

OLN '02-'03 Learning Communities Initiative

**Learning From Experience: “Developing Portraits of Practice: CASE RECORDS”**

**A. Project Title:** *Your kingdom for a few words?*

Exploring Electronic Portfolios as a Form of Alternative Assessment

**B. Project Overview:** *Tell the world what you’re doing. 75 Words or less!*

The LCCC Faculty Learning Community will explore the development of electronic portfolios that embrace a three-fold purpose: formative, summative and marketing. Formative portfolios can be used in the classroom to demonstrate overall progress in a course and become components of the summative portfolios that may be used institutionally to assess program or General Education outcomes. Marketing portfolios can be used by students to demonstrate to potential employers the competencies and lessons learned in a program.

**C. Case Recorder(s):** Identify the person(s) preparing the case record on behalf of the LC. *Who are you?*

Chris Sheetz, Principal Investigator of the Faculty Learning Community

**D. Learning Community Members, units, roles:**

List your community members, their units or disciplines, and roles in the LC. *Who are core members and associates (key people involved in the community project other than core members) of your LC? What experiences do each bring to the community and project?*

Community Member Name	Unit/ Title	Role/s in the Community
1. Christine Sheetz	Faculty, Division of Library & Learning Resources	- Leading/convening Faculty Learning Community; - Using portfolios to assess institutional General Education

		outcomes, specifically critical thinking
2. Joseph Freconna	Coordinator, Employment and Career Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determining the content and format of electronic portfolios for marketing students/ candidates to employers;</li> <li>- Revise and develop new Employment and Career Services Center policies and procedures to incorporate electronic portfolios into the job search and service delivery processes.</li> </ul>
3. Robert Kaiden	Faculty, Division of Programs for Student Success – Developmental Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently requires a portfolio in developmental mathematics courses;</li> <li>- Electronic portfolios that distance students can incorporate into their Internet based coursework.</li> </ul>
4. Susan Leiken	Faculty, Division of Allied Health and Nursing -- Dental Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently incorporates a portfolio project as a requirement for the capstone course in Dental Hygiene</li> <li>- Will modify this portfolio project to require a section on self-assessment as well as preparing it for electronic form.</li> </ul>
5. Dennis Ryan	Faculty, Division of Arts and Humanities -- Graphics and Multi-Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Already uses electronic portfolios in courses</li> <li>- Will contribute technical expertise</li> </ul>
6. Patricia Schrull	Faculty, Division of Allied Health and Nursing	- Portfolios in allied health and nursing programs
7. Dorinda Smith	Faculty, Division of Social Sciences and Human Services -- Public Administration, Political Science and Urban Studies	- Pilot a project with 4 students entering the new Public Administration degree program
8. Michael Substelny	Technical Applications Specialist, Division of Engineering Technologies and Distributed Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Portfolios in the Engineering Technology program</li> <li>- Will offer experience in work measurement and process improvement to the team</li> </ul>

9. Jen Xu	Faculty, Division of Engineering Technologies and Distributed Learning	- Will provide the multi-media and software support for the FLC
10. Michael Zellers	Faculty, Division of Business -- Computer Information Systems	- Use of e-portfolios in the E-Business Program - Will contribute technical expertise

*Other comments about LC members and supporters:*

In addition to the roles within the LC, members of the LC are involved in the campus's assessment and faculty development initiatives.

**E. Background & Context:**

Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. *What do you hope to achieve? How will this contribute to learning at your institution? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have or would like?*

The LCCC Faculty Learning Community will explore the development of electronic portfolios that embrace a three-fold purpose: formative, summative and marketing. For example, formative portfolios can be used in the classroom to demonstrate overall progress in a course and become components of the summative portfolios that may be used institutionally to assess General Education outcomes. Marketing portfolios can be used by students to demonstrate competencies and lessons learned that could be transferred directly to the workplace.

The teaching members of the FLC will select a pilot course or program that will enable him/her to master the basic elements of electronic portfolios and collaborate to overcome the difficulties encountered. Each participant in the FLC will develop his/her own electronic portfolio for the pilot course or program. The non-teaching participants will develop an electronic portfolio for their topical issues; e.g., use of electronic portfolios to assess General Education outcomes and for career development.

The College is committed to enhanced assessment through its membership in the North Central Association's Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP), a continuous improvement accreditation model. One of the college's AQIP action projects is Continuously Improve Student Learning Through Faculty Development and Process Improvement, whose goal is to improve faculty development, particularly in the area of assessment, in order to foster student learning and increase retention. The action project includes an initiative to enhance student involvement in the assessment process. The work of the Learning Community Project will support this AQIP action project.

At a minimum, the Learning Community Project will result in a group of faculty and staff who are knowledgeable about electronic portfolios and the multiple uses of them to support learning.

This knowledge will then be shared with other faculty. It will provide the foundation for continued efforts in an area that has been compared to “where course management software was about five or six years ago.”

The practical application of electronic portfolios to student learning will occur at varying levels throughout our project. We may experience the actual use of electronic portfolios in specific courses, the preliminary planning to use electronic portfolios in a program or simply greater understanding of the issues surrounding the use of electronic portfolios.

#### **F. Description of your early work, planning and preparations.**

Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Learning Institute. *What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impact have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?*

In late July, the FLC convened to discuss the preliminary investigation, project plan, process for training faculty and students, and the writing of the Implementation Grant. Several members of the learning community provided their personal experiences of using both written and electronic formats of portfolios in the classroom. After the meeting, each member provided a preliminary plan describing the special contribution or focus he/she will make to the project based on the unique skills and expertise that he/she brings to the learning community. The plans included strategies for piloting electronic portfolios in the Spring Semester, 2003, methods for sharing best practices and lessons learned and anticipated roadblocks. Additionally, to support the progress of the learning community, each member was provided a copy of the book, *Electronic Portfolios: Emerging Practices in Student, Faculty and Institutional Learning*. This book will be used as a resource to promote expertise in the use of electronic portfolios.

In late October, some members of the FLC viewed a videoconference, “Teaching, Learning & Assessment with E-portfolios,” in which experts discussed the teaching and learning issues associated with E-portfolios and the challenges of e-portfolios in higher education. Some members met with a commercial software vendor to discuss technological requirements and capabilities.

In the preliminary awareness stage, we began to ask deeper questions. We made ourselves more aware of the issues around implementing electronic portfolios. Listed below are awarenesses that were gained and questions that must be answered.

- Student reflection on the content of the electronic portfolio is critical.
- How much do students have to know about the technology?
- There are possible limitations to electronic portfolios. For example, how can an electronic portfolio demonstrate psychomotor skills?
- Students may be very creative. In some cases, students may create material that is inappropriate for an electronic portfolio. How does an instructor set standards for what is appropriate for inclusion in an electronic portfolio?

- How will the FLC ensure that the electronic portfolio is student-centered?

During the summer Readiness Grant process, the FLC discovered four additional challenges that must be addressed. 1) Each course has specific learning outcomes that must be met. The portfolio must be adapted to suit the course rather than adapting the course to accommodate the portfolio. 2) The electronic portfolio may require a variety of hardware and software. The FLC must investigate and recommend hardware and software solutions, including adequate storage space, access speed, and bandwidth to sustain the viability of the project. 3) Like any data resource available on the Internet, electronic portfolios will have requirements of support, maintenance, and training. The FLC will investigate and recommend the level of support, maintenance and training that will be required to sustain the initiative. 4) The establishment of reliable and valid scoring rubrics will be challenging.

We have also discovered that Educause's National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (NLII) has chosen e-portfolios as a key theme. The NLII organizes its work around [key themes](#) chosen annually from the larger domain of the transformation of teaching and learning with technology. This is both a blessing and a curse for our FLC! A blessing in that we will be able to track and participate in this national initiative, a curse in that we realize we are perhaps closer to the "cutting edge" than we initially anticipated. This discovery leads to one of our mental roadblocks in the project – the ebb and flow of the reality of the potential magnitude of this project.

The more practical issues we struggle with have to do with project management. Time is the primary issue. All members of the FLC are attempting the project in addition to their other responsibilities. The only possible time during a typical week that all members could come together in the Fall was from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM on Thursdays. We have worked to remedy this roadblock through the creation of a Knowledge Room for the FLC. Resources, discussion threads and calendars are maintained on this central site.

Another issue that is drawing energy from the project is the complexity of grant administration issues (such as, contracts, budgets, reimbursements, etc.) within the LCCC system.

### **G. Description and learning about your community building and project development.**

Describe early phases of building your community and developing the project. *What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures do you have and how do you handle them? What did they – or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? How are you utilizing the Learning Communities information provided by Milt Cox on October 15?*

A major challenge for the LC has been building a sense of community. We are 10 faculty members from disparate disciplines drawn together by an interest in a specific assessment method. Our paths do not typically cross. Thus, finding the time and energy to build new relationships into our already full work lives continues to be a challenge. We have yet to all be together in one place at the same time! The January Learning Institute brought us closer to a sense of community. We have committed to more face-to-face time with each other and now

have bi-weekly gatherings established. These are proving to be helpful in building a sense of community between those members who are able to attend.

Despite the establishment of a Knowledge Room or virtual community, not all members of the LC are comfortable with this mode of operation. Similar to the struggles students experience with online courses, our LC is struggling to stretch this model to its full potential.

The very nature of our project -- individual faculty members working on their individual courses or programs -- is a barrier to community development. It is convenient and easy for an LC member to remain an island with his/her individual course or program and not see the valuable contribution that he/she will make to the project as a whole. This is a barrier that must be overcome in order to demonstrate the learning that can be achieved in a group setting such as a faculty learning community.

Yet another challenge we face is the diverse level of technological literacy among group members. This diversity leads to false assumptions, misunderstandings and other barriers to community building. It strengthens our project because we are intending to show that electronic portfolios can be incorporated to varying degrees into a variety of programs, despite one's technological literacy.

A milestone of the LC was achieved at the January Learning Institute, when **all** members of the LC finally believed that the project is "do-able." This common realization has energized the LC. We continue to achieve milestones each day -- from LC members learning how to scan documents, save as PDF files, or burn CDs to setting community gathering times, or exploring what constitutes quality self-reflection about learning.



**This is the end of Part 1.**

**Take your completed DRAFT of your "*Portraits of Practice: Case Records*" Part 1 to your Learning Institute and send the final version to OLN by February 1, 2003.**

