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TO: SLCC Full-time Faculty  
FR: David Hubert, Associate VP for General and Developmental Education  
DATE: January 5, 2009  
RE: **E-portfolio Proposal (Lite)**

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*In order to help students become intentional learners “who focus, across ascending levels of study and diverse academic programs, on achieving. . . essential learning outcomes;” (AAC&U, 2007)*

*In order to create a more purposeful and integrated General Education program;*

*In order to promote student engagement in the learning process and foster a student-centered approach to education;*

*In order to assess the General Education program and College learning outcomes in the context of an integrated student experience, I propose that we make the following changes:*

- **Provide an electronic portfolio to all students taking Dev Ed or Gen Ed courses.** This provision would begin in the summer of 2010.
- **Require all Gen Ed courses to have at least one *signature assignment* that will be graded after the student puts the assignment in his/her e-portfolio and reflects on it.**<sup>1</sup> The student would provide the link to the e-portfolio to the instructor, who would then go into the e-portfolio to ensure that the assignment and reflection are there before grading them. If a course has more than one signature assignment, a student would be free to choose which assignment to put in his/her e-portfolio. Rather than requiring all Gen Ed courses to go through the curriculum process, I propose that each department with Gen Ed courses send a letter to the Gen Ed Committee, signed by the Department or Division Chair, indicating the department’s acceptance of this change. Then, as courses come up for their normal review, they can add language to this effect in the CCO.
- **Create several annual awards for e-portfolios.** The awards would be prestigious and might include tuition reimbursement and/or a scholarship to any USHE institution. Categories might be Best Overall E-Portfolio, Best Use of Multi-Media in an E-Portfolio, Best Reflection in an E-Portfolio, and so forth. Faculty could nominate particular

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<sup>1</sup> A signature assignment is one that addresses two or more of the College-wide student learning outcomes and constitutes a real-world application of knowledge. Courses already have signature assignments, but faculty may not be used to this particular terminology. Examples of signature assignments include final projects that incorporate course concepts; service-learning or field study experiences; writing assignments that tap not only discipline knowledge but also another learning outcome such as effective communication or critical thinking; or a realistic problem that students need to solve using the established knowledge or skills in a particular field.

e-portfolios by a certain date, and a committee would make the selection of winners.

- **Allow students to satisfy the Computer Literacy requirement with a completed e-portfolio.**
- **Establish a standard set of categories that a student e-portfolio must have, such as:**

<b>Portfolio Template for AA and AS Students</b>				
<b>About Me</b>	<b>My Learning Goals</b>	<b>My Best Work</b>	<b>Learning Outside of Class</b>	<b>Resume</b>
Bio		General Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition</li> <li>• Quantitative Literacy</li> <li>• American Institutions</li> <li>• Lifelong Wellness</li> <li>• Computer Literacy</li> <li>• Student Choice</li> <li>• Biological Sciences</li> <li>• Fine Arts</li> <li>• Humanities</li> <li>• Physical Sciences</li> <li>• Social Sciences</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul> My Major		Resume

<b>Portfolio Template for AAS and Certificate Students</b>				
<b>About Me</b>	<b>My Learning Goals</b>	<b>My Best Work</b>	<b>Learning Outside of Class</b>	<b>Resume</b>
Bio		General Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition</li> <li>• Quantitative Studies</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Human Relations</li> <li>• Distribution Area</li> </ul> My Major		Resume

In the About Me and My Learning Goals sections, students would be largely free to express themselves as they wish. In the Learning Outcomes section, students would need to archive artifacts from their Gen Ed distribution courses and reflect on how those assignments helped them attain the College’s learning outcomes. In the

Learning Outside of Class section, students could document and reflect on their co-curricular activities, their work experience as it relates to their education, study abroad trips, service-learning experiences, field studies, and so forth. In the Resume section, students would start and continually update their resume.

- **Assess the attainment of student learning outcomes using artifacts (an artifact is essentially the product of a signature assignment) in e-portfolios.** Select a random sample of e-portfolios and apply rubrics to the artifacts students have put in them as evidence of having met each particular learning outcome. Gather groups of faculty to assess the evidence for different learning outcomes—one group for critical thinking, one group for written communication, one group for quantitative literacy, and so forth. Separate groups would assess the Gen Ed distribution areas. Do the assessment in June and pay faculty a stipend to be a reviewer. Institutional Research and Assessment, Accreditation and Planning would be charged with gathering the results and writing assessment reports in time for the beginning of Fall term in August.

### **Why Should We Adopt This Proposal?**

Although this proposal would institute e-portfolios College-wide with as little disruption to our existing General Education system as possible, it is clearly a big step to take. Why should we adopt this proposal? Why not just ease our way into e-portfolios by expanding our current pilot efforts?

SLCC should move toward greater adoption of e-portfolios for a number of reasons, the least of which is that as the popularity of e-portfolios grows—and they are becoming quite popular in higher education across the board—students are coming to expect them just as five years ago they began to expect to be able to take classes online. A quick Google search reveals that e-portfolios in one form or another are being used in public schools, colleges, and universities throughout the United States. From 1999 to 2007, the number of presentations about e-portfolios more than tripled at the annual meeting of the Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education (Ring, Weaver, and Jones, Jr, 2008). Students at all levels are being exposed to the advantages of creating e-portfolios, especially in their search for employment after they finish with formal education (Rowh, 2008).

A more concrete reason to support this proposal is that it has great potential to improve student learning. The process of selectively archiving and reflecting on their work to show how they are meeting learning outcomes, is a learner-centered pedagogy that has positive results for students. As one review summarized, “e-portfolios are helping students become critical thinkers and aiding in the development of their writing and multimedia communication skills. E-portfolios can help students learn information and technology literacy skills and how to use digital media” (Lorenzo and Ittleson, 2005: 3). A study at Bowling Green State University (Knight, Hakel, and Gromko, 2008: 1), concluded that, “after controlling for background factors, undergraduate students with e-portfolio artifacts had significantly higher grade-point averages, credit hours earned, and retention rates than a matched set of students without e-portfolio artifacts.” A study at the University of Michigan

School of Social Work (Fitch, 2008) suggested that “e-portfolios can be invaluable tools in helping our students acquire the process knowledge and skills necessary for clarifying underlying values and goals within specific professional contexts...and developing effective evidence-based practices to meet those goals throughout their professional careers via the competencies acquired in coursework (assuming they are evidence-based).”

E-portfolios also have the potential to integrate students’ curricular and co-curricular activities into a more unified learning experience. Students will be asked to archive not only specific assignments from across General Education, but will also be given the opportunity to reflect on their learning in activities outside of the classroom. This opens intriguing possibilities to bridge the Student Services/Instructional Services divide at SLCC. As Johnson and Rayman (2007: 21) noted, “Far and away one of the most promising opportunities for collaboration between academic programs and student affairs is the electronic portfolio.”

Why institute an e-portfolio requirement across General Education courses at the same time? A departmentally-based incremental approach adds to the complexity of an e-portfolio initiative. Departments could choose radically different e-portfolio platforms, making it difficult for the institution to scale-up the e-portfolio initiative to include work from across the curriculum. Support and regulation of departmentally-based e-portfolios would also be difficult. It will be just as difficult to build robust support mechanisms for students in select programs as it will be to support all students, so let’s do it in one big action, thereby having a real impact on the College culture. A partial implementation of e-portfolios may stall with only a few departments, leaving a cultural divide that undercuts our General Education mission. Moreover, previous attempts at implementing e-portfolios (e.g., Ring, Weaver and Jones, Jr.) have concluded that from the students’ point of view it is essential to integrate e-portfolios throughout the curriculum.

### **What Would We Need to Do if We Adopted This Proposal?**

- **Get the endorsement of the Utah Board of Regents** that SLCC’s e-portfolio program can fit into whatever statewide e-portfolio the Board might be pursuing.
- **Pick an e-portfolio platform or figure out a way to manage this requirement if we allowed students to choose between several e-portfolio platforms.** The General Education Committee, with student input, should make a recommendation to the Vice Presidents of Instruction and Student Services. This decision ought to be reached no later than November 1, 2009. Bresciani (2005) provides a good overview of criteria to be used in selecting a platform.
- **Figure out the logistics of integrating e-portfolios into our IT systems.** This may depend on the platform(s) chosen. How do we sign up students for e-portfolio accounts? Can we take a “snapshot” of student e-portfolios for assessment and archiving purposes?

- **Develop a simple rubric for reflective writing** that faculty could apply when evaluating student reflections and providing feedback. The Gen Ed Committee should develop this, and begin by looking at examples that already exist and are posted on the Web.
- **Develop a process by which students would be able to satisfy the Computer Literacy requirement with their portfolio** instead of via the CIS course or challenge exam. The General Education Committee should determine this process.
- **Help students start and complete their e-portfolios.** Possibilities include:
  - Having Distance Learning and Educational Technology personnel create a set of online tutorials that would step students through the process.
  - Having Student Services and the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC) work together to create some “Start your e-portfolio” workshops.
  - Adding e-portfolio guidance to Learning Center, Learning Resources, and/or Writing Center services.
  - Ensuring that sufficient open computer labs are equipped to be of use to students in creating e-portfolios. This may entail updating browsers, providing the ability to make audio recordings and upload images, providing scanners, digital cameras to check out, and so forth.
  - Making a big push in Developmental Education courses to start students off with e-portfolios. Faculty in Dev Ed courses could assign students to write about their learning goals and write their biographies, thus helping students get grounded as they transition into higher education.
- **Train faculty and advisors on e-portfolios.** Faculty and advisors will not be required to have e-portfolios of their own, but they will need to be able to access and navigate student e-portfolios well enough to assess them and/or provide advice to students. Student Services and the FTLC should collaborate to organize these training workshops.
- **Have students sign a release** indicating that if their portfolio is randomly selected for program or institution-level assessment, the College must be given access to it for a specified period of time and the students will be asked to refrain from making changes to the e-portfolio during the assessment period (let’s say, during the month of June). In addition, inform all students selected for assessment that their names will be entered into a drawing for prizes. **A separate release** might also allow the College to “showcase” the student’s e-portfolio or otherwise use it for marketing purposes.

- **Figure out how to finance this General Education E-portfolio Initiative.** Our goal should be to limit the cost of this initiative to \$10-15 per student, and allow students to keep their e-portfolios when they leave the institution. Possibilities here include supporting it via:
  - Funding from the Utah State System of Higher Education.
  - External grants.
  - An increase in general student fees.
  - Instituting a distance education course fee.
  - Instituting a General Education course fee.

## References

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