How Important is Teaching? Results of Research on Academic Hiring





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Research Questions

- How important is teaching in decisions about academic hiring?
- What evidence of teaching effectiveness do hiring committees consider?
- How common is it for hiring committees to request teaching statements?
- What elements of a teaching philosophy are search committees interested in?
- What makes a statement of teaching philosophy successful/unsuccessful?

Research Design

• Collected academic job advertisements in six disciplines during AY 2004-2005

Discipline	Source	# of Postings Meeting Study Criteria
ENGLISH	Modern Language Association http://www.mla.org	719
HISTORY	H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online http://www.h-net.org/jobs	221
POLITICAL SCIENCE	American Political Science Association http://www.apsanet.org/ejobs	315
PSYCHOLOGY	American Psychological Association http://www.psyccareers.com	229
BIOLOGY	American Association for the Advancement of Science http://www.aaas.org	25 I
CHEMISTRY	Chemical and Engineering News http://www.cen-chemjobs.org	72

- Conducted a web survey of search committee contacts (June September 2005)
- * Contacts identified for a random sample of postings from each discipline
 - Random sample selected to provide a 5% confidence interval
- * Tenure-track or open rank positions in the United States
- * Excluding community colleges

Discipline	Random Sample	Surveys Sent	Response Rate
ENGLISH	248	217	64%
HISTORY	140	117	62%
POLITICAL SCIENCE	170	133	62%
PSYCHOLOGY	131	104	56%
BIOLOGY	147	120	57%
CHEMISTRY	72	64	56%
TOTAL	908	755	61%

How important is teaching in decisions about academic hiring? % of Respondents indicating their search committees ranked the following items as important or very important*: **Potential for Obtaining** Record/ **External Potential** as % of Respondents ranking teaching ability and research potential as important or very important*: Teaching Ability Research Potential 93.9% 91.8% Doctora **Extensive** * Respondents rated each item on a 6-point likert scale (6 = extremely important... I = extremely unimportant)

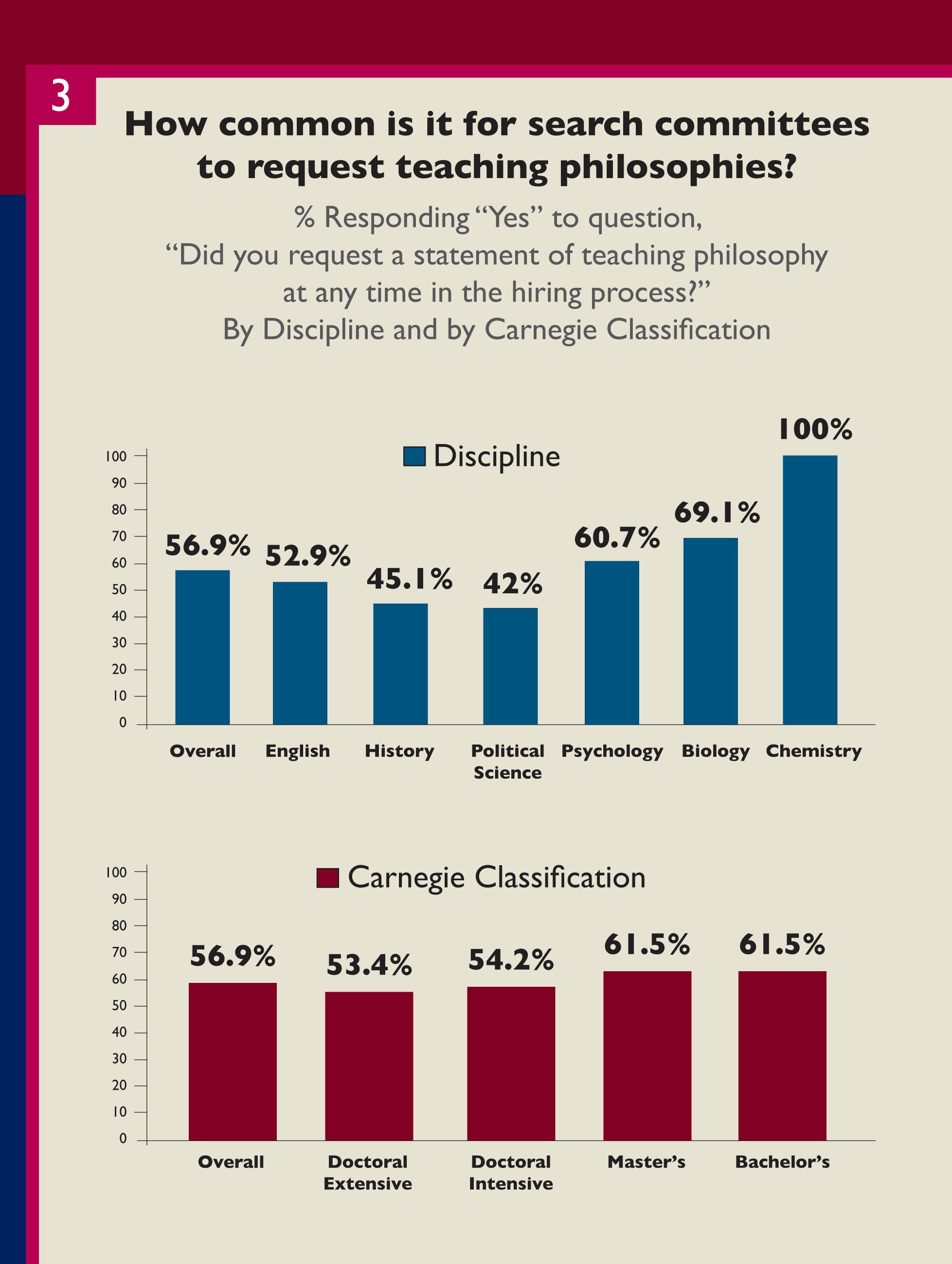
What evidence of teaching effectiveness do search committees consider?

% of Respondents indicating use of the following materials to evaluate teaching effectiveness

% "YEC"

Documents	% "YES"
Description of Teaching Interests	77.2
Course Syllabi	57.8
Teaching Philosophy*	56.9
Student Evaluations	54.3
Teaching Portfolio	26.0
Interactions	% "YES"
Interview questions about teaching	83.8
	83.8 78.1
Interview questions about teaching	

"Data for feaching Philosophy obtained from question,
"Did you request a statement of teaching philosophy at any time in the hiring process?".



What elements of a teaching philosophy are search committees interested in? % of Respondents stating they would be interested or very interested in the following elements*

Elements	Rating
Teaching Methods	85.3
Goals for Student Learn	ing 78.4
How Discipline Shapes	Feaching 64.2
Assessment of Student	Learning 61.4
Diversity and the Learn	ing Environment 61.3

* Respondents rated each item on a 6-point likert scale (6 = extremely interested... I = extremely uninterested)

These elements are

derived from: the

literature on teaching

statements, and review

of more than 300

statements written for

a PFF Seminar over

six years.

What makes a statement of teaching philosophy successful?

78% of survey respondents provided open-ended responses to this question. Responses were analyzed for common themes.

The five most common themes are reported below.

Category	Respondents	% of Total
Provides evidence of practice	110	31%
(Links theory and practice; Uses specific examples)		
Describes instructor as student/learning	65	18%
-centered (Focuses on student learning; Is attuned		
to student differences, e.g., learning styles, abilities, lev	vels)	
Describes instructor as reflective	53	15%
Conveys a value of teaching	50	14%
(Transmits a sense of enthusiasm about teaching;		
Articulates a vision of teaching)		
Is well-written, readable and clear	39	11%

Conclusions

- Teaching effectiveness is an important criterion for all faculty search committees. However, teaching is ranked higher in importance at Masters and Bachelors institutions
- A wide array of evidence is used to judge teaching effectiveness. Judgments are based on both submitted materials AND discussions of teaching during the interview process.
- A majority of search committees request a teaching statement at some point in the search. However this trend varies considerably by discipline.
- Search committees in the natural sciences were most likely to request a teaching statement.
- Search committees are ambivalent about the quality and hence the utility of teaching statements.
- Despite this ambivalence, these results show that search members have specific criteria for teaching statements, and are interested in documents that provide them a clear understanding of a candidate's teaching methods and goals for student learning.
- Preparing Future Faculty programs, teaching centers, and faculty who mentor graduate students should incorporate these findings into the information that job candidates receive about successful strategies for the academic job market.

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