

*Assessing Communication Education:
A Handbook for Media, Speech, and Theatre Educators*

Edited by

William G. Christ

(HILLS DALE, NJ: ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, 1994)

Student Portfolios

(Draft Chapter 6)

by

Peter B. Orlik

343 Moore Hall

Central Michigan University

Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859

(517) 774-7279

Student Portfolios

Peter B. Orlik, Ph.D.

Executive Summary:

Creative portfolios have long been a fixture in the business world as a means of demonstrating their preparer's artistic, design, or writing abilities. In many ways, the use of the portfolio instrument as a self or programmatic assessment mechanism is simply an evaluative extension of this practice. Instead of merely showcasing what the `book's' author believes to be his or her best work, the assessment portfolio provides a panoramic view of that person's professional development experiences --- and thereby also serves to measure the contribution to those experiences made by the educational institution from which that individual hopes to graduate.

There is a wealth of trade press guidance on how to prepare creative portfolios. And there is a burgeoning body of academic literature on the use of portfolios as student and programmatic assessment devices. In one short chapter, we cannot even attempt to survey this vast field. Instead, our main purpose here is to focus exclusively and pragmatically on how to structure a portfolio to meet the specific assessment needs of a communication studies curriculum.

It should be kept in mind, however, that no student-generated programmatic assessment instrument will succeed if it does not clearly serve the needs and gratifications of its preparer. Therefore, it is an underlying tenet of our discussion that the demonstrable student benefit accruing from portfolio preparation must be at least as great as the evaluative benefit received by that student's sponsoring department.

The Roots of Assessment Portfolios

Many of the insights that underpin assessment portfolio theory were derived from advances in the field of Experiential Learning. In 1971, The Commission to Study Non-Traditional Education was formed as one response to the demand for more learner-centered educational delivery systems. In its report two years later, the Commission's recommendation #47

asserted that: "New devices and techniques should be perfected to measure the outcomes of many types of nontraditional study and to assess the educative effort of work experience and community service." As a result of this recommendation, several higher education institutions joined with the Educational Testing Service in 1974 to undertake the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning Project. Funding was provided by the Carnegie Corporation.

Though the Carnegie grant was only short-term, the project that it underwrote did much to validate the whole concept of prior learning assessment. Building on this foundation, the non-profit Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) was created in 1976 to further develop responses to the original Non-Traditional Education Commission's proposals. Out of this concern for the proper recognition of education outside the classroom grew new assessment mechanisms --- one of the most prominent of which became the prior learning portfolio.

As the name implies, the prior learning portfolio allows students to focus on experiences previous to their current educational endeavors. These experiences may have occurred in the workplace, the home, community and recreational organizations, and training venues beyond the boundaries of the conventional college course. Within the prior learning portfolio's pages, the student describes each experience, isolates the specific learning that flowed from it, and then provides clear evidence of his/her participation in this education-deriving event. The sponsoring collegiate institution must then translate these described experiences into appropriate academic credit; discriminating those situations in which real college-level competencies have been attained from those in which the student has failed to apprehend higher-learning outcomes.

Obviously, the prior learning portfolio places a great deal more burden on the educational institution than does a volume prepared within the more conventional and circumscribed environment of a communication studies department. For in prior learning assessment, the student is not only seeking to describe what they have learned, but also to achieve educational credentialing for experiences that may be far removed from the campus

structure and the departmental major.

Nonetheless, by employing some of the mechanisms found to be successful in prior learning assessment, the communication studies unit (and those who evaluate it) achieve a far more comprehensive picture of student learning and the many paths that might lead to the same educational goal. This can only improve our instructional performance. For ultimately, we need to become less concerned with where a student developed a learned competency and more concerned with validating that the competency has, in fact, been attained.

Through portfolio facilitation, a curricular unit may discover that, though its exiting students have acquired the desired skills and insights, many of these competencies did not flow from the coursework intended to teach them but rather, from other classes or experiences to which students fortunately (and perhaps accidentally) have been exposed. Two positive outcomes result from such a revelation: (1) the unit does successfully demonstrate that students are, in fact, graduating with mastery of the desired competencies; (2) the unit can strengthen and further support those activities that actually are generating such competencies while modifying or deleting those that are not fulfilling the task they were supposedly servicing. Scarce instructional resources therefore can be reapportioned to make successful activities stronger and to address competency shortfalls in other areas.

Unlike prior learning vehicles, the primary task of the communication studies department's portfolio process is not to take a vast spectrum of non-campus learning and assign equated college credit to it. Instead, in a much more narrow-gauge way, the portfolio that capstones our students' course of study examines experience that often already has been transcribed in order to:

- [1] ratify what each student individually has achieved;
- [2] compare this to what other students exposed to the same curricular structure have learned;
- [3] validate that each student possesses the fundamental skills and insights necessary to the initiation of a successful communication

career.

The outcomes that each communication department identifies and mandates for its students will vary from unit to unit, of course, and will be impacted by what, if any, requirements are laid down by state authorities. Other chapters in this book deal with the selection and construction of such outcome statements. Our point here is simply that, as a means of determining curricular efficacy, any student's self-generated portfolio can, if its structure is well designed, be benchmarked against the minimal competencies that we require of every student.

Fundamental Learning Philosophy

In designing a discriminating portfolio structure, it is essential to recognize that experience and learning are not the same thing. Learning can only flow from experience --- but all experience does not result in learning, or at least, in college-level learning. In other words, real comprehension doesn't flow from "just being there." If, as filmmaker/comedian Woody Allen once said, "Eighty percent of life is just showing up," then all of our learning comes from the other twenty percent.

When it comes to the translation of experience into learning, portfolio composition must take two outcome realities into account: (1) some people never really "learn" a competency - - -even after repeated experiences germane to that competency's application; (2) two perceptive persons sharing the same experience may learn quite different things from it.

At some time in your life, you may have worked alongside someone for whom each day was a re-invention of the wheel. They never seemed able to reduce the job to its key components; never were capable of modifying the task so that needless or repetitive elements were eliminated. They did the job, day after day ---but never really learned its essence so as to be able to refine and streamline it. This is very much like the student who "works" the audio console in the lab but is incapable of translating this experience to other audio consoles because he or she has not learned the fundamental functions common to every console's design. True learning, in short, is the isolation of the most important and generalizable from the peripheral and specific.

Our second outcome reality --- that different people can learn different things from the same experience - - - becomes more and more likely as the experience becomes (a) more complex and (b) less structured. Thus, the more we move from the tightly controlled progression of the lecture course to the less rigid progression of the seminar; the more we advance from the simple world of personally pushing buttons to the complex environment of managing people who direct button-pushers, the greater will be the likelihood of a learning divergency.

The writer recalls evaluating the graduate-level prior learning portfolios of two Defense Department district audit supervisors. Both had progressed from the same accounting training through the same series of junior/senior auditor positions, to identical supervisory roles in different parts of the country. The length of time each spent at the various stages of the career ladder was also very similar. Yet, as evidenced by their portfolio exhibits, the two had learned quite different things from their current position.

Auditor A's discussion demonstrated that he was a master of work-flow planning. He could take the most complex systems audit and estimate almost to the hour how long it would take a team of his accountants to complete the task. However, the individuals under his direction were apparently perceived as little more than interchangeable cogs in a well-oiled machine.

Conversely, Auditor B had become an adept personnel manager and career programmer. His observations indicated that he knew how to detect and productively utilize work style differences among his subordinates and could bring this knowledge to bear in selecting and pairing different people for different types of assignments. His group's audits were being completed --- but not with the time-line precision common to his colleague.

Both of these students were experiential learners. Both had honed their competencies to a high level. Yet, because each selected for attention different elements from the complex web of real-life immersion, each had acquired different competency strengths; different cognitive weaknesses. Sensitive portfolio instruments can detect these

differences in a prescriptive way for the student (What do I still have to learn?) and in a descriptive way for the department (What are we actually teaching and where?).

Any assessment portfolio therefore, including those used in communication education evaluation, must accommodate learner distinctiveness through scrupulous attention to self-assessment; and must identify and gauge the sources of learning through rigorous standards of documentation. Putting the matter most succinctly, documentation evidences the doing while self-assessment validates the learning. Because self-assessment and documentation are the twin pillars by which the entire portfolio process is supported, let us take a moment to examine each.

Self-Assessment

A precise portfolio self-assessment mechanism forces students to convey the essence of the experience together with what they learned from it, in their own words. Self-assessment probing is based on two primary assumptions. If a person has really learned something, they should be able to:

- [1] isolate its most important elements
- [2] explain the essential characteristics of these elements

in language that is discernible to a reasonably educated lay person.

As we previously discussed, different people learn different things from the "same" experience. The more complex the experience, the greater the variety of learned competencies likely to be derived from it --- and therefore, the greater dissimilarity of student self-assessment statements about it. Thus, it is to be expected that a supervisory position at the department's radio station or as captain of the debate squad may produce a wider spectrum of articulated competencies among students who performed these functions than would their mutual exposure to the instructor-structured world of a basic lecture class.

From an individual student standpoint, self-assessment allows us to ascertain just what was gained from a given experience ---without prejudging as to whether or not this is what our department wanted or expected the student to learn in this activity. Unlike a classroom test where we often seek a commonality of responses, the self-assessment

questions posed in each portfolio exhibit should be structured to permit divergency. We encourage the student to describe what they really learned from a given experience. Then, taking the portfolio as a whole, we evaluate whether key competencies have been attained by the student as a sum total of all the experiential events which that portfolio chronicles.

From a programmatic standpoint, of course, our primary interest is whether this sum total reflects the competency attainment that we mandate for each of our graduates. This is also the concern of those external agencies to which we are accountable. But in addition, an open-ended self-assessment mechanism also facilitates internal review of all of the components that make up our curriculum and its co-curricular and extra-curricular enterprises. If several student self-assessments are isolating the same learning outcome for a given activity --- and that outcome substantially departs from the activity's "official" reason for existence --- we can take two courses of action: [1] If the learned outcome is important to our mission, we can modify the activity to more directly support that outcome, and look for another course or planned experience to teach our originally intended subject matter. [2] If the learned outcome is peripheral or irrelevant to our mission, we can downgrade or delete the experience altogether. Either way, student self-assessment has helped to refine our program by distinguishing what learning is really occurring from the learning that we thought was occurring. The more "historic" the curriculum, the more graphic this dichotomy is likely to be evidenced in our students' self-assessments.

To be sure, self-assessment requires deep reflection on the part of each learner. But through careful formulation of framing questions, a portfolio format can encourage students to engage in the process in a way that is revealing both to them, and to the communication studies program in which they are enrolled. These positive results are enhanced by requiring that self-assessment responses be expressed in the student's own words. Portfolio preparation instructions must establish that the parroting of catalog and syllabus course descriptions is prohibited; that the mimicking of internship and co-curricular objectives and mission statements is not allowed. In short, it must be made clear

that the only "wrong" answers to the portfolio's self-assessment questions are those that do not flow from the student's own articulated observations.

Documentation

As was previously stated, self-assessment validates the learning, while documentation proves the doing. In other words, documentation serves two functions:

[1] establishes that the student actually participated in the experience;

[2] evidences the breadth and depth (the scope and length) of that experience.

Documentation authoritatively places the student in a situation that possesses the potential for generating college-level competencies. While the type of learning (as revealed via self-assessment) may vary substantially from student to student, the dimensions of a common experience are much more uniform. Proper portfolio documentation assures that a student participated in a complete experience --- and establishes that this experience was of sufficient duration, intensity and sophistication to carry the likelihood of the attainment of college-level competencies.

In the Sample Portfolio Packet found in the following section of this chapter, several types of appropriate documentation are listed. For a conventional course offered within a communication studies department, documentation is obviously a much easier task than for a hobby or other life experience that takes place totally outside any structured class or workplace. Yet, even for a "regular" course, proper documentation is more than the mere attachment of a grade report. It must also encompass specific evidence of the kinds of learner performance which resulted in that grade.

A Sample Portfolio Packet

Appendix A contains a prototype portfolio packet that can be implemented by a communication studies program. Following the cover sheet (which would be configured to reflect institutional identity and format requirements), the first form in the packet provides key information about the student. Just as important, it requires this student, as author, to attest to the accuracy of all of the exhibits that are to follow. Depending on the role of the portfolio in fulfilling graduation requirements, this certification statement could be

strengthened into a formal affidavit complete with notarized signature and specification of penalties for willful deception.

The next page, the PORTFOLIO TABLE OF CONTENTS, inventories all of the exhibits to be found in the `book,' together with the documentation that accompanies each. This contents list may extend to several pages --- depending on the breadth of experiences that the communication studies unit wishes to encompass in the portfolio development project.

PART ONE --- LEARNING FROM WORK EXPERIENCES is a two-sided form designed for the discussion of a single job. The student would use a separate form for each work experience included in the portfolio. Because we are interested in identifying the student's learned competencies rather than their financial status, unpaid practica and internships are usually treated like any remunerated employment.

All work situations share a fundamental commonality. At least as compared to classroom experiences, the progression of an occupational activity (paid or unpaid) is relatively unstructured and capricious. To learn from it, the employee must bring careful perception and organized reflection to bear. There is no instructor to provide continuous focus and development. Even if the supervisor is a skilled trainer, the bulk of an employee's time is still spent in self-learning --- in trying to pull coherence from a mass of simultaneous, repetitive, and sometimes conflicting tasks. An appropriately-organized portfolio packet recognizes this commonality by grouping all on-the-job experiences in the same section; with the same self-assessment measurements applied to each.

Thus, after providing basic time/place specifics, our prototype form asks the student a series of three leading questions; the answers to which will comprise the exhibit's self-assessment component.

In responding to the central "What have you learned?" query, it often is useful for students to engage in the continuous self-critiquing exercise of asking themselves: "So What?", "Why is this Important?", and "What's the Underlying Principle?". These questions will help the portfolio writer to move beyond mere experience description to

genuine learning isolation:

"I learned to write and deliver short, persuasive sales pitches."

SO WHAT?

"This taught me the value and power of proper word selection and arrangement in successful communication. I now take a great deal more care in my choice of words and progression of ideas in everything that I write."

"I can now manipulate a studio camera with confidence that I will deliver the required shot."

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

"To direct viewer attention to the pictorial center of interest, I found that you must not only know the equipment, but also understand visual planes and aesthetic framing."

"This internship allowed me to see that program choices are motivated by the search for advertising dollars."

WHAT'S THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE?

"I learned that an effective commercial programmer must be in the business of manufacturing audiences rather than shows."

These questions assist students in transcending the actual experience to recall what learning theorist David Kolb labels the "Reflective Observation" that should have taken place as a proximate result of the experience. If true learning has occurred, the student should then be able to employ this observation to reach Kolb's third stage of "Abstract Conceptualization" which can then be extended to cope with future situations as "Active Experimentation."

If, on the other hand, the student's self-assessment remains stuck at the "manipulating the camera" stage, we might seriously question whether true college-level learning has taken place. And if most students coming out of this particular job placement exhibit a similar cognitive limitation, we might want to distance our program from any

formal relationship with this employment provider --- or reconfigure the experience if the department itself is providing it! Perhaps the available job tasks are just too rudimentary ever to result in college-level learning.

In any case, the work experience form would be followed by appropriate pieces of documentation that authoritatively place the portfolio author in this employment setting and evidence the level of success that was attained there. The documentation must demonstrate that the situation provided the kinds of experience that could potentially stimulate the claimed learned competencies.

PART TWO --- LEARNING FROM PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

EXPERIENCES, pertains to course-type settings. Though the precise questions asked are somewhat different from PART ONE's forms, these exhibits are structured in a very similar way. The request for time/place data is followed by queries about the class content, scope, level, and evaluative mechanisms. Then, the crucial self-assessment response is requested (to which students should apply the same self-critiquing questions that were suggested to help shape job-derived self-assessments.)

As in the previous section, the student typically would complete a separate PART TWO form for each training experience. However, depending on the precise purposes the portfolio is intend to serve in a given communication studies curriculum, it may be more logical to group sequence courses together on a single form. Alternatively, certain introductory or core courses may be omitted altogether from the portfolio process to allow it to concentrate on more high-level and/or specialized offerings. This decision hinges, of course, on the outcomes we are trying to measure --- and for whose scrutiny. This context will also determine whether training experiences completely external to our curriculum and campus are to be included in the portfolio's purview. Whatever exhibits are encompassed, each form is then followed by documentation relevant to the experience or experience cluster.

PART THREE --- LEARNING FROM HOBBIES AND OTHER LIFE

EXPERIENCES, is largely optional. If the portfolio process is deployed to reflect only

what occurs under the direct sponsorship of the communication studies unit, few if any PART THREE experiences will qualify for inclusion. If, on the other hand, we are interested in chronicling the total spectrum of students' college-level learning, regardless of source, this section adds an essential dimension to the process. In other words, if the portfolio is intended solely to measure the efficacy of our curriculum, PART THREE is irrelevant. But if the portfolio is designed, even in part, to be a student self-appraisal or job-hunting vehicle, then hobbies and other life experiences that have resulted in professionally-relevant competencies should probably be included. The PART THREE form requires an articulation of this relevance along with responses similar in thrust to what was requested in the previous two sections' exhibits. Multiple forms may be required to complete PART THREE as well.

For organizational clarity and to further emphasize the distinctions between these three sections, it is advisable to print their forms on different colored stock. LEARNING FROM WORK EXPERIENCES may be reproduced on yellow paper, for example, with the TRAINING EXPERIENCES form printed on pink and the OTHER experiences documents rendered in blue. Students would obtain as many of each as necessary in order to construct the number of exhibits entailed by their learning background. Once the forms are completed and assembled with their supporting documentation, the pages are then hole-punched and placed in a three-ring binder for submission.

Although they would not be submitted in the finalized book, the initiating portfolio packet should also include additional pages of instructions, definitions, and student encouragements. The instruction sheets that we have included in our prototype clearly pertain to a portfolio that is as much a student-promoting "achievement book" as it is an accountability instrument for the sponsoring communication studies program. Whether you wish your portfolios to serve one or both purposes is an issue that should be faced in the earliest stages of process implementation.

Portfolio Benefits for the Student

The concluding comments in the above section notwithstanding, it is difficult to conceive of

a successful portfolio process that does not, at least in part, serve the self-interests of the students who will be preparing these books. This is a tenet we expressed at the very beginning of the chapter. Portfolio systems that are constructed solely to protect or enhance the parent department's interests with external authorities are unlikely to motivate students to engage in enthusiastic book preparation. The real purpose of these volumes will become far too obvious; and artificially tying their completion to course or graduation requirements scarcely adds to their student appeal.

Conversely, the portfolio instrument designed to accommodate students' twin desires for [1] self-concept support and [2] a job-seeking tool, will be embraced much more readily. The portfolio structure we have suggested simultaneously meets both of these student needs --- in addition to servicing programmatic accountability mandates.

In the rapidly changing and intensely competitive communication industries, graduates need the initial assurance that they possess the competencies required for success. Once we have ensured that our curriculum provides these competencies ---and credentials only those students who have been able demonstrably to attain them --- it is essential that we help to convey this sense of valid accomplishment to those graduates. The process and result of portfolio completion ratifies for its author the learning that has occurred. It concretely demonstrates that "I have done a lot; I already have achieved a number of goals to get myself ready for the career ahead." Any adult tends to define themselves in terms of their past experiences. The assessment portfolio focuses this definition on the experiential outcomes most relevant to professional stature and growth.

In addition, with little or no modification, the assessment portfolio provides a potential employer with tangible evidence of the assets that this applicant immediately can "bring to the party." It can work in conjunction with a creative portfolio or serve as a stand-alone vehicle in the case of students who are not seeking writing or visual design positions. While few corporate interviewers may read the book in its totality, even a cursory skimming of a well-ordered portfolio will plant specific and applicant-advantageous impressions.

Programmatic Evaluation of the Portfolio

In utilizing the portfolio to determine the efficacy of our curriculum, we must derive a consistent means for 'book' appraisal. A portfolio doesn't determine a department's instructional outcomes, of course. Rather, it is a vehicle for analyzing whether or not your students are reaching the learning goals you have separately and previously isolated.

Each communication school or department must set its desired instructional outcomes before it deploys a portfolio system. Otherwise, in the words of an old advertising industry conundrum, "If you don't know where you're going, you're likely to end up somewhere else." Outcomes isolation is a topic that has been addressed in previous chapters of this book. So for the purposes of our discussion here, we will restrict our focus to the subsequent portfolio evaluation procedures.

First of all, it is suggested that the unit develop a master outcomes nomenclature template that inventories the total range of competencies that we wish to detect in our students. For purposes of illustration, Table 11-1 constitutes a very comprehensive template developed by Central Michigan University's Prior Learning Assessment Team. Because this team seeks to identify learned competencies evidenced from the student's total range of experiential learning, without regard to departmental affiliations, this instrument is much broader than would be one fashioned for use by a communication studies department. We can, however, develop a similar matrix to survey our curricular purview in a more narrow-gauge way.

PUT THE TWO-PAGE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE. (Facing Pages)

Caption: Outcomes nomenclature template developed by Central Michigan University's Prior Learning Assessment Team, College of Extended Learning.

A communication department's Level 1, for example, might list competencies in Station Management, Theatre Administration, or Publication Administration. Its Level 2 might encompass such titles as Studio Control, Speech Activities Coordination, Discussion

Leadership, Campaign Organization, Facility Schedule Planning and Traffic & Continuity Supervision. Finally, a communication department's Level 3 could isolate such task-specific competencies as Small Group Facilitation, Basic Audio Production, Scene Design or Newswriting Practices. No matter how the nomenclature template is originally designed, it should then be subjected to continuous refinement as the unit and its faculty have the opportunity to examine and process more and more portfolios.

Consistency in the assessment of portfolios begins with a common nomenclature template. But this consistency actually is operationalized by faculty who have a common understanding of the unit's assessment process. One practice that has proven effective in experiential learning circles is the use of the "team approach." Two faculty, for example, would independently evaluate a student's portfolio, identifying the competencies from the template that are persuasively present in it. These two separate evaluations would then go to the team "coordinator" who also reads the portfolio, and then reconciles differences between the two original evaluators to arrive at the final competency assessment determination. If the discrepancy between the two evaluators is wide, the coordinator can also meet with them to resolve the discrepancy and to address the possible assessment misapplications that caused it.

In such a system, the coordinator thus reads every portfolio submitted. (In large, multifaceted departments, separate coordinators could be appointed for Theatre, Radio-Television, Speech Communication, etc.) This not only assures a consistency of evaluations, but also identifies "deviant" faculty evaluators who require additional training in the assessment process. Because of the scope of the coordinator's duties, the person fulfilling this function should be (1) interested and committed to the assessment process; (2) a respected senior colleague who therefore is not politically dependent on his/her evaluators; and (3) the recipient of a substantial "released time" allocation in recognition of these responsibilities. All members of the department may be required to serve as initial evaluators as part of their ongoing contractual tasks. Alternatively, a smaller team of more skilled assessors may be assembled with their advising or other loads reduced

accordingly to support their involvement with a greater number of portfolios.

In reaching their assessment decisions, faculty evaluators must not only detect competencies, but also the depth of these competencies as evidenced in a given portfolio.

They therefore must come to common understandings as to five variables:

1. Time. What is the minimum length of time necessary to achieve the competency in a course, work, or 'other' life experience?
2. Level. Is this experience one that feasibly and demonstrably leads to more comprehensive, directorial competencies (Levels 1 and 2 on the nomenclature template) or more narrow, task-oriented (Level 3) competencies?
3. Complexity. Does this experience appear to lead to a single competency, or a cluster of a primary and one or more secondary competencies (such as a mastered class in Media Management in which the student also attained secondary competencies in Budgeting and Employee Evaluation)?
4. Relevance. Is this learned competency of importance to the student's plan of study and career goals? Does it pertain to outcomes encompassed by the department's mission?
5. Progression. Was this competency built on earlier learning --- or is it a replicative or regressive experience as compared to previous activities and achievements?

Once some general understandings and guidelines pertaining to these variables have been evolved, the portfolio evaluation process can move from its trial to its fully functioning phase. It must be stressed once again, however, that portfolio evaluation will only be successful to the extent that the sponsoring department has clearly and conscientiously identified its own mission and desired student outcomes.

The Portfolio Outlook

Whether or not we choose to (or are required to) utilize an assessment portfolio in our own communication studies program, it seems clear that the portfolio mechanism is becoming a fixture in many academic sectors. Several colleges of education now tie portfolio

preparation to the selection and career preparation of teacher candidates. Even more broadly, the K-12 accountability movement has injected portfolios into many public school systems. As just one example, on July 16, 1992, the Governor of Michigan signed into law a state-wide portfolio mandate. Section 104 of Public Act 148 specifies that, "To receive state aid, each district must: provide and maintain a student portfolio until the pupil graduates or leaves the district." The Act phased in the requirement to apply to all ninth graders in 1993-94 and all students beginning the eighth grade in 1994-95. It further specifies that each portfolio shall have at least four major sections containing: [1] records of academic and nonacademic plans that the student intends to follow; [2] records of academic achievement; [3] records of career and job preparation; and [4] records of recognitions, accomplishments and community service.

Derived from a 1987 survey of state employers and piloted in 22 Michigan districts during 1991-92, this portfolio system reflects a nationwide concern about employability skills and an insistence on tighter linkages between the education and business communities. It is a trend that communication educators cannot afford to ignore - - - if only because we are far more likely than most disciplines to profit from it. With so much of our curriculum devoted to pre-professional training, it makes sense to participate in a process designed to enhance and credential career preparation.

As more and more of our students are initiated to portfolio-building in their earlier schooling, it should become easier for us to adopt higher-level portfolio strategies that directly reflect and identify professional communication competencies - - - and demonstrate all that we are doing to foster them!

BACKGROUND READING

Deweese, P. (1986). The assessment of prior learning: A critical adult learner service. Athens, OH: Project Learn.

Fugate, M. and MacTaggart, T. (1983). Managing the assessment function: Cost effective assessment of prior learning. (Vol 19, pp. 27-43). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Keeton, M. (Ed.) (1976). Experiential learning: Rationale, characteristics and assessment. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Keeton, M. and Tate, P. (1981). Learning by experience --- what, why, how. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knapp, J. (1977). Assessing prior learning. Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning.

Knapp, J. (1981). Financing and implementing prior learning assessment. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kolb, D. (1976). Learning style inventory: Technical manual. Boston: McBer and Company.

Kray, E. and Hultgren, L. (1976). Implementing and financing portfolio assessment in a public institution. Columbia, MD: Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning.

Mandell, A. and Michelson, E. (1990). Portfolio development and adult learning: Purposes and strategies. Chicago: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Rydell, S. (Ed.) (1982). Creditable portfolios: Dimensions in diversity. Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning.

Simosko, S. (1988). Assessing learning: A CAEL handbook for faculty. Columbia, MD: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Simosko, S. (1985). Earning college credit for what you know. Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books.

Warren, J. and Breen, P. (1981). The educational value of portfolio and learning contract development. Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning.

Whitaker, U. (1990). Assessing learning: Standards, principles and procedures. Philadelphia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Willingham, W. (1977). Principles of good practice in assessing experiential learning. Columbia, MD: Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning.

Yelon, S. and Duley, J. (1979). Efficient evaluation of individual performance in field placement. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Resource Bibliography

- Chickering, Arthur. "Vocations and the Liberal Arts," in D.W. Vermilye (ed.) Relating Work and Education: Current Issues in Higher Education 1977 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).
- Deweese, Patricia. The Assessment of Prior Learning: A Critical Adult Learner Service (Athens, OH: Project Learn, 1986).
- Fugate, Mary and Terrence MacTaggart. Managing the Assessment Function: Cost Effective Assessment of Prior Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Vol. 19, 1983), pp. 27-43.
- Keeton, Morris (ed.). Experiential Learning: Rationale, Characteristics, and Assessment (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976).
- Keeton, Morris and Pamela Tate. Learning By Experience --- What, Why, How (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981).
- Knapp, Joan. Assessing Prior Learning (Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning, 1977).
- Knapp, Joan. Financing and Implementing Prior Learning Assessment (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981).
- Kolb, David. Experiential Learning (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984).
- Kolb, David. Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual (Boston: McBer and Company, 1976).
- Kray, Eugene and Lorraine Hultgren. Implementing and Financing Portfolio Assessment in a Public Institution (Columbia, MD: Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, 1976).
- Mandell, Alan and Elana Michelson. Portfolio Development and Adult Learning: Purposes and Strategies (Chicago: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1990).
- Rydell, Susan (ed.). Creditable Portfolios: Dimensions in Diversity (Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning, 1982).
- Simosko, Susan. Assessing Learning: A CAEL Handbook for Faculty (Columbia, MD:

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1988).

Simosko, Susan. Earning College Credit for What You Know (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1985).

Warren, Jonathan, and Paul Breen. The Educational Value of Portfolio and Learning Contract Development (Columbia, MD: Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning, 1981).

Whitaker, Urban. Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles & Procedures (Philadelphia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1990).

Willingham, Warren. Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning (Columbia, MD: Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning, 1977).

Yelon, Stephen and John Duley. Efficient Evaluation of Individual Performance in Field Placement (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 1979).

Level 1

ADMINISTRATION: Broad applications of planning, implementation and control. The general term ADMINISTRATION would be used when the student has demonstrated that these competencies go across divisional lines.

SPECIFIC ADMINISTRATION COMPETENCIES

Accounting/Auditing Administration
 Communications Administration
 Facility Administration
 Fiscal Administration
 Health Care Administration
 Human Resource Administration

Logistics Administration
 Maintenance Administration
 Marketing Administration
 National Security Administration
 Operations Administration
 Program Administration

Production Administration
 Public Administration
 Purchasing Administration
 Resource Administration

Level 2

Primary responsibility for carrying out one or more parts of the administrative process. This will usually entail the responsibility for supervising others in carrying out these tasks.

CONTROLLING

Control Analysis
 Cost Control
 Fiscal Control
 Health Systems Control
 Inventory Control
 Operations Control
 Production Control
 Quality Control

COORDINATION

Educational Coordination
 Instructional Coordination
 Operations Coordination

LEADERSHIP

Community Leadership
 Educational Leadership
 Industrial Leadership

ORGANIZING

Organizational Psychology
 Organization Therapy
 Organizational Development

PLANNING

Administrative Planning
 Contract Planning
 Data Base Planning
 Facility Planning
 Fiscal Planning
 Forecasting and Planning
 Land-Use Planning
 Long-Range Planning
 Operations Planning
 Product Planning
 Program Planning
 Scheduling
 Strategic Planning
 Work-Flow Planning

SUPERVISION

Clinical Supervision
 Educational Supervision
 Laboratory Supervision
 Office Supervision
 Operations Supervision

Level 3

Responsibility for carrying out a specific task. The focus of the individual is on a task rather than the supervision or coordination of others carrying out these tasks.

COMMUNICATION

Business Writing
 Creative Writing
 Editing
 Fund Raising
 Interviewing
 Journalism
 Photojournalism
 Public Relations
 Public Speaking
 Publication
 Report Writing
 Technical Writing
 Telecommunications

DISTRIBUTION

Traffic Operations
 Inventory Control
 Warehousing
 Wholesaling

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Campaigning
 Community Services
 Community Development
 Contractor Relations/Procedures
 Customer Relations
 Fund Raising
 Lobbying
 Political Action
 Supplier Relations
 Vendor Relations

FINANCIAL METHODS

Auditing
 Budgeting
 Cost Accounting
 Cost Analysis
 Cost Estimation
 Credit And Collections
 Financial Accounting
 Income Tax Theory and Preparation
 Investments
 Tax Accounting

HEALTH CARE OPERATIONS

Clinical Measurement
 Emergency Medical Technology
 Gerontological Health Care
 Health Care Practices
 Health Care Services
 Inhalation Therapy
 Laboratory Instrumentation
 Nutrition

HUMAN RESOURCES

Affirmative Action/Race Relations
 Career Programming/Counseling
 Collective Bargaining
 Employee
 Compensation/Benefits
 Development
 Evaluation/Appraisal
 Recruiting
 Relations
 Training
 Industrial Relations
 Interview Techniques
 Labor Relations
 Performance Appraisal
 Personnel Services
 Union Relations
 Wage and Salary Administration

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Computer Applications
 Computer Concepts
 Computer Systems
 Data Systems
 Management Information Systems
 Records Systems
 Systems Analysis
 Systems Development

INSTRUCTION

Curriculum Development
 Instructional Aide
 Instructional Strategies
 Learning Theory
 Religious Instruction
 Student Assessment
 Training and Development
 Visual Aid Construction
 Vocational Education

INTERNAL RELATIONS

Client Services
 Scheduling
 Traffic Operations
 Work-Flow Planning

MANUFACTURING/OPERATIONS

Computer Assisted Design
 Computer Assisted Manufacturing
 Industrial Engineering
 Industrial Safety
 Numerical Control Systems
 Product Design
 Production Control
 Production Control Analysis
 Quality Assurance
 Quality Control
 Robotics
 Shop Methods
 Statistical Process Control
 Time and Motion Study

OFFICE SYSTEMS

Applied Secretarial Skills
 Clerical Practices
 Keyboarding/Typing
 Office Management
 Office Practices
 Office Procedures
 Office Systems
 Record Keeping
 Records Systems
 Word Processing

POLITICS

Campaigning
 Legislative Process
 Lobbying
 Local Politics
 Party Politics
 Practical Politics

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTPURCHASING

Inventory Control
 Logistics
 Negotiations
 Procurement
 Supplier Relations
 Vendor Contracting

REAL ESTATE

Real Estate Principles
 Real Estate Sales

RESEARCH AREAS

Analysis
 Cost
 Data
 Fiscal Control
 Evaluation
 Forecasting
 Marketing
 Performance
 Quality Control
 Work-Flow Measurement

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Analytical Skills
 Computer Applications
 Computer Concepts
 Data Processing
 Computer Programming
 Economic Analysis
 Library Resource Skills
 Microcomputers
 Operations Research
 Software Design
 Software Use (specify)
 Statistics

SMALL BUSINESS

Small Business Administration
 Small Business Practices

SOCIAL SERVICES

Alcohol Counseling
 Client Counseling
 Community Development
 Community Services
 Family Relations
 Public Safety
 Recreation Services
 Social Work
 Substance Abuse Counseling
 Youth Activities

NOTE TO PRODUCTION: PLACE THE SAMPLE PORTFOLIO PAGES ABOUT
HERE. THE COVER PAGE MUST START AS A LEFT-SIDE PAGE SO THAT THE
PARTS ONE, TWO, and THREE SHEETS EXHIBIT THE PROPER BACK-TO-FRONT
RELATIONSHIPS. APPENDIX A: (Organizational Packet and Instructions)

THE COMMUNICATION STUDENT'S

COMPETENCY PORTFOLIO

Organizational Packet and Instructions

Communication Studies Department
Multiplex University
653 Reputable Hall
Stubblefield, MI 48859

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE PORTFOLIO AUTHOR

Name:

Present Address:

Permanent Address:

Preferred Phone Number:

Alternate Phone Number:

~~~~~

Degree Being Completed:

Major:

Area(s) of Concentration:

Minor(s):

Previous Post-Secondary Schools Attended:

Previous Post-Secondary Degrees and Diplomas Received:

~~~~~

AUTHOR CERTIFICATION

I affirm that the information submitted in this portfolio is true and accurately presented.

.....
(author signature)

.....
(date)

PORTFOLIO TABLE OF CONTENTS

Instructions: This page should catalogue all of the exhibits (sections) included in your portfolio. Each exhibit is identified by a hyphenated part and order number. Thus, the first (most recent) work experience/exhibit is labelled I-1, the first training experience/exhibit is labelled II-1, and the first hobbies and other life experience/exhibit is labelled III-1. Use as many pages as necessary to complete this table of contents.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Title of Experience</u>	<u>Documentation List</u>
I-1		

PART ONE --- LEARNING FROM WORK EXPERIENCES
(including practica and internships)

Instructions: Use the front and back of this page to describe what you learned in each single position. All related documentation should be placed in your portfolio immediately behind this page. Begin with your most recent (current) work experience and proceed backward in reverse chronological order -- most recent to least recent. Use as many sheets as you need. Include pre-college work only if you believe the experience resulted in the acquisition of college-level competencies.

Dates of Employment (month, year)

From:

To:

Full-time or part-time?

Average number of hours per week:

Exact Title of Position:

Name and Address of Employing Organization:

Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor:

Supervisor's Address & Phone Number:

What were the primary RESPONSIBILITIES assigned to you in this position? (Describe in your own words.)

What have you LEARNED as a result of your performance in this position? (Do not forget to include technical skill development as well as knowledge acquisition.)

Did you accomplish any special tasks that attracted commendation while functioning in this position? (Special achievements must be documented as well as described.)

PART TWO --- LEARNING FROM PROFESSIONAL TRAINING EXPERIENCES

Instructions: Use the front and back of this page to describe each single training experience (class) that resulted in learning directly applicable to the performance of professional tasks within the communications industries. All related documentation should be placed in your portfolio immediately behind this page. Begin with your most recent training experience and work your way back in time. Use as many sheets as you need. Do not include secondary school coursework.

Title of Class or Session:

School/Organization Providing the Training:

Dates of Training (month/year)

From:

To:

In-Class Clock Hours:

Brief description of the course and its major units (in your own words):

Describe the amount and type of course preparation required OUTSIDE of class:

What were the prerequisites for admission to this course?

By what means was your performance evaluated --- and how frequently?

In the space below, discuss in your own words the specific knowledge and competencies you gained from this training experience. DO NOT just repeat the offering organization's course description!

PART THREE --- LEARNING FROM HOBBIES AND OTHER LIFE EXPERIENCES

Instructions: Complete this part if you have attained college-level competencies from activities outside of conventional work and training experiences --- such as hobbies, travel, and community/social service endeavors. All related documentation should be placed in your portfolio immediately behind this page. Begin with the most recent experience and work your way back in time. Use as many sheets as necessary, but remember --- each experience described should have resulted in the acquisition of knowledge and competencies directly applicable to your career as a communications professional.

Activity Title/Brief Description:

Dates of Activity (month, year)

From:

To:

Organization (if applicable):

Approximate hours per month spent on this activity during the specified period:

What tasks did you complete during your participation in this activity?

What was your primary responsibility or focus during your participation in this activity?

Describe the activity in detail:

What specifically did you learn? And what is the relevance of this learning to your anticipated career as a communications professional?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS
(Do NOT include this sheet in your completed portfolio)

Work Experiences

Learning from a work experience differs in nature and kind from learning acquired in a class/training experience. For example, classroom learning is much more focused and concentrated than "real life." In a work experience, you must isolate what is important. Different people often learn/emphasize substantially different things from the "same" job. There seldom is an instructor-figure to distill and organize the experience to make the learning uniform in topic and depth. Consequently, it usually takes longer to acquire a competency through a work experience than it does through a training experience. And the competencies attained by two persons in similar positions may be radically different. In short, describe and detail what you learned --- not what someone else may have learned from the same job.

Training Experiences

Similarly, course outlines and objectives set forth instructor/institutional goals for a class. They seldom correspond exactly to what an individual student learns from that class. Thus, be certain to isolate what you personally achieved from this training rather than what a course bulletin or syllabus indicates you should have achieved.

Hobbies and Other Life Experiences

Sometimes a hobby or community service activity can result in competency attainment that is directly relevant to your career. For example, you might learn the rudiments of facility management by scheduling ice time for the teams in your youth hockey league. You might acquire principles of budgeting and/or accounting as treasurer of a club or sorority. Or perhaps you've attained the ability to select and edit commercial music beds as a byproduct of piano study or playing in a band. Do not overlook sources of learning outside the obvious situations of the workplace and college classroom.

Documentation

For all three categories of learning experiences, you must provide tangible evidence of your participation and level of

attainment in each activity. Documentation typically consists of such items as the following:

WORK EXPERIENCES

Performance evaluations by your supervisor; official job descriptions; awards; letters of commendation/congratulation for high performance; evidence of promotion; samples/excerpts of work produced; evidence of suggestions adopted or special projects/innovations that you organized or created.

TRAINING EXPERIENCES

Course descriptions, syllabi, outlines; official transcripts/reports of grades received; samples of assignments you completed; written instructor comments on your work; licenses or certificates earned; written evidence of class preparation required; official statement of qualifications necessary for admittance to the class.

HOBBIES AND OTHER LIFE EXPERIENCES

Copies of publications, writings or drawings; newspaper articles describing your proficiency or contribution; letters confirming your participation with service organizations; commendations, recognitions, and awards received; photos of items you built/created together with certifications that the item pictured was your work.

~~~~~

In Summary

A well-structured portfolio constitutes a detailed assessment of your competencies and achievements. It is not a pile of random observations or claims. Instead, it serves as an integrated and documented album of the knowledge and skills that you are ready to bring to bear in taking your place as a successful communications professional. The conscientiously prepared portfolio not only showcases your competencies to others, but also functions as a personal reminder/reassurance of what you have already accomplished.