Challenges to Liberal Education:
Assessment as Bridge, ePortfolios as Illustration

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Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
AAC&U 2017

Who keeps your flame?
Have [we] done enough?
Who tells your story?

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Some background

IUPUI fosters student engagement with liberal education through:

- Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs), since 1998
  - Core Communication and Quantitative Skills
  - Critical Thinking
  - Integration and Application of Knowledge
  - Intellectual Breadth, Depth, and Adaptiveness
  - Understanding Society and Culture
  - Values and Ethics
- General Education Core, legislative mandate in 2012
  - Transferable 30-credit core, traditional distribution areas

Assessment: Who Knew?

- IUPUI’s surprising EIA adventure with external stakeholders
- EIA Designation recognizes institutions that “successfully integrate assessment practices across campus, provide evidence of student learning outcomes, and use assessment results to guide institutional decision-making and improve student performance”
  - and
- “[Make] evidence of accomplishment readily accessible and potentially meaningful to various audiences”
Telling Our Stories

◊ “Reviewers noted...that many institutions seemed to struggle with presenting a cohesive...narrative regarding their campus-level assessment process....Many campuses defaulted to providing lists of various disconnected activities.”

◊ “Few campuses reported actively engaging adjunct or part-time faculty, students, alumni, receiving institutions, and employers in their assessment work.... Even those campuses...engaged in intentionally aligned assessment of student learning struggle to tell their stories to the variety of stakeholders they are accountable to.... Put another way, campuses talk about assessment to themselves when they talk about it at all.”

In short,

◊ We have a story about the value of liberal education.
◊ We have experts who help tell our stories to important, traditional publics.
◊ We have potential ambassadors in place (with whom we may well not share that story).
◊ We have untapped contexts for telling that story.
How we determine what our students are learning—that we do so at all—is a story few external publics seem to know.

We have access to people we know, who may be more likely than “traditional” publics to listen to us because the story speaks to their interests.

Those people know other people, who may be more likely to listen to them than to us.

How do we often tell our stories?
Which story is more likely to capture—and keep—your interest?
People demand data, but they believe stories.
(from Joe Hoey)

What is an ePortfolio?

“An electronic portfolio (also known as an eportfolio, e-
portfolio, digital portfolio, or online portfolio) is a collection of
electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the
Web.” (Wikipedia)

“Web-based, student-generated collections of learning artifacts…[and]
reflections, focused on learning and growth.” (Eynon & Gambino, 2017)

“A selected body of plural performances narrated by the writer in a
reflective text.” (Yancey, 2004)
"Building an ePortfolio has allowed me to go back and think about my experiences at IUPUI. This has led me to find purpose in everything I have done or am still doing. Listing these skills along with interesting thoughts and life-lessons has helped me build something that displays who I am and allows me to express myself with no word-limits."

-- Anjali Prakash, 2015
Discuss

✧ What groups at your institution might have a stake in knowing that we assess our students’ learning? About how we assess it?

✧ (How) Can we frame our discussion of our assessment work to highlight the integration of liberal education and career learning?

✧ (How) Can we bring our students’ stories, as demonstrated in their ePortfolios, into the discussions we have with external stakeholders?
Reflect

What would you do if you had more time?

What one step might you take when you get home to begin?

Be in touch

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“What we need as part of our stories about the liberal arts is not simply an outline of what jobs someone’s had, but examples of how their education prepared them to think differently, challenged them to learn quickly about something new they encountered, or helped them to understand another’s point of view because they listened deeply to what someone else was saying. We need to hear attributes like these reinforced through the words of people who’ve learned and lived the experience for themselves.”