PROPOSAL 29: Streaming Student Success: e-Portfolio Integration Project

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Planning Priorities and Project Goals

The current goals of the Academic Strategic Plan emphasize: 1) a rigorous and engaged student learning experience, 2) a culture that supports and engages faculty and staff, and 3) a commitment to community engagement that benefits the university, the region and the world. Adopting web-based electronic portfolio systems, or e-portfolios, as a tool for general education curriculum integration and assessment, would be one way of addressing all three of these goals effectively. Moreover, this project specifically addresses student success. As a system that fosters more intentional teaching and more active learning, e-portfolios encourage student engagement, foster student motivation and empowerment, and prepare students for lifelong learning.

Web-based electronic portfolio systems, or e-portfolios, involve text-based, graphic, and/or multimedia elements stored on a Web site, CD-ROM, or DVD that comprise “a digitized collection of artifacts including demonstrations, resources, and accomplishments that represent an individual, group, or institution” (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005). More than a simple collection of artifacts, however, e-portfolio systems serve as an administrative tool to manage and organize work created with different applications, to control who can see the work, to provide feedback, to encourage personal reflection, and to promote the exchange of ideas.

Although not yet a mainstream higher education technology, those who have adopted e-portfolios claim they are the biggest educational technology development since the adoption of course management systems. Currently e-portfolios serve six major functions: documenting knowledge, skills, and learning; performance evaluation; tracking development within a program; course evaluation; program planning; and job application functions. From institutional portfolios to student portfolios, “E-portfolios can support student advisement, career preparation, and credential documentation; the sharing of teaching philosophies and practices; department and program self-studies; and institutional and program accreditation processes.” (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005)

Student e-portfolios date back to faculty-assigned print-based portfolios of the mid-80s and to programs with an emphasis on writing. Students collect their work, select samples to showcase, and reflect on what they have learned. In principle, portfolios authentically represent a range of work, are context rich, highlight student choice, offer opportunities for self-assessment, and provide a look at student development over time (Cambridge, 1998).

E-portfolios have gained prominence in college of education programs, with preservice teachers using them to provide evidence of competencies. E-portfolios are gaining ground in general education areas such as communications, math, and leadership, and in professional areas such as business, nursing, architecture, and engineering.

Like their predecessors, e-portfolios help students become critical thinkers by turning information into knowledge and they aid in the development of writing skills, but unlike their predecessors, e-portfolios also build multimedia communication skills and information and technology literacy skills. Recognizing this, schools such as LaGuardia Community College are “seeking to advance this goal of integrative learning through the use of electronic portfolios to cumulatively assess

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Incorporated to support integration and increase skill development in interdisciplinary “core competencies,” e-portfolios enable faculty to track a student’s progress from enrollment to graduation in “highly individualized portraits of student learning.” Moreover, with e-portfolios students identify “key learning experiences,” include events, criteria for assessment, and both self- (or internal) and external assessment. “Students can thus both plan and plot their growth” (Cambridge **, 6).

An additional strength of e-portfolios is that it allows students, faculty, and the university to showcase their work in various ways that allow them to make stronger, more immediate connections to the community. For instance, students can readily share what they are learning with their family, assist their communities, and present to prospective employers. As such, curriculum integration through e-portfolios helps connect the university to the community in very positive ways. Dean Paul Arcario at LaGuardia says that one of the reasons e-portfolio has been so popular in its pilot phase is that students have a way to show their family what they are doing at college. “Students so far are excited about sharing their experiences with others, and that, Dean Arcario hopes, is a very good sign for the future of LaGuardia’s integrative learning programs” (AAC&U News, 2004)

Goals and Objectives:
This project proposes to support student success through curricular innovation and integration using TaskStream, a student-supported, web-based electronic portfolio system. The primary goals include:

- Promoting student success through the development of an engaging and integrated general education curriculum that builds academic skills and fosters lifelong learning (ASP Goal 1)
- Developing the training infrastructure to engage faculty in new teaching strategies and technologies (ASP Goal 2), and
- Providing a mechanism for systematic assessment of student skills and success in the general education curriculum, that assists the university in connecting with the broader community (ASP Goal 3)

TaskStream is one of a number of e-portfolio systems available. These systems include homegrown systems (e.g., University of Washington and University of Denver), open source systems (e.g., Virginia Tech and University of Texas at San Antonio), and commercial systems (including Blackboard and LiveText). TaskStream is a commercial, student-supported, e-portfolio system. Patrick Lordan in the Teaching and Learning Center has researched e-portfolio systems and identified TaskStream as the best product for a variety of curricular innovations and assessment. Students pay a small annual fee to access TaskStream resources, and student records are archived on the TaskStream servers, where they may continue to store them indefinitely for a small annual fee or save them to disk. TaskStream supports faculty use of their products in the same way the textbook manufacturers do. For Eastern, this is an effective way to move toward an e-portfolio system; the university does not need to invest in expensive technology, while the faculty can still expect a certain level of tech support.
Currently, Rodger Hauge (Education) is using TaskStream to build curricular integration and Linda Kieffer (Computer Science) is using TaskStream for program assessment. Rodger Hauge moved to adopt TaskStream as an e-portfolio system during winter quarter 2005 “out of frustration over grading huge student portfolios at the end of the quarter with little time to do each work justice.” After incorporating e-portfolios into his Elementary Science Methods course, Hauge (2005, 3) writes:

The most startling revelation is the connection you make to your students. I pride myself on being a student-centered instructor. This experience raised my level of being student-centered to a whole new plane. I knew what each student was doing. I could review their work, make comments and suggestions, send it back to them, and have them correct any difficulties before submitting for evaluation.

Such improved communication between student and instructor fosters trust between the two. Hauge (2005, 3) also notes that TaskStream “allowed the student to submit their work in a non-threatening environment, get correction if that was indicated, and submit their work only when they knew that it was pretty good. This communication allowed all the students to be highly successful.” (Emphasis in the original.)

Linda Kieffer and Laurie Morlie have been using TaskStream to develop an end-of-program assessment for [Linda please explain here].

The intent of this project is to develop three collaborative teams comprised of faculty, support staff (who have expertise in teaching with technology, writing assignments and assessment rubrics, college transitions, academic skill building, and general academic advising),and students under the guidance of two lead faculty and a product support team. The teams will work to revise three existing general education courses so that they integrate best practices in academic skill building and college transitions with the content of the general education courses. This work will be accomplished through the development of student portfolio templates and assessment rubrics. These three courses, which will be taught in Fall 2006 and again in Winter/Spring 2007, will serve as a demonstration project for a larger project for which we will seek external funding.

**Goal 1:** Promoting student success through the development of an engaging and integrated general education curriculum that builds academic skills and fosters lifelong learning

1. **Objective:** Implement three general education courses that integrate transition success skills through e-portfolio-based curriculum by Fall 2006.
2. **Objective:** By June 2007, 300 first-time, first-year students will have directly linked transition success skills to content-based courses through e-portfolio curriculum integration.
3. **Objective:** By September 2007, a cohort of students that have taken e-portfolio general education courses will be recruited to serve as peer educators for program expansion.

**Goal 2:** Developing the training infrastructure to engage faculty in new teaching strategies and technologies

1. **Objective:** Develop three collaborative teams comprised of faculty, support staff, and students, to redevelop existing general education courses incorporating best practices for student engagement and success
2. **Objective:** TaskStream, the Teaching and Learning Center, and the lead faculty will provide teams with the support to successfully adopt e-portfolio frameworks in general education courses

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3. Objective: By 2007, each team will be able to take the lead in training three new teams in e-portfolio development as we expand the program.

4. Objective: By 2007, course redevelopment and resources will be available in an on-line General Education Resource Center, including forms, templates, etc.

Goal 3: Providing a mechanism for systematic assessment of student skills and success in the general education curriculum, that assists the university in connecting with the broader community

1. Objective: TaskStream, the Teaching and Learning Center, and the lead faculty will provide teams with the support to successfully adopt assessment plan for key learning outcomes: critical thinking and intellectual curiosity; communication; diverse perspectives; globalization; social, environmental, and ethical responsibility, and disciplinary expertise.

2. Objective: At the beginning of all courses, teams will clearly communicate student evaluation and course assessment plans with students

3. Objective: At the end of each course, teams will provide a formal assessment report on key learning outcomes and any other agree upon indicators.

4. Objective: By 2007, each team will be able to take the lead in training three new teams in assessment as we expand the program.

Expected outcomes for revised courses include: 1) increased student engagement, including attendance and class participation; 2) improved student performance; 3) increased reliability and efficiency in assessment; and 4) increased faculty enthusiasm and engagement in teaching GECR courses. This project will provide assessment reports in January and June 2007. Finally, we expect that this small pilot project will generate broad interest and that 8-12 additional faculty will join the project in 2007. It is also important to note that this proposal has the potential to build on current interest in and momentum toward integration, while still allowing the institution time to come to agreement on an overall curricular structure.

Timeline for Activities:

January 2006 Identify faculty/staff participants
    Orientation Session for Teams, including students who are familiar with process.
    Possibly joint with General Education Service Learning project.
February Host TaskStream training workshop
March Identify existing General Education courses that can be redeveloped as e-portfolio courses. Identify outcomes and assessment measures
April-June Support course redevelopment—resources, assignments, rubrics,
June-Aug Develop templates and assessment programs
Sept. Present e-portfolio courses for feedback
    Fine-tune templates, etc.
    Launch initial courses
December Assessment of Fall 2006 courses
    Revisions of courses
January 2007 Begin 2nd iteration of teaching e-portfolio general education courses
March Assessment of 2nd iteration of e-portfolio courses
April Begin 3rd iteration of teaching e-portfolio general education courses
June Final Assessment of e-portfolio courses for this project

Project Management:

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Sue Wright, the Faculty Fellow for General Education, Larry Kiser, Director for the Teaching and Learning Center and Helen Bergland, Associate Director for the Teaching and Learning Center will work together to coordinate this project. Rodger Hauge and Linda Kieffer will serve as the lead faculty on this project, for curriculum development and assessment respectively. Patrick Lordan will provide tech support. The General Education Review Group will provide on-going feedback to the project team.

Assessment:

Evaluation and assessment is an integral part of e-portfolio systems. In this project, courses will be redesigned so that assignments clearly identify learning outcomes and include assessment rubrics. Each team will include a faculty member who will work with Linda Kieffer to identify ways to build in systematic assessment tools and run assessment reports at the end of the quarter. Assessment reports will be shared with General Education Curriculum Committee, the General Education Review Group, and the Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Initiative.

Budget: We request $53,400 for this project. This amount will cover summer stipends and fall course release for 2 lead faculty, summer stipends for 6 participating faculty, 6 student assistants, and several support staff. We also request funds for TaskStream system training and license fees for 300 students.

TaskStream:
- On Campus Workshop $2,000 for 1 day $2,000
- License Fees
  - 300 Students $39 @ per year 11,700

Curriculum Coordinator:
- Rodger Hauge $5,000 Summer Stipend 5,000

Assessment Coordinator
- Linda Kieffer $5,000 Summer Stipends 5,000

3 Curriculum/Assessment Development Teams
- 6 Faculty $2,500 Summer Stipends 15,000
- 6 Student Assistants $1,200 Summer Stipends 7,200
- 3 Staff $2,500 Summer Stipends 7,500

TOTAL 53,400

Bibliography:
Cambridge, B. ***. Electronic portfolios as knowledge builders. In ***
Hauge, Rodger. Memorandum to Dr. Neville Hosking. August 22, 2005

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