey sizes from remains, 1996
- Blair Wagar, WFCOn 596, Ecology of largemouth bass in Mass. ponds, 1996
- Ron Heun, WFCOn 596, Diets of juvenile alosids, 1996
- Luke Iwanowicz, WFCOn 596, Aquaculture of hybrid striped bass, 1997
- Valerie Carter, WFCOn 498Y, National Aquarium Internship, 1997
- Dave Chaple, WFCOn 396, Predator-prey interactions in piscivores, 1998

Honors Independent Studies

- Ethan Nedeau, HIS 496, Cunner fecundity estimates in Massachusetts Bay, 1995
- Mike Marchand, HIS 396, Analysis of bass populations in the Quabbin reservoir, 1995
- Ilana Greenberg, HIS 396, Effect of fishery closure on sea scallops, 1997

Honors Thesis Committee

- Susan Murray, WFCOn 499Y/T, Eutrophication effects on insectiv. bat foraging, 1995
- DeAva Lambert, WFCOn 499Y/T, Effects of salinity on respiration in Atl. sturgeon, 1998

Honors Thesis Committee Chair

- Mike Marchand, WFCOn 499Y/T, Conservation of turtles, 1998
- Valerie Carter, WFCOn 499Y/T, Analysis of Atlantic salmon returns, 1998

Appendix E: Sample Teaching Philosophy Statement

The following teaching philosophy statement was part of a portfolio submitted to the committee who evaluated candidates for an annual U.S. Professor of the Year Award. (Used with permission from Mzamo P. Mangaliso, Associate Professor, Department of Management, UMass Amherst.)

My teaching philosophy has been strongly influenced by my early experiences growing up as a black child in South Africa. But in spite of the apartheid system, I was able to persevere and eventually succeed. I obtained a B.Sc. in Physics & Chemistry, and subsequently a University Education Diploma (U.E.D.) in South Africa. Later I obtained my graduate degrees in Business Administration in the United States. I credit my success to a combination of hard work, parental support, and a bit of luck. But the people who inspired me most were the teachers who saw some talent in me and encouraged me to excellence.

Perhaps the most important lesson I took from my growing up in South Africa is that people should not be treated as vessels into which knowledge is simply poured. Rather, they should be helped to understand the world from their own phenomenological vantage points. This philosophy, well articulated by writers such as Paolo Freire, helped me in framing my own paradigm of teaching — the paradigm of empowerment. I believe that we are all engaged in the life-long process of learning, a process of sharing perspectives, ideals and experiences, and of giving and receiving counsel. In the didactic triangular encounter of teacher–student–subject matter, the main role of the teacher is to guide students, while allowing them to discover the “truths” for themselves. I furthermore believe that to be effective, teaching must be fun to the students, and that the best pedagogic encounter is one where everyone leaves with more questions than answers.

How well has my teaching been received over the years? The students have nominated me for the University’s Distinguished Teacher Award on a number of occasions, including last year and 1989, when I was a finalist. I have also received other teaching recognitions, including being a Lilly Teaching Fellow in 1993–94, and being a Lilly Teaching Fellow Mentor in 1996–97. And this year, in selecting me for the School of Management’s Outstanding College Teacher Award, the Management Department Personnel Committee noted:

Overall, this was an excellent year for Professor Mangaliso, with results that were outstanding in teaching . . . No one taught more this past year, nor received better student ratings, than Professor Mangaliso. . . . [S]tudent reactions were exceptionally high no matter what the course (required or elective), or what the level (undergraduate, masters’, or PhD).

I am dedicated to continuing to explore innovative ways of enriching the teaching of our students both in terms of pedagogy and content. In the Fall semester of 1998, I taught an innovative seminar that prepared students for effective case analysis and presentation. From the class I selected a team to represent the University of

Massachusetts at the International MBA Case Competition held at Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada, in January 1999. While our team did not win, the students had great fun competing against 34 other universities from around the world. During the spring semester of 1999, I was also involved with professors from Framingham State, Middlesex Community, and Westfield State Colleges in teaching an innovative collaborative distance learning honors course which linked the students at our respective colleges using the latest multimedia technology. The course looks at the challenges and opportunities facing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and addresses vital issues, including globalization, changing industries, technology, human resources, and the role of government.

I feel honored to have been nominated for this esteemed award. I will continue to uphold the values of creating and sustaining an environment where high-quality teaching and learning can take place.

Appendix F: Sample Teaching Philosophy Statement

The following teaching philosophy statement was part of a portfolio that was used in a review for tenure and promotion. (Used with permission from Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology; formerly Associate Professor, Department of Consumer Studies; member, Executive Board, Center for the Family, UMass Amherst.)

The subject of “the family” in the classroom is one loaded with assumptions, misconceptions, values, and judgments. A goal in all my classes is to continually challenge students to question the assumptions and preconceptions they bring to the study of the family. With this as a primary aim, I see the teacher’s role as one that should be stimulating, challenging, supportive, and interactive.

Most students have some personal or professional motivation for taking a class on families. It is important to understand students’ motivations because the extent to which I can capitalize on them makes for a more stimulating and successful class. For example, if a student is taking a class to better prepare herself for a career in family therapy, it is important to find linkages between the theoretical and substantive issues we discuss and therapeutic settings.

It is vitally important that students be given the right tools, such as a variety of theoretical perspectives to use in evaluating family issues. At the University of Illinois and the University of Massachusetts Amherst I taught a required family theory course at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Teaching family theory presents me with great challenges in the classroom. Introducing theory into class discussion or lecture often intimidates students. In many cases even the brightest individuals turn into automatons simply scribbling down definitions for the exam. One fairly successful approach I have found for introducing theory is to ask students to examine their own personal “theories” about marriage and the family. For instance, I pose the question: What is a “good” marriage? What makes for a good marriage (the theory)? We then address the question of what specific factors will influence marital satisfaction (the hypothesis). What would be the best way to test the hypothesis (methodology)? Once students have begun to identify their own assumptions and beliefs, they can more easily let go of them, at least temporarily, when introduced to alternative perspectives.

While I think the classroom should be a challenging environment, it must also offer a safe and supportive context for discussion and disagreement about value-laden issues such as cohabitation, divorce, single parents, and gay and lesbian families. I have covered these issues in a class I developed at UMass entitled “Child, Family and Community” (CS 297A). Especially in a large class, it is vital to step out of the lecture format as often as possible and allow students to think on their own. For one class assignment, students are asked to go out and interview a married couple at a specific point in the life cycle (e.g., new parents, empty nest). The class is then divided up into groups based on the life-cycle stage of the couple they interviewed, and each group

discusses the ways in which marriages at a particular stage in the life cycle are similar and different. In addition, students are instructed to compare their findings with the empirical research on the topic. Finally, as a group they must summarize their findings and present them to the class. This assignment requires students to interact and learn from one another. At the same time a supportive group is formed that works together towards a common goal.

Finally, I strive to help my students understand there is no right or wrong answer, method, or theory when it comes to understanding families. My aim is to have no student walk out of one of my classes saying “such-and-such is good for marriages.” I continually stress the importance of contextual issues in understanding family life. Factors as broad as an economic recession or the civil rights movement, and aspects such as social class, ethnicity, and race all influence marriage and family relationships. Similarly, we address the issue of how more microlevel processes within families such as communication patterns and the division of labor may have distinctive consequences for different types of families. I recently redesigned the introductory family course in Consumer Studies, Introduction to Marriage, Family, and Intimate Relationships (CS 176), in order to acquire general education status to fulfill the Social and Behavioral (SB) requirement. The course recently received SB approval, and I see this as an exciting step towards providing our undergraduate students greater exposure to the topic of the family from an interdisciplinary perspective.

I am very proud of the steps I have taken to formalize undergraduate experiences in research. Working with my graduate students, I have developed an independent study opportunity on the Work and Family Transitions Project where students become active researchers. Graduate students, undergraduates, and I meet once a week as a group for training, discussion, and to review the goals of the project. In addition, students gain experience interviewing family members, recruiting families to participate in the project, checking and coding data, entering data, and participating in the development of articles. This experience has truly been a win-win situation for all involved. I get much needed help on a large project and have the opportunity to meet motivated and bright students in a more informal atmosphere. Students have a “hands-on” opportunity to participate in research and interact with a group of people all working towards a common goal.

My teaching has been recognized in a number of ways. At the University of Illinois, I was included in the “List of Professors showing Excellence in Teaching” for three years. This list was published annually by the university. I also received the Outstanding Instructor Award in the School of Human Resources and Family Studies given by the students in Human Development and Family Studies at a yearly banquet. As can be seen in both my end-of-semester student ratings and students’ mid-semester feedback collected with assistance from the Center for Teaching at the University of Massachusetts, teaching remains a priority for me and I have received strong ratings from both arenas.

I will continue to try to enhance my teaching and bring new and creative techniques to the classroom. I view teaching as a vital and enriching part of my job. It is my responsibility to engage students in discussion and lectures that challenge their thinking and inspire critical thought, and in so doing, I continue to challenge my own views and biases.

Appendix G: Sample Activities to Improve Teaching

The following excerpts from a portfolio developed for mini-tenure review illustrate several activities that were undertaken to improve teaching. (Used with permission from Ray Pfeiffer, Assistant Professor, Department of Accounting and Information Systems, UMass Amherst.)

I have taken several significant steps during my time at the University to improve my teaching. In my first year on the faculty, I participated in the Mid-Semester Assessment Program through the Center for Teaching (CFT). The CFT conducted focus groups of my students and provided me with detailed feedback on students' perceptions of how the class was going, as well as one-on-one consulting with a member of the CFT staff.

I have regularly attended workshops offered by the CFT to help expand my range of thinking about teaching and to integrate new ideas, teaching tools, and techniques. For example, I have participated in seminars on using technology in the classroom, teaching and learning in a diverse classroom, getting students to help each other learn, introducing active learning into the classroom, using writing as a teaching/learning tool, and helping students who perform poorly. Through my participation in these events, and sharing my ideas and my course materials with the CFT, I believe I have also contributed to the University-wide dialogue on teaching. Participation in these workshops has led me in each semester and course to make significant modifications to my syllabi and experiment with new assignments, new pedagogical approaches, and new tools to help enhance my students' learning.

During the 1997-1998 academic year, I was nominated and chosen to be a Lilly Fellow. The Lilly Program has four main components, all of which contributed substantially to my development as a teacher. First, I attended the Seminar on College Teaching taught by the CFT throughout the academic year, an in-depth look at a number of teaching and learning issues germane to teaching college students. Second, through the Lilly mentoring program, I met regularly with a senior colleague to discuss teaching. Third, the release time granted by the Lilly Program enabled me to make substantial changes to my Financial Reporting I course. Interaction with the CFT and the other Lilly Fellows provided a wealth of terrific ideas that I was able to implement in my course. Fourth, the CFT provided in-depth consultation in my course, including a videotaped classroom session and a mid-semester focus group assessment of my Financial Reporting I course.

To ensure that the content of my courses reflects current practice, I attended the Robert M. Trueblood Professors' Seminar hosted by Deloitte and Touche in February 1996. I have met on an ongoing basis with the Accounting Advisory Council and with representatives from the primary recruiters of our students to discuss changes in practice and in the skills required of our majors. Also, I read publications provided by the "Big Five" professional services firms and by the Financial Accounting Standards Board

regarding the latest developments in financial accounting practice and financial reporting regulation.

I continue to make changes to my courses every time I teach them, for I believe that we never really get it just right. As George Bernard Shaw once wrote: “I’m not a teacher, only a fellow traveler of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead • ahead of myself as well as you.” I think that captures well my attitude about teaching. For the rest of my career, I will be looking ahead, trying to be the best teacher I can possibly be.

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Teaching Portfolio Resources List

All of the following resources are available from the Center for Teaching at UMass Amherst.

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