

Four-Year Electronic Portfolio System for Program Evaluation and Accreditation

Project

A faculty committee from Portland State University's University Studies, Yves Labissiere, Psychology/University Studies, Sukhwant Jhaj, Architecture/University Studies, Grace Dillon, English/University Studies, Michael Toth, Sociology, and Georg Grathoff, Geology/University Studies, in conjunction with Judy Patton, Director of University Studies, will spearhead the development of a common portfolio site for the development of student electronic portfolios. Students will utilize these portfolios throughout their educational careers at Portland State University and potentially beyond. The committee will work with Nate Angell, PSU web master. Angell has designed a common web site template and support structure for the university that is in the initial stages of implementation. We believe that this structure, called Saga, may be the best location for the student portfolios. The funding from NWACC will allow the development of a common portfolio site and template along the research into the best technology for housing them. In addition, University Studies has wanted to extend the portfolios throughout the four-year curriculum. The development of the common site will allow this vision to be implemented. Faculty teaching at the Sophomore Inquiry and Senior Capstone levels of the program have been working to develop key assignments to use to assess those levels of the program. Those key assignments will be the next work samples that students put into their portfolios. The portfolios will include resumes as well. Student self-evaluations and reflective essays will be part of the portfolios and of the assessment of the program. Funding will also allow us to offer faculty development activities to support the integration of the portfolios in this new version into classes across all levels of University Studies.

The committee will also work closely with Kathi Ketcheson, Director of Institutional Research and Planning, who directed the development of the university electronic portfolio. PSU is working with the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges to pilot the accreditation review process using the institutional electronic portfolio. The electronic student portfolio assessment data and sample portfolios will be linked to the institutional portfolio to show evidence of student learning in general education and in the majors. Major departments will be able to elect to use the portfolios as well as part of the assessment of the major. University Studies will be working in partnership with Architecture to create the common portfolio site for the use of both programs from the beginning.

While many institutions are involved in the development of electronic student portfolios, few are using them for program evaluation or to demonstrate student learning for accreditation purposes. At Portland State University, we have begun the development of an assessment system that utilizes student portfolios for both purposes. In University Studies, student portfolios have been used in the first year courses, Freshman Inquiry, since the beginning of the program in 1994. The intent for the portfolios was to improve student learning; however, secondarily, the portfolios were to be used for program evaluation. While the assessment plan for the program includes several measures,

student work samples are the central feature. Freshman Inquiry is the required, entering student, yearlong course with a current enrollment of approximately 1500 students in 41 courses this year. Over half of the Freshman Inquiry portfolios are electronic, but they are created in various, dissimilar formats. For the past four years a sample of the portfolios, both hard copy and electronic, has been reviewed and the resulting data used for course improvement and program evaluation. In addition students taking Senior Inquiry, a collaborative program between PSU and four area high schools, and in parallel curriculum at Clackamas Community College, also create portfolios that are included in the annual review. The common portfolio site will be used in the high school programs and will be available to students in the Freshman and Sophomore Inquiry courses at Clackamas Community College as well.

Innovation and Dissemination

PSU, as is the case for many other institutions, does not have the resources to design and implement an entire e-world for the campus. The electronic portfolio system that this funding will support will be a more cost effective strategy. The process of development and the design will be shared with campuses in NWACC and with other institutions interested through day-long seminars and through the PSU web site.

The use of institutional electronic portfolios for accreditation purposes is an innovation. Linking portfolios of student work samples and the data from a programmatic review as evidence of student learning is an innovative assessment strategy. If successful, and we believe that it will be, the accreditation review process in electronic form could become an ongoing option for other institutions in the Northwest and elsewhere. PSU's system would be available through the electronic portfolio via the web.

One piece of the assessment process that the accreditors have asked be present is evidence of the use of assessment data. This element has been particularly difficult to capture. The common portfolio site will include the development of an area on the site for the purpose of gathering faculty reflections of the use of the data for their course improvement.

Two elements of the portfolio system are important to keep in the foreground. One is that their main purpose is to enhance student learning. In order for them to provide for the learning, students need to have control of their design and choice of material. The other is using authentic student work to assess programs. The design of the PSU portfolio system will leave the portfolio as a whole, in the student's hands but will assess the key assignments in relation to the four goals of the program in an easily accessed web environment. The assessment feature may be the common portfolio site while the portfolio, itself, may continue to be student created web sites with an optional template available as well. This way of thinking about portfolio design and assessment is new to the way higher education has been dealing with the issue.

University Studies works closely with several high schools. The collaborative course, Senior Inquiry, includes the common portfolio. These collections of work samples and their evaluations have been successful at helping students demonstrate their learning for

placement and for determining how institutions accept the University Studies transfer credit. The portfolios could develop as a way to demonstrate PASS proficiencies as well and placement more widely.

Evaluation

As the common portfolio site is implemented, questions about the efficacy of the design and ease of its use will be included in the ongoing assessment process. End of course evaluations will include questions for students. Faculty will be surveyed separately. The annual portfolio review will include an assessment of the ease of the process using the common site at the completion of each day's review. The portfolio review generally takes place over three to four days. Each day one goal is assessed using rubrics that have been calibrated at the beginning of each day.