

**ASSETT Faculty Fellows Program
FINAL REPORT**

**Electronic Portfolios as a Tool for
Reflection and Synthesis in the
Interdisciplinary Certificate in Writing**

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THE PROJECT

I proposed, as my ASSETT departmental project, an initiative to develop curated electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) that would serve as a capstone experience for students earning the new Interdisciplinary Certificate in Writing. Such ePortfolios would encourage reflection and synthesis of learning over multiple, diverse courses. Three motivations engendered this project:

An unmet pedagogical imperative.

At CU-Boulder I see a dearth of opportunities to help student synthesize learning across siloed, segmented, firewalled experiences. Students operate in a world of discrete assignments, courses, and academic programs. Most especially, their co-curricular and community experiences, where a considerable amount of learning occurs, are somehow off limits to our—and their—appreciation of how learning occurs. Real, deep learning comes in the connections we forge (students and faculty alike). The university provides little encouragement or opportunity to do so. Reflection, synthesis, and meta-cognition are the pathways to forging these connections, and curated ePortfolios are a tool well suited to these goals.

A programmatic opportunity.

The Program for Writing and Rhetoric has long toyed with the idea of implementing portfolios, especially in its suite of first-year courses. This nascent interest has never developed into a concrete initiative, and has remained still-born for two reasons. First, faculty fear that the portfolio will somehow become a surveillance tool. And second, although they acknowledge that a paper portfolio is passe, they are uncomfortable with electronic portfolio technologies. I will address these issues by framing the ePortfolio as a student-owned and operated resource for reflection whose rationale is not (or certainly not primarily) assessment. And second, I seek to create a suite of tools, templates, rubrics, and feedback mechanisms that will help faculty become comfortable with electronic portfolios. In both respects, I seek to encourage agency

among students, and our own faculty. Although the immediate rationale for the curated ePortfolio is the capstone experience in the Certificate in Writing, I expect some considerable interest in adopting this tool elsewhere in the PWR.

A pragmatic necessity.

Within a year or so, students earning the Interdisciplinary Certificate in Writing will be taking a one-credit-hour, pass-fail course dedicated to curating an ePortfolio. We wish to be well prepared for these students, and offer resources and training that will help them embrace the ePortfolio as a welcome opportunity, and not a final hurdle to overcome. Thus, there are very pragmatic reasons for engaging in this project.

THE OUTCOME

The project achieved and, dare I say, exceeded its stated goals with respect to the Interdisciplinary Certificate in Writing, to the integration of eportfolios in the Program for Writing and Rhetoric, and to the desired broad adoption of eportfolios on campus.

Interdisciplinary Certificate in Writing

On the most immediate and pragmatic level, the ASSETT Fellowship permitted me to design a capstone eportfolio course and the associated template/review procedures. Three students completed the Certificate and its capstone eportfolio in AY 2018-19. There are now some 20 students in the Certificate 'pipeline'. The template and review procedures have proven themselves to be helpful, effective, and sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of a variety of students.

Programmatic Opportunities with the PWR

The ASSETT Fellowship provided a platform from which to advocate for eportfolios in the Writing Program. I met with four faculty members in Spring 2019 to orient them to eportfolios. And on May 14 I will be leading a two-hour PWR workshop on eportfolios with some 18 faculty members attending. There is growing interest in eportfolios in the PWR due to the recognition this pedagogical tool is receiving as a high-impact practice (HIP). Discussing eportfolios in the larger PWR learning community has not only acquainted faculty with this tool, but it has also sharpened my own command of this pedagogy.

Broader Campus Engagement with ePortfolios

The ASSETT Fellowship prepared and permitted me to take a more active role on campus in advocating for eportfolios. I presented an FTEP workshop on eportfolios in Fall 2018, and again in Spring 2019. I have been invited to reprise this workshop in September 2019.

During this academic year, I also heard the good news that OIT has established a campus site license for Digication (the eportfolio platform that I and others are using on campus). This broader campus engagement with eportfolios will engender more technical support and more opportunities for me and others to showcase its pedagogical virtues. I have been working with Viktoriya Oliynyk to help plan the roll-out of this eportfolio platform to a wider faculty audience.

I wish to thank Andy Martin, Amanda McAndrew, and others in ASSETT for inviting me to participate in the ASSETT Fellows Program. It has indeed made a difference to me personally, to my unit, and to the broader campus.