All Things Assessment at KU is edited by Dr. Gil Clary, and members of the Advisory Board are Dr. David Beougher, Dr. Mahfuzul Khondaker, Dr. Michelle Kiec, Dr. John McCarthy, Professor Krista Prock, and Dr. Carole Wells. Suggestions for articles, announcements, and feedback of any sort are welcomed and appreciated.

Electronic Portfolios
Gil Clary, Office of Assessment

Several articles in this issue of the KU Assessment Newsletter discuss Electronic Portfolios. Like paper portfolios, electronic or digital portfolios can store students’ written work but have the advantage of also being able to contain multimedia projects, including power point presentations, video recordings, and hyperlinks to websites. E-portfolios and paper portfolios can be useful tools for program assessment as they provide an opportunity for faculty to base assessments of the impact of the program on a wider variety of student work, as well as basing them on the collection of work as a collection. Moreover, portfolios allow faculty and students to see student growth on the key learning goals of the program.

The remainder of this article will discuss some of the particulars of organizing E-portfolios for assessments, as well as some of the benefits and challenges of implementing this process. The article by Dr. Moe Folk (English) will describe his use of E-portfolios – note that his use of digital portfolios covers several purposes, and his primary focus is educational and not assessment. In addition, this issue’s update from the College of Education discusses COE’s use of E-portfolios for helping teacher candidates to collect and manage work products for the purposes of program assessments as required for NCATE accreditation and for use by students as they submit applications for employment. Finally, Kerri Gardi’s article considers the role of E-portfolios in students’ search for employment.

From the standpoint of assessment, an E-portfolio may provide the best means for determining whether the students in a program are achieving the desired learning goals, and establishing the program’s “value-added.” E-portfolios provide the opportunity to collect and store a diversity of student work, which will then allow program faculty to consider a student’s overall level of performance or ability on the collection of assignments. Furthermore, portfolios of any type often consist of student work that has been generated over several years, which allows faculty to examine students’ growth and development over
the course of their educational experiences with the program. Finally, portfolios, again of any type, are probably most effective when the collection is accompanied by the student’s reflection on his or her work, which requires that students integrate and synthesize the various educational experiences, and analyze their strengths and developmental needs as learners (Hanstedt, 2012).

As a tool for program assessment, a means of evaluating portfolios is needed and typically some sort of rubric is used. The particular rubric, however, is dependent on the goals of the program and those of the portfolio assignment: rubrics might be focused on program-specific student learning outcomes, students’ progress over the course of education, and/or so-called metacognitive skills as revealed by their reflections on their learning and development. Moreover, rubrics can be holistic as in situations where the portfolio as a whole is evaluated and rated from “excellent” to “good” to “needs improvement.” Lastly, rubrics can be “home-grown” by the program or existing rubrics can be used as is or adapted – a particularly good source for existing rubrics are those developed through the AAC&U VALUE project: http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=42169521&CFTOKEN=99959420.

Hopefully it is clear that E-portfolios can benefit both the academic program and the student. For both, portfolios allow for evaluations of the educational experience in total, of student growth and development, and of authentic work products. In addition, students may find the E-portfolio useful during applications for employment. At the same time, E-portfolios come with costs, beginning with the very real costs if a commercial E-portfolio software package is used; however, no cost systems do exist. Beyond that, E-portfolios do require additional time, and in the case of students, there is the time required to manage the collection and the need to attend to it over time. For faculty, there may be the need to monitor student adherence to the requirement, and then the evaluation of the E-portfolio is likely to be time-consuming since collections may be quite sizeable. This burden can be lightened for assessment, since program assessment does not require that every E-portfolio be evaluated, and in fact, sampling is expected and encouraged. That said, for purposes of the student’s educational experience, it seems that every E-portfolio should be evaluated so that students can receive feedback on their work and educational careers.

For academic programs that wish to consider an E-portfolio, there are several next steps to take. First, start small and perhaps even begin with a paper portfolio. Second, correspond and converse with people who are knowledgeable about portfolios, including those on-campus and those available in print (a list of resources available in the Office of Assessment are listed at the end of this article). Finally, seriously consider the questions Linda Suskie, in her Assessing student learning: A common sense guide, 2nd edition (2009), recommends as programs consider implementing an E-portfolio process:

- “What are the goals of the portfolio?
- Who are the portfolio’s audiences?
- How and when will students choose what to put in the portfolio?
- How will student and faculty reflection be ensured in the portfolio process?
- How will the portfolios be evaluated?
- Who will review and evaluate the portfolios? When?
- How will the portfolio compilation and evaluation process be kept manageable?
- Who “owns” the portfolio?
- What are the benefits of moving toward portfolio assessment?
- Are portfolios a feasible practice in your situation?” (p. 205)

Resources


I've used digital portfolios for a variety of courses and for a variety of reasons over my teaching career, but I'll focus here on their use in ENGLISH 380: Literature Senior Seminar. The ENG 380 portfolio serves as the equivalent of the comprehensive exam and was designed to provide a more meaningful learning experience (and a more comprehensive measure of student learning) than the written test students had taken before. The digital portfolio features three different assessments: 1) graded by me as part of the regular course assessment; 2) graded anonymously by other members of the department as the equivalent of the Literature comprehensive exam; and 3) and archived for use in programmatic assessment.

If the primary purpose of a digital portfolio is to give it to the instructor for part of a course grade or some kind of university-related assessment effort, students often are not engaged enough to produce their best work. When a student knows that their work has a purpose down the road and can be viewed by friends, family, and others online rather than just a professor or a few members of an assessment team, it provides a huge edge in engagement and also a tougher intellectual task in navigating multiple audiences. When a digital portfolio is live and portable, students tend to put more care into their construction and revision since they can be re-used and re-formulated for a long period of time.

With that in mind, the other pedagogical advice I think is important is to let students choose their own platforms. In other words, instead of dictating that a digital portfolio must be built in, say, Wordpress because that’s what the instructor knows, let students decide which platform they prefer because they are the authors who will (hopefully) be using them in the future. Each platform offers different benefits and drawbacks, and allowing students to negotiate these differences given their goals for the portfolio is a good learning experience. For example, going beyond how easy the interface is to navigate and what kind of content can be included, some portfolio systems allow for dynamic moving images, some allow for only static content, some offer rigid templates, some allow access to all aspects of the design, and so forth. For that reason, I show students a variety of portfolios done in different ways, and I allow them to choose any of these, or even another platform I didn’t go over or may not even be familiar with. Some instructors believe they need to have complete technical knowledge of a particular platform to let it be an option, but that’s not the case. When students are given choice, they are motivated and savvy enough to clear any hurdles the instructor may not have clear answers for. Although instructors might demonstrate a few methods in class and be clear about how well they can support student work in each one, allowing choice is important.
To that end, in ENG 380 I allow students to make portfolios with whatever method they choose, but I always show at least three free and easy-to-use alternatives for both PC and Mac: Google Sites, Wordpress, and Wix. All three allow for uploading a vast range of digital content. Google Sites http://www.sites.google.com is the easiest to open and use right away, but it has the most restricted design. Wordpress http://www.wordpress.com is robust in terms of design, but advanced features and design elements (such as accessing CSS) cost money; moreover, it is trickier to use at first because it retains blogging terms in the interface (e.g., what would be the opening page of the portfolio is called “Posts”). Wix http://www.wix.com offers the most dynamic content in terms of design, but the interface takes a bit of time to get used to. I have noticed that most of my students in ENG 380 prefer Wix because it matches professional designs they see in their heads. Students who are very wary of technology usually choose Google Sites.

Here’s a Wix portfolio from an ENG 380 student, Joe Cirio. He used his portfolio to satisfy the ENG 380 course requirements and as a supplement to his graduate school application. He was accepted into one of the top programs in the country, Florida State, in part, as he was told later, because of his portfolio: Joe Cirio (Sample Wix Portfolio): http://owleyes319.wix.com/portfolio.

These are just a few sample ideas and platforms. Other students have had success with Tumblr https://www.tumblr.com/, Weebly https://www.weebly.com, and Yola https://www.yola.com. Of course, students could craft their own digital portfolio from scratch by starting with something like Dreamweaver and then delivering content through their own domain name. Louisiana State has an excellent model for incorporating digital portfolios from Dreamweaver to finished product in their Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) project. Here are some examples and resources from their program: http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cxc/digital-portfolio-tips/.

What I’ve discussed here is just some basics for those new to the process. If you would like to see more examples of each, feel free to contact me at folk@kutztown.edu.

The KU Career Development Center on E-portfolios

Kerri Gardi, Career Development Center

E-portfolios provide an additional benefit to students in the job search process. In addition to the traditional resume, employers have an even more robust resource to assess evidence of student learning as well as skills and qualities. To support this effort, in 2009 the Commonwealth rolled out eFolioPA (www.efoliopa.com) to help students and job-seekers by providing free electronic portfolios. While the KU career center promoted the service to students and faculty, unfortunately this initiative did not take off state-wide as anticipated. As you likely know, marketing and awareness are always the greatest challenge, even with a strong product or service. In response, the staff in the career center began focusing on social media as better alternatives for career promotion.

Social media has grown phenomenally over the past few years and has successfully entered the professional arena. For example, in the latest study by Jobvite.com, over 86% of recruiters view social media profiles and 78% have rejected candidates based on online information. Staff has been actively educating students about the pros and cons of social media and more specifically been promoting LinkedIn, the forerunner social media site when it comes to professional networking. Recently, LinkedIn launched on-line portfolios to users. Videos, images, documents and presentations can all be shared through an individual’s profile to interested viewers, which is already proving to be a successful upgrade to the immensely successful LinkedIn site.
College Assessment Committee News

College of Business
Martha Geaney, Dean’s Office

The Department of Business Administration continues to close the loop through the assurance of learning process. As learning goals are assessed and the assessment data are analyzed, we make changes to improve the curriculum. One result of the department’s assurance of learning committee discussions is the decision to assemble a digital toolbox for Bachelor of Science in Business Administration students. The toolbox, which the AACSB mock peer review team called innovative, will provide refresher material in each of DBA’s discipline areas – accounting, finance, management, marketing, quantitative analysis, business law, economics, information systems, international – to all BSBA students. Faculty members are actively involved in contributing toolbox material on topics such as breakeven analysis, time value of money, torts, the elements of a contract, and money supply, to name a few. The materials are in various formats including video, power point, and web sites. The toolbox repository will reside in D2L.

College of Education
John McCarthy and Patricia Walsh-Coates, Dean’s Office; Secondary Education Department

In the College of Education, completing the professional portfolio serves as the capstone activity. The portfolio provides the teacher candidate with an opportunity to organize a selection of various artifacts in order to demonstrate the student’s skill in four (4) domains established by Charlotte Danielson in the Framework for Teaching model. The four domains include the following:

1. Curriculum
2. Educational Environment
3. Instruction
4. Professionalism.

These domains also serve as the basis for the Pennsylvania Department of Education assessment form for Professional Knowledge and Practice. The intention of these artifacts is to demonstrate teacher candidates’ ability to impact K-12 students’ learning, their ability to reflect on teaching and learning, and a commitment to lifelong learning. These artifacts can incorporate any required class projects or core assignments, as well as individual student projects or other evidence that addresses individual domains. Examples of artifacts are lesson plans, PRAXIS or PAPA scores, papers, and videos of teacher candidates’ class presentations have also been included. The professional portfolio of College of Education students is web-based to make storing and sharing content easier upon graduation.

Once assembled, students’ professional portfolios have two important uses. First, the portfolios serve as evidence of student learning, and COE faculty can use them to assess whether students are learning the desired knowledge, skills and dispositions expected of COE teacher candidates; these assessments can then be used for program improvement. Second, and equally important, students can use the artifacts in the portfolios to support their applications for employment.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
David Beougher, Dean’s Office

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has made significant efforts to reinforce bridges and interagency cooperation as we continue to assess retention. Recent collaborations include the College Assessment committee inviting the director of CASA as well as several athletic coaches to discuss their programs and processes and encourage nesting of the departments and college into the university program. Open communication remains essential to success and members of the assessment committee remain committed to finding ways to enhance student success while limiting redundancies where that makes sense. Members of the LAS Assessment committee have highlighted ‘one do-able thing’ within each department that facilitates and improves retention. The New Year will bring continued assessment of
activities and their relevance to the overall college and university retention programs.

**College of Visual & Performing Arts**

Kevin McCloskey, Communication Design Dept.

The Zine Project: Each student in Kevin McCloskey’s Illustration II class created a signature project, a limited edition “zine” or mini-comic. With a grant from the KU Office of Assessment they displayed their work at an exhibitor’s table at the 2013 MOCCAfest in NYC. This was Kutztown’s first time at the national event, which brought together professional illustrators, publishers, and art schools. Students took turns manning the Kutztown display and attending professional workshops. The assignment and experience related directly to the Department of Communication Design’s student learning goals in the area of professional practice. To assess students’ levels of performance, KU Art Education Professor Rick Salafia used a rubric to evaluate and compare KU student zines with projects from other illustration programs including Parsons The New School for Design and the School of Visual Arts. He found KU student work “comparable to the work of their peers.” Given the quality of the illustration programs at these other institutions our students are doing commendable work.

**GEAC Update: Goal 3 Assessment**

Krista Prock, Rohrbach Library

The General Education Assessment Committee is in the process of assessing Goal 3 of Kutztown University’s General Education program: “To inculcate a sense of personal and social responsibility that is anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real world challenges.” Goal 3 consists of four domains:

3.1. Local and global civic knowledge and engagement
3.2. Intercultural knowledge and competence
3.3. Ethical reasoning and action
3.4. Personal qualities and attitudes such as passion, curiosity, self-confidence, imagination, cooperation, commitment, and support for life-long learning.

A number of faculty members have volunteered to assess this goal. Faculty volunteers administer an assessment of an assignment or exam that they already use in one of their classes and compile the results on the domain-appropriate reporting template created by GEAC, according to the level of performance (templates can be found at: http://www.kutztown.edu/gened/home.html). Then all results for each domain are combined and analyzed by GEAC. If your course addresses a Goal 3 domain learning outcome and you are interested in volunteering, please contact GEAC at geac@kutztown.edu. Additional information about this year’s General Education assessments can be found by viewing the presentation prepared for our Goal 3 training sessions: Pilot Training for Goal 3 assessment.