

BECOMING INTERDISCIPLINARY

An

INTRODUCTION

to

INTERDISCIPLINARY

STUDIES

Second Edition

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Cover photos provided by Patty Barnes.

The selected painting for the cover, *South Window 8.204* (2004), explores the startling new possibilities that develop when something ordinary, a view from a window, is seen from multiple perspectives. At first glance what we see is an unattractive view of a block wall and electric wires with a small slice of sky and treetops. This wall is symbolic of the many walls or obstacles we all face in our lives. The artist Patty Barnes captured the view first with a camera and then later with paint on canvas. Looking through thick glass, Barnes was able to obtain multiple new perspectives and make the ordinary come alive. By turning the activity of looking through glass into a highly conceptual and creative act, Barnes creates with her art a visual metaphor for becoming interdisciplinary. She imaginatively captures the many ways we can see obstacles or problems in our world and transform them by means of the integrative process into the extraordinary.

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PORTFOLIOS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES STUDENTS

Day by day, my future becomes clearer through my portfolio reflections and my collected materials, and with the combination of the skills that I have already and what I have yet to learn, my future seems to be getting brighter.

Paul Rosenberg (2004, p. 202)

Learning Objectives

By reading Chapter Eight of *Becoming Interdisciplinary* you should be able to:

1. Understand what are portfolios.
 2. Recognize different kinds of portfolios.
 3. Know what is an artifact.
 4. Generate your own artifacts.
 5. Be familiar with the history of portfolios.
 6. Create your own portfolios.
-

What Are Portfolios?

There are many definitions of portfolios these days. Most are pretty similar, although some are better phrased than others. Kimeldorf (1997) points out that the word derives from Latin: *port* — means to carry and — *folio* means papers. Kimeldorf (1997) defines *portfolio* as “a portable collection of papers and/or artifacts” (p. 12).

While his definition is pretty straightforward it needs some tweaking to take account of the electronic age. Collections of papers no longer have to be physical since they can be virtual and viewed on a computer screen. As Crockett (1998) insightfully points out, any definition of portfolios should place its emphasis on the contents of the portfolio rather than on what or how they are contained (p. 4). So for the purposes of this textbook a working definition of portfolios is the following:

Portfolios are either portable collections or electronic spaces in which you can show specific things, namely artifacts, which communicate both visually and verbally your identity, your interests, your skills, your talents, and your qualifications.

What are artifacts? Artifacts are documented pieces of evidence and samples, usually paper documents, but can be others things too—such as photos or samples of artwork. Artifacts are like pieces of evidence for

the “case” you wish to present. The type of case you are making (as well as the type of artifacts you are choosing) depends on the type of portfolio you are putting together. Examples of artifacts will be provided in the next section.

Types of Portfolios Helpful to College Students

There are numerous types of portfolios that students can use during their college career. Sometimes students are asked to use the same portfolio for different functions, which can lead to confusion. Some common types of portfolios are the following:

SELF-DISCOVERY PORTFOLIO

This portfolio allows one to collect and store information regarding personality assessment, value assessment, dreams, and goals. Personal discovery artifacts include mission statements, personality tests such as the Meyers-Briggs, interests indicators such as the Strong Interests Inventory, personal written narratives such as intellectual autobiographies, visual personal narratives such as autobiographical maps, personal strengths and weaknesses inventories, skills lists, lists of goals, dreams, etc.

The Self-Discovery Portfolio answers the question, “Who am I?”

LEARNING OR EDUCATIONAL PORTFOLIO

This portfolio facilitates the collection and storage of artifacts from one’s education experience. According to Cole, Ryan, Kirk, & Mathies (2000), educational portfolios should include a clearly defined purpose as well as the following: student-selected artifacts, student reflections on their selected artifacts, artifacts that demonstrate improvement and mastery, and artifacts that demonstrate growth (p. 12). Educational artifacts can include all of the following:

- Sample work from coursework: papers, class projects, tests, presentation materials, etc.
- Syllabi
- Brochures or fliers that describe seminars, special training, and workshops
- Award letters for scholarships
- Recommendation letters
- Reflections on one’s education
- Transcripts or list of courses taken with course descriptions
- List of skills and knowledge contents learned in courses
- Evidence of integration skills
- Sample interdisciplinary work from one’s education
- Write-ups of extracurricular activities, service learning, internships, co-ops
- Research reports
- Writing Samples
- Evaluations of coursework (graded work) (See ASU Career Services 1998/2002)

If the primary purpose of the learning portfolio is to track a student’s progress within a single course, then the portfolio is known as a **course portfolio**. If the primary purpose of the portfolio is to track a student’s progress throughout a particular program, then that learning portfolio is considered a **program portfolio**. In the case of many interdisciplinary studies programs, a program portfolio is established in the introductory course and then is revisited in the senior seminar. This chapter will be mainly concerned with interdisciplinary studies program portfolios.

The Learning Portfolio says, “Look how far I’ve come in my (interdisciplinary studies) education. This is what I have learned.”

CAREER PLANNING PORTFOLIO

This portfolio can help a student prepare, for and during, one's job search. Information about companies, letters of recommendation, and résumés are among the documents stored in a career portfolio.

The Career Planning Portfolio says, "This is what I am qualified to do and look where I am heading."

SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO (ALSO KNOWN AS PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO)

This portfolio is the one that you would take to an interview setting. The showcase portfolio would contain few but highly selective documents that would showcase or best display one's skills and talents. Among the documents to be included would be one's mission statement; one's résumé; samples of excellent coursework; volunteer activity; work experience; lists of skills; lists and descriptions of courses taken. The selection of the most relevant artifacts is crucial for the showcase portfolio. Accordingly, you should revise and/or update your showcase portfolio for each job interview, as its contents should be specific to each position for which you are applying. Your showcase portfolio is more than your own "greatest hits" album; it should contain the "evidence" to make the best possible case for why you are the best candidate for the position(s) you are applying.

The Showcase Portfolio proudly exclaims, "Look how fabulous am I!"

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO

This portfolio is an electronic or web-based version of the showcase portfolio. Electronic portfolios can have similar formats as personal web pages that have a home page and additional links to other sections or categories. Electronic portfolios need not be uploaded to the Internet, however. They can be saved on a CD-ROM. Saving your electronic portfolio on disks may be a safer option if you are concerned about identity theft or having your work stolen or plagiarized. If you prefer to have your electronic portfolio online, you may want to consider having your personal documents password protected. Even with password protection you should avoid uploading any document that contains your home address or personal telephone numbers. Most importantly, you must take care not to upload any document that contains your college ID number or your Social Security Number!

You can find out more information about creating your own electronic portfolio at the following websites:

- Albion College digital portfolio site available at:
<<http://www.albion.edu/digitalportfolio>>
- GateWay Community College electronic portfolio site available at:
<<http://www.gwc.maricopa.edu/class/e-portfolio/index.html>>
- Kalamazoo College portfolio page available at
<<http://www.kzoo.edu/pfolio/index.html>>
- LaGuardia Community College portfolio site available at
<<http://www.eportfolio.lagcc.cuny.edu>>

The Electronic Portfolio boldly announces to the world, "Look how super-fabulous am I!"

Combination or Hybrid Portfolios

There are other types of portfolios that are a combination or a hybrid of the portfolios listed above. For example, the contents of program portfolios usually do not remain constant. What types of artifacts are combined in a hybrid portfolio that a student has at any given moment really depends on where the student is in the program at that particular time. A portfolio created during an introductory course may emphasize personal discovery and/or career exploration while trying to link one's personal interests with one's educational and professional goals. Thus an introductory-level program portfolio may have the following components:

Personal Discovery + Learning + Career Planning Portfolios

By the time students register for what is often the final course of their college years, i.e., their interdisciplinary studies senior seminars, their concerns often shift as students tend to be preoccupied with their lives after graduation. While students may be asked to revisit and to complete the portfolios they initiated in their introductory courses, the contents of their portfolios may change drastically to reflect their growing professional concerns. Thus a learning program portfolio produced for a senior interdisciplinary studies seminar may have the following components:

Learning + Career Planning + Professional Portfolios

In other words, the interest in personal discovery decreases while the interests in career planning and professional showcasing increase. The learning or educational component also increases: by the time they are in their senior seminar courses students would have completed more coursework since completing their introductory course and thus have produced and collected more educational artifacts. By the time they graduate interdisciplinary studies students should have an abundant amount of interdisciplinary artifacts demonstrating interdisciplinary thinking, interdisciplinary skills, interdisciplinary team projects, interdisciplinary research, and other interdisciplinary work.

If students keep all their educational artifacts in their program portfolios, their portfolios can become massive, heavy tomes by the time they reach what is often the final course of their college careers. Their program portfolios may become too unwieldy to bring to class, let alone to a job interview. Thus it is a good idea to create a showcase portfolio that is a summary or condensation of the hybrid portfolio.

Other Kinds of Useful Portfolios

Of course there are many other types of portfolios as well that are extremely helpful for personal use and getting organized. The following list is only suggestive:

- Personal Portfolio
- Wellness Portfolio
- Personal Finances Portfolio
- Business Plans Portfolio
- Stock Research Portfolio
- Hobbies Portfolio
- Recipes Portfolio
- Travel Portfolio
- Volunteer Work Portfolio
- Multiple Intelligence Portfolio

A Short History of Portfolios

Portfolios have been around for a long time. Artists have used them as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, first to secure commissions and then to get into art academies. As other careers and jobs emerged, other people began to use portfolios, especially those who do freelance work. For example, graphic artists and writers also create and maintain collections of their work in portfolios. Fashion models rely on “books” that showcase their best photographs to secure further work. Anyone wanting to go into advertising needs to have a creative portfolio that contains sample ads and related projects.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s educators borrowed the concept of portfolios for various purposes. Many prospective teachers create portfolios to demonstrate their teaching skills for job searches. Once they begin teaching, many teachers use portfolios as teaching assessment tools. Indeed, there exists a great amount of literature regarding teaching portfolios for teachers at the elementary, secondary and university level. Portfolios have even entered the elementary and secondary classrooms as tools for assessing students’ work, so it is not surprising that portfolios would become a tool for college students as well.

What is surprising is that portfolios have not yet become a standard practice among college students, although that is beginning to change. Art and design students have been required to have portfolios to gain admission to art schools for quite some time. The portfolios are also required to help art and design students prepare to become creative professionals as the basis of many creative careers is in freelance work rather than steady jobs. Many writing composition courses now require course portfolios that document the progress of students' writing skills during the course of a semester or two. For the most part, however, college students have been introduced to the idea of portfolios through university career service programs where portfolios have recently been embraced as a vital career planning tool.

Why Do Interdisciplinary Studies Students Need Portfolios?

Clearly one does not have to be a student majoring in interdisciplinary studies or an interdisciplinary program to benefit from being required to create and maintain portfolios throughout their education. Interdisciplinary studies programs that require portfolios for their majors require either program portfolios that tracks students' progress throughout their education, specific course portfolios, or even hybrid interdisciplinary program portfolios that help students integrate the personal, the educational, and the professional.

More and more interdisciplinary studies programs are requiring program portfolios for their majors. In effect, such programs require that their students create, maintain, and revisit a program portfolio as they complete their coursework for their degrees. These portfolios are not only incorporated within the curriculum but are usually an integral component of it. Interdisciplinary studies program portfolios are particularly designed to facilitate students to integrate their personal, educational, and career interests.

Some universities, such as Truman State University in Missouri, require portfolios from all their graduating students. Among the numerous artifacts Truman State requires of its graduates is an interdisciplinarity artifact demonstrating the student's ability to integrate knowledge. More information about Truman State University's Portfolio Project can be found at <<http://assessment.truman.edu/components/Portfolio/index.htm>>.

Portfolios are also excellent tools for preparing for life after graduation. As Bridges (1994) points out, the concept of a "job" is a relatively recent one that is a direct consequence of industrialization and the rise of the factory. For most of the twentieth century, most employed individuals worked at a single job for their entire careers. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the concept of the job has become increasingly obsolete as most organizations went through major restructuring. At many organizations work no longer is organized around jobs but around work that needs to be done (Bridges 1994).

Currently at the dawn of the twenty-first century people now work as members of project teams that exist only as long as the project. No longer do individuals expect to work for the same organization or, for that matter, to do the same type of work for the duration of their working years. The reality of the twenty-first century workplace is that employees are increasingly becoming "portfolio professionals" who can now expect to change careers an average of seven times. Maintaining a career portfolio helps employees document all their accomplishments in the workplace as well as their transferable skills that are necessary for advancing or changing careers.

Portfolios: A Necessity in the Postmodern World

Portfolios are increasingly becoming a necessity in today's job market. As it is more and more commonplace for people to switch not only jobs but also careers, it is becoming increasingly more crucial to be able to document your skills and accomplishments. In order to be able to claim that you are an interdisciplinarian, you will have to be able to prove it by documenting your ability to integrate, i.e., your integrative skills, which can be demonstrated by your interdisciplinary artifacts. Moreover, it is vital to be able to show how the skills you utilize at one job or career can be transported to another job or career.

In his description of what he terms "the postmodern condition," Lyotard (1983) asserts that we are now living in an age of self-legitimation, which means that there is a decreasing reliance on outside accreditation for professional identities. Think about it: more and more people are outsourcing, becoming consultants, and/or starting their own business. What qualifies them to do so?

In contrast, what makes a doctor a doctor? A lawyer a lawyer? Their degrees and certification allow them to practice their professions. Without a license to practice medicine or law, doctors and lawyers cannot work legally. External accreditation will continue to be a necessity for these professions and many others. A consultant, however, needs no such certification. A consultant will probably have advanced degrees, but the consultant's expertise will be demonstrated from previous work and recommendations—work and recommendations that undoubtedly have been documented in a professional portfolio that is shown to prospective clients.

Putting together your program and showcase portfolios can legitimate you in terms of your unique personal experiences (your biography), your education, your work experiences, and your skills. Your portfolios will demonstrate your experience, your knowledge, your skills, and your accomplishments, which range from completed class projects, evidence of teamwork and other activities, to awards and accolades you have received. Just as you learn in your writing composition and public speaking classes that you must back up any claim you make in your papers and speeches with evidence, so must you back up your claims for any work you wish to do.

Obviously, if you have not placed much effort in your college career you will have a more difficult time putting together a spectacular interdisciplinary studies program portfolio. The old adage that you will reap what you sow certainly applies here. Nevertheless, assembling an interdisciplinary studies program portfolio will still be a worthwhile project even for those students with less than a stellar academic career. The process of making a portfolio and the final result, the portfolio itself, will make abundantly clear what is lacking and where you need to improve. If you do not have many suitable educational artifacts you might want to consider what are your strengths and emphasize those. If you are uncertain about a career choice, analyzing the artifacts you collect for your personal discovery, educational, and career development sections of your program portfolio should identify your strengths and those activities in which you like to engage further.

For most college students, putting together portfolios yields many pleasant surprises, as students are able to identify and demonstrate skills that perhaps they did not even realize that they had. You worked hard for your college degree! Let your portfolios show how much you learned and gained from your education and experiences. Table 8.1 lists the positive outcomes for student portfolios identified by Augsburg and Helms (2000).

Table 8-1 Student Portfolio Outcomes (Augsburg and Helms 2000)

1. Actively engages students in the learning process.
2. Tracks integrative skills.
3. Documents educational experiences and development.
4. Identifies skills and understand their transferability.
5. Makes connections between curricular, co-curricular and work experiences to the world of work.
6. Enhances the academic advising experience for students.
7. Places the responsibility of career development with the student.
8. Identifies and solidifies career goals, choices, and opportunities.
9. Collects and organizes important career and work-related information.
10. Increases self-efficacy by documenting and examining experiences.
11. Can be utilized for making future career transitions.

The Importance of Saving Your Work

When I first started to assign portfolios to students, I was very surprised to learn that many of my students had not saved any work that they had done while in college. It never dawned on them that they should save their work. Some students claimed that the reason they had not saved their work was because no one had told them to do so, let alone explain to them that the papers they wrote in English 101 could be useful to demonstrate how their writing has improved.

Other students told me that the reason why they did not save their schoolwork was limited space. Who wants all that paper lying around? I can understand that way of thinking—to a point. True, many college students move around frequently, so having less stuff to carry around is certainly a plus in their eyes. Portfolios,

however, are wonderful organizational and paper management tools. Paper clutter can be alleviated and even avoided altogether with portfolios since paper can be stored neatly in one place.

While I can understand the need to throw paper out, I am unable to understand why students do not save multiple electronic copies of their work. All too often students have only one diskette of all their schoolwork with no backup files. Those students then learn the hard way the consequences when that diskette becomes lost or destroyed by a computer virus: all of their work becomes irretrievably lost.

I would be willing to bet money that if students were told very early in their college careers that they were required to maintain a portfolio to document their education in order to graduate, virtually all college students would have pretty comprehensive educational portfolios by the time they were seniors. The most appropriate time and place to introduce students to educational portfolios are during the freshman orientation week before classes even begin. This way, students are acquainted with the concept of portfolios before beginning their first assignment.

Assembling Your Portfolio

How do you put together a portfolio? First of all, you will need to purchase at least the following materials to create your portfolio:

- A three-ring binder
- Section dividers
- Plastic sheet protectors

What kind of binder you will need depends on what kind of binder you wish to create. Course portfolios are smaller than program portfolios, so usually 1" or 2" binders will be adequate. Program portfolios need to be bigger—3" or 5". Binders shouldn't have flimsy covers. Binders that have a plastic sleeve on the front cover allow greater individualization in appearance. You can slip a piece of paper or a photograph inside the sleeve in order to give your portfolio an individualized decorative cover. Even if you would rather your cover be plain you should at the very least have your name stated on the cover. In contrast, showcase portfolios should be 1" or 2" and be made out of leather or similar looking material for a more professional look.

Since your portfolios will be constantly in flux as you will continually update them, you will need to protect your artifacts by putting each piece of paper in a sheet protector. This way when pages are turned by your readers they are less likely to be ripped. You will then not have to hole punch your artifacts, so they will be less likely to rip and fall out.

THE APPEARANCE OF YOUR PORTFOLIO COUNTS!

The appearances of your portfolios are crucial for the impression you wish to make. Your portfolios will be a reflection of you and your values. How do you value yourself? How do you value your education? Surely you value yourself and your education—you would not be investing so much time, money, and effort if you did not. It makes perfect sense then that your portfolios should reflect your investment (and protect it as well). Your portfolios will also be a visual representation of yourself. Like it or not, you will be evaluated on if not judged by the quality of both the contents and appearance of your portfolio. You really have no other option but to create an exceptional looking portfolio that reflects your individuality and your efforts.

There is no single template for how your portfolios should look, which is why it can be an extremely effective tool for self-marketing. While showcase portfolios should look as professional as possible, they nevertheless should reflect your individuality and creativity. Program portfolios have more leeway for self-expression. While many students prefer a professional look to represent their education, others may prefer a more "scrapbook" feel. Some students use various crafts such as stamps and glitter to create unique covers. Often students put photographs of themselves on the cover, which is terrific. Nevertheless, be certain that the photograph gracing your portfolio cover is appropriate. You will want to present yourself professionally, so avoid goofy, funny, embarrassing, or sexy photographs of yourself. Of course you want to look attractive, but your portfo-

lios are not intended for dating purposes. Unless you plan to become a swimsuit model there is no reason why you should have a cover photograph of yourself in a bathing suit or wearing otherwise revealing attire.

SELECTING ARTIFACTS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

You have to decide what goes into your portfolios, particularly your showcase portfolio. What best illustrates your capabilities and potential? What best demonstrates what you have learned and how? That first paper you wrote in college may be worth including if its purpose is to demonstrate pre-growth or how much you have improved. For each artifact you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I wish to include this particular artifact?
- What does it demonstrate and how?

For some artifacts you will have to include both a title and a description of that artifact's significance so that the reader can understand readily its significance (Kimeldorf 1994). Such explanation can be done on a separate page or by attaching a caption to the artifact.

IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

As you select your artifacts you will be reflecting on your education and what you have learned. You should also try to identify exactly what you have learned in each of your courses. You have learned some specific knowledge and some specific skills in every class you have taken. Even if you hated a class and can swear you have learned nothing, in actuality you have learned some things. For starters, you probably learned the skill of overcoming adversity. If your professor was problematic you may have learned how to deal with difficult people. Finally, if you hated the course's subject matter or found it boring you have learned some valuable lessons about yourself. You should ask yourself why you disliked the course material. Very likely all of these lessons have influenced your subsequent educational decisions, whether it was to not take any more classes in that discipline or even to changing your major. On a more positive note, what did you learn in your favorite classes? If you enjoyed learning in your favorite classes, was it because you believed that the lessons learned were extremely valuable? What were those valuable lessons? Your favorite classes probably influenced your subsequent educational decisions as well.

Being able to identify and articulate the specific knowledge contents and skills you have is a very important skill that requires some practice. All too often students tend to underestimate rather than overestimate the skills they have acquired, whether those skills were obtained in one's education, work experiences, volunteer experiences, extracurricular experiences, or life experiences. Students underestimate their skills in part because they have yet to identify adequately their own skills. Have you ever made a list of all your skills? You might want to try making lists of skills that you have developed from various activities. For example, students are always amazed to learn how many skills they learn from their freshman writing composition class or from waiting tables. What kind of portfolios artifacts would demonstrate those skills? For example, what kinds of artifacts would document a volunteer activity? What kinds of artifacts would demonstrate teamwork?

EXERCISE 8-1*Developed by Chris Helms*

Identify those skills by making the following two lists of the specific skills and knowledge you have learned in your freshman writing composition class.

Skills Learned in ENG 101**Knowledge Learned in ENG 101****EXERCISE 8-2***Developed by Chris Helms*

Identify by making a list of possible portfolio artifacts that demonstrate the skills and knowledge you obtained in your freshman writing composition class that you listed in Exercise 8-1.

ENG 101 Portfolio Artifacts**Organization Strategies**

How should you organize your portfolio? You will probably spend a lot of time trying to answer this question. For example, should you organize your portfolio according to chronology or to skills you have been obtaining? Should you include a personal section, an education section, and a career section? Where should you place your awards and achievements? It would make sense to create a separate “Awards and Achievements” section. Your instructor may provide you with specific organizational guidelines. While there are numerous ways you can organize your portfolio, you should probably avoid paginating your portfolio unless your instructor tells you to do so as the page numbers and sequence will very likely change. The following checklists should help you decide what to include in the following three types of portfolios: course portfolio, program portfolio, and the showcase portfolio.

INTRODUCTORY COURSE PROGRAM PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Front Matter:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Mission Statement

Interdisciplinary Studies Program/Intro Course Artifacts:

- Your Interdisciplinary Studies Program Information (home page/program description and/or requirements + course info)
- Definition of Interdisciplinarity (Either the textbook's or the one you developed in Chapter Two)
- Metaphor for Interdisciplinarity and Explanation
- Intellectual Autobiography/Personal Narrative (and/or Autobiographical Map)
- Disciplinary Research
- Example of Integrative Process (Integrative Process Worksheet from Chapter Six)

Personal Discovery Artifacts:

- Strong Interests Inventory Test + One-Page Reflection
- Myers/Briggs + One-Page Reflection
- Your Five Top Values + Values Reflection
- Your Top 5 Skills + Skills Reflection/Indication of Where You Obtained Them
- Your Personal Strengths/Weakness Inventory List
- List of Goals

Educational Artifacts:

- Lists of Skills and Knowledge Contents Learned From Coursework
- Educational Reflections
- Investigating Academic Professional Literature
- Discussion/Analysis of an Interdisciplinary Project
- Analysis of an Interdisciplinary Concept(s)
- Interdisciplinary Thinking Educational Artifact

Career Research/Professional Artifacts:

- Résumé
- Career or Business Research
- Informational Interview

General Education Portfolio Artifacts:

- Writing Samples (with favorable evaluations if possible)
- Academic accomplishments within Areas of Emphasis
- Letters of Recommendation
- Academic Transcript
- Awards or certificate of Merit or accomplishment
- Samples of Artwork/Design/Project
- Write-up/Evidence of Volunteer Activity and/or Internships
- Other

APPEARANCE:

Materials:

- Attractive, Appropriate Three-Ring Binder
- Plastic Sheets/Page Covers
- Dividers

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Neatness (no visible price stickers, no blank plastic sheets etc):

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Organization (portfolio is clearly divided into reasonable categories):

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Creativity:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Overall Effort:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

SENIOR SEMINAR PORTFOLIO/PROGRAM PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

CONTENTS CHECKLIST:

Front Matter:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Mission Statement

Interdisciplinary Studies Program/Course Artifacts:

- Definition of Interdisciplinarity
- Interdisciplinary Metaphor
- Copy of Interdisciplinary Studies Program Home Page with Program Description and/or Requirements
- Autobiography/Personal Narrative (and/or Autobiographical Map)
- Samples of Interdisciplinary Work
- Sample Syllabi
- Sample Assignments
- Reflections of Courses/What I Have Learned

Personal Discovery Artifacts:

- Strength/Weakness Personal Inventory
- Skills and Knowledge Learned/Developed from Courses
- Skills and Knowledge Developed from Life/Job/Internship Experiences
- Indication of where and how you learned each skill

Career/Professional Artifacts:

- Career/Professional Artifacts:
- Résumé
- List of Professional Goals
- Evidence of Internship Activity
- Evidence of Work Experience
- Work Performance Evaluations

General Portfolio Artifacts:

- Writing Sample (with favorable evaluations if possible)
- Academic accomplishments
- Letters of Recommendation
- Academic Transcript
- Awards or certificate of Merit or accomplishment
- Samples of Artwork/Design/Project
- Write-up/Evidence of Volunteer Activity
- Other

APPEARANCE:

Materials:

- Attractive, Appropriate Three-Ring Binder
- Plastic Sheets/Page Covers
- Dividers

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Neatness:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Organization:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Creativity:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

Overall Effort:

_____ Excellent _____ Very Good _____ Fair _____ Needs Improvement _____ No Effort Made

SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Front Matter:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Mission Statement
- Résumé
- Autobiography/Personal Statement
- List of Courses (If Applicable)

Interdisciplinary Studies Program Section:

- Copy of Program Home Page Plus Program Description/Requirements
- Sample Interdisciplinary Work from Introductory Course
- Sample of Interdisciplinary Coursework
- Sample Interdisciplinary Work from Senior Seminar Course
- Reflection: What I Have Learned in My Interdisciplinary Education
- Reflection on My Integrative Skills

Skills:

- Strength/Weakness Personal Inventory
- Skills Learned/Developed from Courses in Emphasis Areas
- Skills Developed from Life/Job/Internship Experiences
- Indication of where and how you learned each skill
- Sample of Integration Skills

Other:

- Writing Samples from Other Coursework (with favorable evaluations if possible)
- Academic accomplishments within Areas of Emphasis
- Letters of Recommendation
- Academic Transcript
- Awards or Certificate of Merit or accomplishment
- Samples of Artwork/Design/Project
- Write-up/Evidence of Volunteer Activity
- Samples from Work Experience
- Other

APPEARANCE:

Materials:

- Professional Quality/Attractive, Appropriate (Leather) Binder
- Plastic Sheets/Page Covers/Dividers

____ Excellent ____ Very Good ____ Fair ____ Needs Improvement ____ No Effort Made

Neatness:

____ Excellent ____ Very Good ____ Fair ____ Needs Improvement ____ No Effort Made

Design:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Typography: | treatment of font size and style support your design |
| Balance of design: | too much white space, not enough white space, centered, graphic/picture placement |
| Consistency of design: | reader is able to easily access your work, consistent page layout |
| Conciseness: | no extra artifacts that don't support your message |

____ Excellent ____ Very Good ____ Fair ____ Needs Improvement ____ No Effort Made

Creativity:

____ Excellent ____ Very Good ____ Fair ____ Needs Improvement ____ No Effort Made

Overall Effort:

____ Excellent ____ Very Good ____ Fair ____ Needs Improvement ____ No Effort Made

CHECKLIST FOR SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO (QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF)

1. Does your showcase portfolio clearly answer the question, "How do I want prospective employers to think of me and my work?"

YES! Yes Average no NO!

2. **Selection:** Do the artifacts in your showcase portfolio represent your qualifications for the position?

YES! Yes Average no NO!

3. **Interdisciplinarity/Synthesis/Integration:** Did you represent your education as interdisciplinary adequately? Did you include evidence of interdisciplinary work? Did you indicate that you have done interdisciplinary work/research/projects?

YES! Yes Average no NO!

4. **Language Mechanics:** Is your portfolio free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors?

YES! Yes Average no NO!

5. **Organization:** Is your showcase portfolio appropriately organized?

YES! Yes Average no NO!

Presenting Your Portfolio to Others: Practice Makes Perfect

Once you assemble your program portfolio, you will have an easier time putting together your showcase portfolio. By reviewing all your artifacts you will be in a better position to select what should go into your showcase portfolio. Once you have a showcase portfolio, however, you need to practice presenting it to others. One way to do so is to simulate an interview situation. What kind of interview depends on your goals: if you plan to go to graduate school after graduation, you should prepare for an admissions committee interview. If you plan to enter the workforce, you should prepare for a job interview. If you plan to continue working at the same organization after you graduate, you may want to practice for a meeting during which you will ask for a promotion or a raise. You should practice answering the following questions:

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- What is an interdisciplinary studies degree?
- Why did you major in interdisciplinary studies?
- Can you explain your degree program?
- What did you study/integrate while you were in college?
- What kind of skills did you learn during college?
- What is your biggest strength? Your biggest weakness?
- Why do you want this position? Or, why do you want to go to graduate school?

Some instructors will assign a portfolio presentation along with a portfolio assignment. Some instructors will request that you present your portfolio to them privately in their office, where they will simulate an interview situation by playing the role of the interviewer. Other instructors will ask students to present their pre-

sentations in class, which can be a bit nerve wracking for students who feel uncomfortable about public speaking. You can alleviate any nervousness about public speaking by making your presentation seem more like an actual interview. One way to simulate an interview situation is to ask a fellow student or the instructor to play the role of the interviewer. The advantage of doing a portfolio presentation in front of your peers is the potential for constructive feedback from them.

Students watching the other presentations can take written notes on little slips of paper with each presenter's name on them. After each presentation the student audience members can use the slips of paper to indicate whether or not they would "hire" the presenter. The comments can be written anonymously and then given to the instructor after all the presentations are over. The instructor can also create folders for each student, so that students can drop off their notes for each presenter in the appropriate folder. Once the distribution of notes is completed presenters can pick up their folders and can read the anonymous feedback (Augsburg 2003).

Even if you are not assigned a portfolio presentation for class, it is a good idea to practice on your own, enlisting friends or family members for help. If no one can help you, you can always practice in front of the mirror or in front of your pet dog or cat. Before you can practice your presentation you need to know exactly who your interviewer is supposed to be. If you know exactly what type organization you wish to work for after graduation you should at the very least do some Internet research so you can familiarize yourself with the particular industry. Better yet, try to find out which organizations interest you, and learn all you can about them. If you are planning to go to graduate school, you should research what specific graduate programs and schools. In other words, you need to prepare as much as possible for the presentation of your showcase portfolio.

You should practice your presentation while using your showcase portfolio as a visual aid. If your showcase portfolio is electronic, practice accessing your electronic portfolio and navigating your way to your documents. If at all possible try to organize your showcase portfolio in the order of the points you will be making during your presentation. You will be investing a lot of time putting together your program and showcase portfolios. Take the time to make them work for you!

Selected Readings

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