Leaning into the Counter-Intuitive: Seizing ePortfolio Initiatives as a Means to Forward Liberal Arts Outcomes

A Discussion

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Session Agenda

• Introductions- UNCG, VT, Radford
• Brief Background
• Discussion
Session Goals

To share information and to facilitate:

• A discussion about the challenges and opportunities to move a broad “transformative” movement such as an ePortfolio initiative from a pilot to a permanent program
• Ways accreditation and other types of “mandated” activities can be leveraged to further liberal education outcomes
• To share two stories, one from UNCG and another from Radford University
Why We Proposed this Session

“To avoid a constant crisis mode, we’d do well to be as intentional as we can in our political engagement, asking what we want to accomplish at any given point. That doesn’t mean getting caught in some impossible perfect standard, but rather thinking through our opportunities, challenges, and approaches, whatever the situation.” (Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, 2010, p. 290)
Introductions - Your Turn!

Why did you sign up for this session?

What are some of your expectations?
UNCG/NCA&T Pilot Rollout of e-Portfolios (PREP) Project

Brenta Blevins
UNCG/NCA&T ePortfolio Background

- The UNCGA General Education Council (GEC), the UNC system governing body, as part of its charge to identify strategies for assessing general education outcomes among the UNC system campuses, initiated an e-portfolio pilot project in October, 2013.
- UNCGA GEC sought to support a high-quality approach to assessment of the general education core competencies related to (1) critical thinking and (2) written communication.

- Pilots Projects:
  1. UNC Chapel Hill
  2. UNC Charlotte
  3. UNC Greensboro and North Carolina A&T
  4. UNC Wilmington
UNCG/NCA&T Pilot Rollout of e-Portfolios (PREP) Project

- Faculty, staff, and students from both UNCG and NCA&T, in a physical classroom-based and online courses.
- 8 faculty (PI was only TT faculty) and 2 staff members
- 296 students in 13 course sections (8 classroom, 5 online) across five academic disciplines at two universities ranging from first-year experience to senior capstones
- Participants created a modified version of the AAC&U VALUE rubrics for evaluation
- Seven different e-portfolio platforms piloted: Google Sites, WordPress, Taskstream, Digication, Acclaim, Blackboard, and Canvas.
**PREP**

- Freshman Foundations for Learning
- Communication Studies
- First Year English
- Senior Seminar in Social Sciences
- Senior Seminar in Humanities/Bachelor of of Arts in Liberal Studies

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**Table 1.A.1. Final Cohort of Participating Instructors and Courses**

Note: Shaded row indicates course taught at NCA&T

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Number of Section(s)</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Course Format (Online or Classroom)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FFL 100: Foundations for Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFL 100: Foundations for Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CST 342: PR: Strategies &amp; Innovations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CST 305: Persuasion in Western Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 100: Ideas and Their Expressions I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CST 105: Introduction to Communication Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC 400: Senior Seminar in Social Sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLS 400: Senior Seminar in Humanities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 101: College Writing 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CST 105: Introduction to Communication Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

13 sections (296 students)

8 classroom sections (191 students)
5 online sections (105 students)
Rubrics

Because UNCGA GEC sought to support a high-quality approach to assessment of the general education core competencies related to (1) critical thinking and (2) written communication, UNCG and NCA&T implemented AAC&U VALUE rubrics corresponding to those areas. As those overlapped in some areas, the pilot team combined the two rubrics. Prior to assessment, the AAC&U VALUE rubrics provided helpful language for articulating learning expectations to students.
1. How do we best implement portfolio rubric training? Study found significant rubric application training investment (initially and over time)

2. Do rubrics reflect process- or product-oriented portfolios?

3. Do rubrics work better for individual elements or for the portfolio as a whole? How does that get addressed? balanced in rubric training? If portfolios are implemented on individual class bases rather than the student’s cumulative educational experiences, what should be done when the rubric does not align with the individual course?
Table 1.C.1. Modified VALUE Assessment Rubric Field Tests: Cumulative Subcompetency Scores

Note: Scale = 0-4 using criteria from assessment rubric in Appendix A.

Key: Mean/Median (standard deviation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample &amp; Platform</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Combined Critical Thinking &amp; Written Communication</th>
<th>Written Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation of issues</td>
<td>Influence of context &amp; assumptions</td>
<td>Conclusions &amp; related outcomes (implications, consequences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Taskstream)</td>
<td>3.09/3 (.54)</td>
<td>2.36/2 (.67)</td>
<td>2.55/3 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Digication)</td>
<td>2.1/2 (.88)</td>
<td>2.3/2 (.82)</td>
<td>1.6/2 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (WordPress)</td>
<td>3.4/3 (.70)</td>
<td>2.7/3 (.67)</td>
<td>2.9/3 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>3.63/3 (.70)</td>
<td>3.25/4 (.67)</td>
<td>3.5/4 (.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>2.44/3 (.73)</td>
<td>2.44/2 (.53)</td>
<td>2.22/2 (.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>2.5/3 (.76)</td>
<td>2/2 (.93)</td>
<td>2.13/2 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (WordPress)</td>
<td>3.14/3 (.38)</td>
<td>2.29/3 (.95)</td>
<td>2.57/2 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (WordPress)</td>
<td>2.43/3 (.79)</td>
<td>2.43/3 (.79)</td>
<td>2.71/3 (.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (WordPress)</td>
<td>1.71/2 (1.1)</td>
<td>1.43/2 (.79)</td>
<td>1.43/2 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>2.29/2 (1.1)</td>
<td>2/2 (1)</td>
<td>2.14/2 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>2.71/3 (.76)</td>
<td>2.29/2 (1.1)</td>
<td>2.29/2 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>2.43/3 (.79)</td>
<td>2.43/3 (.79)</td>
<td>2.43/3 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>3.17/3 (.75)</td>
<td>2.67/3 (1.03)</td>
<td>3/3 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>3.5/4 (.84)</td>
<td>3/3.5 (1.26)</td>
<td>3.3/3.5 (.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (Google Sites)</td>
<td>3.17/3.5 (.75)</td>
<td>3/3.5 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.83/3 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean of Standard Deviations</td>
<td>(0.698)</td>
<td>(0.884)</td>
<td>(0.826)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.A.1. Student Evaluations of e-Portfolio Educational Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature of Evaluation</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved my competency in written communication</td>
<td>1.61%</td>
<td>5.38%</td>
<td>27.42%</td>
<td>38.71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed me to evaluate and reflect on my learning processes</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>26.68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed me to keep track of learning experiences and be able to reflect on any weak area</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>22.34%</td>
<td>28.72%</td>
<td>43.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me become a more effective and independent learner</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>5.85%</td>
<td>24.47%</td>
<td>26.06%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me organize my work to prepare for future employment</td>
<td>3.76%</td>
<td>7.53%</td>
<td>22.04%</td>
<td>25.81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved my competency as a critical thinker</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
<td>26.34%</td>
<td>36.56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me monitor my progress toward achieving my personal, academic, or professional goals</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
<td>5.79%</td>
<td>20.53%</td>
<td>30.53%</td>
<td>40.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me use feedback from my instructor to improve my work</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>5.35%</td>
<td>20.86%</td>
<td>31.55%</td>
<td>39.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructor Comfort:
70% rating their usability as somewhat to very easy
60% of instructors had little or no prior e-portfolio experience
86% of online students had little or no prior e-portfolio experience; 93% of face-to-face students had little or none; Overall, 92% of student participants had little or no experience with e-portfolios prior to this project; 93% of first-year students had little to no e-portfolio experience; 89% of seniors still had little or no involvement with e-portfolios.
More seniors (69%) judged their e-portfolios as suitable or highly suitable for presentation (with some revision) to a prospective employer.

38% of first-year students agreed that their e-portfolio would be suitable or highly suitable.

46% of seniors believed that it was likely or highly likely that they actually would use an e-portfolio.
28% of first-year students thought they would
Works Cited


Radford University
Leveraging Accreditation for
Civic Engagement
and ePortfolio Adoption
Radford University

Public, mid-size, rural comprehensive

Founded in 1910: State Normal and Industrial School for Women; in 1972 became officially co-educational

Enrollment totals for Fall 2016: 9,401

- 56.8% Female
- 30% Identify as Non-White (up from 11.5% in 2006)
- 38% First Generation (historic high)
Scholar-Citizen QEP Timeline

Implementation began in 2012
Required QEP cycle concludes June 2017
Impact Report due to SACSCOC March 2018
Implementation process has focused from day 1 on preserving what we build in a challenging environment
Educational research appears to be informing institutional planning efforts and designs of QEPs. An overwhelming majority (99%) of QEPs integrate at least one HIP.
Liberal Outcomes

Scholar-Citizen Initiative

- It taught me to look outside my values.
- I found my values and goal and sense of self.
- It made me realize that my schooling can help the community.
- It helped me realize the gravity of the situation [and] was more important than any other group project I’ve ever had.
- It helped me see the world differently.
- It made me question and redefine my values. It reaffirmed ethics and sense of social responsibility.
- Make [SCI] available more.
- I loved this experience and wish there were more classes I could take, or [that I] knew about it sooner.

Anonymous student feedback, SCI Course Surveys, 2015-2016
Components of Scholar-Citizen QEP

As a broad-based QEP, the SCI incorporates:

• A faculty development program,
• A co-curricular programming initiative,
• A grants and awards program,
• An ePortfolio initiative, and
• A Scholar-Citizen Fellows graduation with distinction program
Faculty investment -> student opportunity

Greatest budget impact:
- Catalyst for partnerships
- Community of practice
- Teaching workshops
- Proliferation of SCI course designation
- Curriculum innovation grants
ePortfolio

The student experience: https://vimeo.com/164770568
ePortfolio

Coordinating ePortfolio at RU: [http://epimplementationframework.weebly.com/](http://epimplementationframework.weebly.com/)

- Survey and interview data with faculty and administrators who have implemented (ePortfolios)
- Improved upon by suggestions from three expert reviewers
- Meant to support those implementing, or attempting to implement, ePortfolios in a higher education context
- Guides through key attributes of systemic innovation in a practical and applied manner
Generalizable Challenges from this Case

• Institutional pressures
• Leadership transitions
• Communication to executive level of a transformative QEP’s mission and value and the importance of ongoing support for the sub-initiatives
• Garnering continuous “buy-in” from diverse departments and stakeholders
• Defining ePortfolio’s niche beyond the QEP
Some Discussion Starters - Turn and Chat!

- Are there accreditation or other opportunities you might leverage?
- What challenges will you have to address once the accreditation/mandate/external pressure expires?
  - Budget
  - Changing institutional priorities
  - Leadership changes
- Who are your champions? Foreseeable barriers?
- What data might you use to make your case for using eP as a mechanism in this project?
  - How do we measure the effectiveness of ePortfolio as opposed to other tools?
  - How do we quantify ePortfolio as a “high impact” practice?
- If we cannot quantify the value of ePortfolio, will it die out?
- What strategic planning activities have you been involved in and what seems to be working?