Electronic Portfolio Resource Guide

"The core objective of the e-portfolio is for students to engage in a process of critical reflection on their teaching practice and overall career trajectory as they consider what it truly means to be a faculty member. The overarching purpose of the e-portfolio is to expose students to and provide support in the development of a teaching portfolio appropriate for an academic job search in the 21st century. The e-portfolio serves as an element linking together skills, tools, and knowledge that are surveyed, explored, and practiced within the curriculum. The e-portfolio serves as a method and tool for evaluation at multiple stages in the program culminating in the final review of the product as a requirement for the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement" (From the document "Electronic Portfolio Requirements for the PFF Program", available online at http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/)*

A critical requirement of the PFF Program for students seeking the Certificate of Achievement designation is the electronic portfolio (e-portfolio). The e-portfolio provides students with an instrument for the display of items that served as individual assignments as well as the cumulative results of the work done in multiple courses in the PFF program. The e-portfolio also serves as a useful career tool that showcases an individual's experiences, education, talents, research interests, and technological proficiency to potential employers. Maintaining an electronic space for housing professional development and job search resources is an increasing trend in higher education, and can serve as a wonderful networking tool for individuals with similar research and academic interests.

This resource guide is designed to assist students in the preparation, completion, and submission of the e-portfolio. We begin with the conceptualization of an e-portfolio, and then proceed to the exploration of the four main avenues for developing an e-portfolio. Lastly, we reiterate the information located in the document "Electronic Portfolio Requirements for the PFF Program" regarding submission and evaluation of the e-portfolio prior to confirmation of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE E-PORTFOLIO

Personal ownership of an electronic space

In GRAD 602, students will discuss what it means to have personal ownership in the academic environment. This topic encompasses ownership of one's own electronic space, and in the case of managing what you 'put out there' electronically, personal ownership of the e-portfolio is strongly encouraged. The benefits of personal ownership and management of the electronic space include mechanisms for reflective practice, comprehensiveness in how you display your work to others, and how you approach academic networking and the academic job search.

Initial questions to ask yourself: What kind of design fits your purpose? How do you want to manipulate this space based on this design plan? Think about how you wish to use the electronic space. The following are suggestions, and are certainly not mutually exclusive. You are encouraged to think about what best fits your needs, your audience(s), and your career path. Depending on the way you manipulate the space, it is possible to integrate many different approaches and designs into the e-portfolio.

To get you started, it may be helpful to consider the three main functions of an e-portfolio, and consider how you might integrate and utilize these functions:

1. Professional tool: Highlights your teaching and research accomplishments, as well as education and work history (think of what is generally found on a curriculum vita).
2. Networking tool: Space allows you to reach out to others in your area of interest in academe and in the community.
3. Reflection tool: Documents and guides your work and practice (often seen through a blog journal component)

Deciding on how the e-portfolio will be used will ultimately help you to determine what sort of electronic platform would be most appropriate to house this information. For instance, students who are interested in networking within a specific professional, disciplinary/interdisciplinary, and/or geographic community might consider utilizing a webpage platform for their e-portfolio because these site are more readily accessible to anyone performing internet searches. Alternatively, students who wish to keep their e-portfolio space more private (possibly for access only by professors, coworkers, colleagues) might consider a web logging or 'blogging' platform as an option that allows for more control over who can access the information.

The following four sections highlight the main methods/formats for an electronic portfolio: Creating a "Visual CV" portfolio, creating a website to host your e-portfolio content, creating a blog to house your e-portfolio content, and using BlackBoard to house your e-portfolio.

To be perfectly clear – the PFF Program does not require that you use a specific type of program or approach to building / housing the e-portfolio. The information provided in this guide is aimed at helping you determine the best approach for your needs and interests. The e-portfolio is not something that you want to rush – this is not the sort of assignment that you want to wait until the last minute to complete. Instead, take some time and dedicate some thoughtful reflection into the platform choice and make sure you consider how the materials you wish to include will 'fit'. Please do not hesitate to contact our office for assistance at any point during this process. While we are not technology specialists, we are always happy to assist you in troubleshooting, brainstorming, and processing the e-portfolio journey. The best way to get a hold of someone in our office if pffprogram@vcu.edu. We are available for in-person, web-chat, and telephone conversations.

FOUR OPTIONS FOR BUILDING YOUR E-PORTFOLIO

Creating a "Visual CV" Portfolio

Visual CV is a free web-based curriculum vita posting site located at www.visualcv.com. While the PFF Program does not have intimate knowledge of the history of the website and does not benefit from the site (there is no conflict of interest), there does appear to be quite a buzz in the world of career counseling about this site and the service it provides.

Members of the PFF Program office staff have investigated the site, and some have even developed their own 'visual CV' on the site. Please contact pffprogram@vcu.edu for more information and/or a one-on-one meeting to discuss. Using this sort of web-based program (there may be others out there) is surely a good match for some graduate students who are looking for a non-VCU-sponsored platform that does not require reinvention of the wheel, so to speak.

Here are three helpful links for the "Visual CV" option:
1. https://www.visualcv.com/www/quickstart/ - 60 second tour of the Visual CV process.
2. https://www.visualcv.com/www/learningcenter/onlinehelp/index.html - online help menu, which provides a step-by-step guide for the process.
3. https://www.visualcv.com/www/learningcenter/onlinehelp/creatingvisualcvs/addportfolioitems.html - this is a part of the online help function (the "learning center") that is particularly helpful because it addresses adding portfolio items.

Advantages of creating a portfolio via "Visual CV":
1. Very intuitive and while it is a bit 'cookie cutter', there is a possibility for personalization;
2. Highly portable and security settings allow for control over who sees the content;
3. In addition to basic options and formats for uploading, the site allows users to upload lectures (or other videos) using YouTube and other formats, and uploading of lecture slides via SlideShare; and
4. For those with LinkedIn accounts, you can link the visual CV to your LinkedIn account and the program will automatically fill in your bio/work history.

Disadvantages of creating a portfolio via "Visual CV":
1. One would hope that a site like this would stay up-and-running forever, but there is no guarantee that it will – so we would recommend that you back up your documents; and
2. The site is free but we cannot guarantee that it always will be free, and in order to get all the bells and whistles you can pay for the premium service.

Creating a website to house your e-portfolio content

Here are some steps to plan for and anticipate that are often involved with developing an e-portfolio on your 'own' website:

1. Figure out the site name, find out if it is available, and complete a leasing/renting agreement for a domain name/space (through a licensing site such as godaddy.com or Google sites);
2. Choose web server to host page;
3. Put files on the server/page, or hire webmaster to create your website;
4. Get your page registered through DNS Domain Server Name;
5. List website on various search engines.

The following link provides a more in depth summary of the process of creating a webpage for educational purposes: http://www.teacherfiles.com/websiteintroduction.htm

Advantages of creating a website:

1. Great creativity, personalization possible;
2. Highly portable; and
3. Gain more internet exposure, more e-networking.

Disadvantages of creating a website:

1. Can be expensive and time consuming to maintain; and
2. Depending on the 'platform' you choose, can be challenging to manipulate and maneuver.

Creating a blog to house your e-portfolio content

A blog is essentially an online journal or diary that chronologically houses entries, and allows the individual to display pictures, audio files, video files, links and scanned documents in a flexible, personalized manner.

Most blogging platforms and software allow for…

1. Others to post responses to items the host has posted on the page;
2. The ability to post through pictures, 'photo blogging', with responses;
3. The ability to 'video blog' or post short web clips;
4. The ability to 'audio blog' or post audio files; and
5. The ability to filter content, or restrict viewership of certain posts and files placed on the page.

Major host webhosts such as *blogspot* or *Wordpress*, referred to as blogspheres. Blogspheres essentially serve as collective communities of blogs and are often categorized according to content, subject, or type of blog such as education topics (classroom/education related materials), personal web logs, professional blogs (companies or businesses), special interest/hobbies (such as gossip or celebrity blogs).

Conveniently, VCU has a created a partnership with the blog-host Moveable Type and thus every student who has a VCU login has access to a personal blog page on Moveable Type. Students can log in and gain more information from the Technology Services blogspot: http://blog.vcu.edu/.

Technology Services also has a Knowledge Base article for Frequently Asked Questions about the blog: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/askit/web-tools/blogs/.

Other Webhosts:
1. wikyblog http://www.wikyblog.com/
2. Wordpress http://wordpress.com/
3. Twitter as a form of blogging
4. Moveable type http://www.movabletype.org/

How it works:
Most blogging platforms are similar in process to the use of an e-mail program or basic software. Blogging platforms allow you to chronologically post information under subject headings. You can also upload files that can be accessed through your blog. A blog may consist of different pages with postings about different topics, and may or may not allow readers/subscribers to post comments and feedback on a posting topic. One of the main advantages of utilizing a blog is facilitating two way communication or feedback between readers and the blogger. If you allow it, those who visit your blog can submit comments and reply to comments made. Also, someone can search for a posting on your blog by using a specific subject or topic using keyword searches or you can also use 'tags' to make this more accessible for those on your blog (a tag is a type of filter the blogger can apply to specific words/posts to categories them according to subject matter, etc.).

Advantages of Blogging Platforms:
1. Portability of information -easy to access, add posts, make changes- from anywhere with an internet connection;
2. Can restrict access, making your weblog public, private, or open to selected few individuals;
3. Easy to post - how to guides exist for posting audio, video, and image files;
4. Allow for individuals to subscribe to blog via RSS (really simple syndication) to get immediate notification when blog is updated;
5. Facilitates two way communications between readers and bloggers;
6. Easy to organize and manipulate space: can categorize posts for a specific topic using keywords or "tags"; and
7. You can post a blog on your webpage! For more information, go to the VCU Technology Services Knowledge Base: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/blog/1034.html.

Disadvantages of Blogging Platforms:
1. Make sure you will *always* have access to the blog – if you are using an organization or institution- sponsored blog, you will want to make sure that you can have access to the blog once you are no longer at that organization or institution. This is particularly important to consider if you are using a school or employer-sponsored blog.

2. You also ought to consider how often you wish to update the blog. Blogs are a good fit for those who want to be active on their e-portfolios. Perhaps you want to upload your work on a regular basis, provide critiques or book reviews in your own space, or provide commentaries for current events. We have even seen blogs that serve as a place to post job search documents as well as reflections on the academic job search. Just remember that whatever you post on your blog (and the comments that people post on your blog) are able to be seen by all who have access

to the blog unless you have security preferences that prevent that sort of access. It is helpful to remember that whatever you post on your blog will be visible to your mom, you potential employer, and your current boss ☺

Moveable Type and Technology Services at VCU also offer some tips and suggestions for blogging on the flowing pages: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/blog/1635.html; http://blog.vcu.edu/ttac/7thingsblogs.pdf; http://www.vcu.edu/cte/resources/technology/Podcasting7things.pdf

Using BlackBoard or Google Docs to house your e-portfolio
For those who do not wish to utilize the other options discussed so far in this document that (for the most part) are rather public, we have a fourth option – BlackBoard or Google Docs. If you choose the BlackBoard site or Google Docs option, then you will have your own course site created by the PFF Program office during the time that you are enrolled in the GRAD 606 Internship/Externship in Professional Teaching OR you will be expected to use your own Google Docs access through VCU Webmail through which you will upload and 'share' access with the PFF Program office.

For Blackboard options – You will use this BlackBoard course as a place to store your e-portfolio. VCU upgraded to Blackboard 9.1 May 15, 2014.

For Google Docs option – You may already be using this resource for other courses or projects. It may be easier to upload everything to one folder in Google Docs and then invite/share the entire folder. This will mean fewer invitation emails to our account, which is much appreciated! Please be advised that the pffprogram@vcu.edu email account is not run through VCU Webmail, so we do not have a google group account. So, you will have to invite/share with one of our individual staff members so we can access and assess the e-portfolio. Please contact pffprogram@vcu.edu first before taking this action.

Advantages of Blackboard or Google Docs Platforms:
1. Portability of information -easy to access, add posts, make changes- from anywhere with an internet connection as long as you have access to the myVCU portal;
2. Privacy – only those with an eID can access Blackboard at VCU and only those with google accounts can access your Google Docs; only you and the PFF Program faculty and office staff can view (you can give access to others with eIDs if you wish);
3. Easy to post - how to guides exist for using Blackboard features;
4. You choose – it is your choice for using blogging, traditional portfolio, or both; and
5. Intuitive system – for those who have used Blackboard or a similar system, the newest system is particularly intuitive.

Disadvantages of Blackboard or Google Docs Platform:
1. Your access to the PFF Program's Blackboard site will end once you no longer have an operational eID;
2. You will only be able to share your e-portfolio content with those who also have VCU eIDs and/or google accounts;

blog unless you have security preferences that prevent that sort of access. It is helpful to remember that whatever you post on your blog will be visible to your mom, you potential employer, and your current boss ☺

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3. Easy to post - how to guides exist for using Blackboard features;
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Disadvantages of Blackboard or Google Docs Platform:
1. Your access to the PFF Program's Blackboard site will end once you no longer have an operational eID;
2. You will only be able to share your e-portfolio content with those who also have VCU eIDs and/or google accounts;

3. Both options do require more planning and coordination between you and the PFF
Program office, and might lead to less individualization due to necessary parameters; and
4. You will have less flexibility than the other two platform options in terms of design, content, and types/sizes of files that can be uploaded.

Resources for using the Blackboard platform for the electronic portfolio:
1. VCU Technology Services for Portfolios via Blackboard 9.1 provides a Student Guide for Blackboard, Tip Sheets and Videos (particularly useful if you want to incorporate Wimba elements): http://www.ts.vcu.edu/askit/knowledge-base/blackboard-91/

Resources for using the Google Docs platform for the electronic portfolio:
1. The VCU Mymail homepage: http://mymail.vcu.edu/
2. Google Help Center for Google Docs (while you're on this page, consider the information available for "Blogger", also supported by Google, which may be a better fit for you): http://www.google.com/support/?hl=en

REITERATION OF THE INFORMATION LOCATED IN OUR 'REQUIREMENTS' DOCUMENT

First of all, if you are not sure which option is best for you then please contact the PFF Program office at pffprogram@vcu.edu. Depending on the number of students in an academic year cohort, we are able to hold an information session on the e-portfolio and GRAD 606 requirements, and we are always more than happy to meet with students individually to discuss the program dynamics. We can chat about your e-portfolio options electronically, on the phone, or in person. Please note that our office staff members cannot provide one-on-one technical support and are not tasked with building your e-portfolio for you. The onus for creating and maintaining the e-portfolio is on the student. We are happy to brainstorm with you and are even sometimes able to consult on minor technological issues; however, members of the PFF Program office will not read the 'how-to' guide to you and will not research information online for troubleshooting – this information is readily available for you to read on your own and the appropriate contact information for technical support at VCU is also readily available online (for VCU-sponsored modalities such as BlackBoard and the VCU blog accounts).

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the student to learn about the technical aspects of the modality selected by the student for the e-portfolio – we have compiled a list of links in this resource guide that should help you navigate the 'how to' aspect. If you are not comfortable with one of the modalities, then you should not select it. Go with what you know or with what you deem to be the best fit given your comfort level with technology. Extensions will not be provided and exceptions will not be granted for technical difficulties or miscalculations of technological skill level!!!

The following information is taking directly from the document "Electronic Portfolio Requirements for the PFF Program", which is available online at http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/:

> The e-portfolio serves as a method and tool for evaluation at multiple stages in the program culminating in the final review of the product as a requirement for the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement.

The e-portfolio product used for evaluation in the GRAD 606 Internship in Professional Teaching will incorporate materials completed r revised by the student that are relevant to and appropriate for the student's career and academic job search in the chosen professional/discipline specialty area. The e-portfolio product will include, but is not limited to the following elements:

1. Statement of acknowledgement or reflection piece on the responsible conduct of research in the student's chosen professional/discipline specialty area;
2. Curriculum vita;
3. Statement of teaching philosophy and teaching interests;
4. Statement of research interests;
5. Sample syllabus for a mock course, including content on course objectives and student assessment;
6. A lesson plan/activity/lecture outline for a given unit or class meeting;
7. Student's final report of GRAD 606 Internship of Professional Teaching experience;
8. Other materials that are deemed crucial to the student's job search as deemed appropriate through experience with GRAD 605 (Professional Specialty Seminar) and GRAD 606 (Internship in Professional Teaching).