Philosophy Statement

An important aspect of an ePortfolio is that it enables you to discuss soft skills and ethics. One way to do this is to include your philosophy statement. This can be a personal philosophy statement that guides your everyday life or a professional philosophy statement that showcases your ethical views regarding your field of work. What kind of teacher, manager, engineer, or nurse do you strive to be?

Depending on your audience and the overall purpose of the site, one style of philosophy statement may work better than the other. For example, there are some fields such as education, nursing, other healthcare professions, and business management professions that look favorably upon, if not require, a philosophy or mission statement. How do you draft the best possible philosophy statement for your purpose?

Personal Philosophy

A personal philosophy is a statement that introduces you—your core beliefs and values. It is different from the "About Me" statement in that it does not specifically describe life experiences and biographical data. A good way of developing your personal philosophy might be to free write and map out things that are important to you.

- Think about people who have impressed you—and why?

- Think about events that impacted you—and why?

- What were the driving forces behind decisions you made or did not make—and why?

Once you have this self-reflection map, develop some clear criteria that guide your philosophy and write about it. As in any piece of good writing, you should have a strong thesis and clear paragraph structure that maps out the criteria. Finally, find a friend or family member that knows you well and have them review your piece. See what they think; do they see these qualities the same way you do? Do they have some additional points to make that you may not have seen in yourself?

As you are developing your personal philosophy, think about the types of artifacts you can include to provide evidence. For example, if one of your beliefs is giving back to others and the community, do you have pictures of working at a food bank? Or helping at a local blood drive? Together the statement and artifacts will provide a more powerful message.

Figure 4: Personal Philosophy Video (Source: "Personal Philosophy." *YouTube*, uploaded by Lori Rogers and Judy Tarbox, 14 September 2022, https://youtu.be/1AHHlOvtmFg)

Professional Philosophy

> - Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.
>
> - Perform services only in areas of competence.
>
> - Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.

These three statements come directly from the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) Code of Ethics (National Society of Professional Engineers). There are other statements listed in the NSPE code, just as there are similar codes of ethics tied to most professions and accessible via professional associations, usually on the web.

These codes of ethics, codes of conduct, or mission statements can assist you in developing your own professional philosophy statement. They give you important guidance in critical thinking and ethics that indicate your distinct values in your profession as well as the language that is used and recognized.

Once you have identified the normative and applied ethics that inform your field, you can usually identify clear issues of concern that are driving the conversation and research as well. Then, you can determine how these are shaping your beliefs and best practices as you perform your job.

For example, one of the statements found in the Ethical Principles statements for Technical Communications Professionals deals with honesty. It states: "We also dedicate ourselves to conciseness, clarity, coherence, and creativity, striving to meet the needs of those who use our products and services" (Society of Technical Communication). To those technical communicators who work extensively with web text of various kinds, this indicates a need to create texts that are readable, usable, and accessible to all audiences. This can be an important area to address in your own professional code of ethics: what you strive for in service to your audiences.

Finally, as in other sections of your portfolio, think of specific artifacts that could be used to demonstrate and provide clear examples of what you are trying to portray.

Figure 5: Professional Philosophy Video (Source: "Professional Philosophy." *YouTube*, uploaded by Lori Rogers and Judy Tarbox, 14 September 2022, https://youtu.be/XurAprjzqII)

Your Task: Write Your Philosophy Statement

Write a 500-word philosophy statement about your identity and perspective from either a personal or professional angle. Remember, it serves as an introduction to you, focusing more on your beliefs and values than on life experiences and biographical data.