



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

WEEKLY UPDATE

A WEEKLY COMMUNICATION FROM THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

April 2, 2007

SoCTL *The Scholarship of Teaching & Learning at CTL*

Faculty Portfolios

As students and faculty in creative fields have long known, portfolios—collections of exemplary work products—are effective vehicles for demonstrating scholarly and professional accomplishments. Over the past two decades, faculty across the disciplines have increasingly used portfolios to share with students, colleagues, and evaluators selected examples of finished products as well as works-in-progress. What distinguishes newer approaches to the portfolio is the inclusion of narratives and essays that bind together the artifacts in a meaningful way.

The descriptive, scholarly narrative, or text, of a portfolio is what makes it more valuable in hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions than its cousin, the traditional tenure or promotion packet. In a teaching portfolio, for example, a faculty member can present a philosophy of teaching, accompanied by reflective essays on his or her professional expertise, approaches to teaching and course design, typical teaching methods, interaction with and service to students, and methods for evaluating student learning and satisfaction.

Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has famously called teaching a closed-door activity (1993). It can be a real challenge to make others understand what goes on in our classes and why we teach the way we do. A portfolio allows a faculty member to frame his or her teaching for others by presenting ideas and facts (i.e., claims) and supporting them with selected examples and information (i.e., evidence). Constructed as an illustrated scholarly argument (Chism, 1998; Mues and Sorcinelli, 2000), the portfolio provides educators and their students a new opportunity for direct analysis and assessment of their own work and that of others.

The electronic portfolio, made available on public or other Web sites, allows for incorporation of work in many textual and audio-visual formats, and publication to a variety of audiences. While a paper portfolio might consist of several pages of narrative (5-10 pages is a good target length) supported by 10-15 pages of appendices, an electronic portfolio can offer hypertext links within the narrative. Those links might take the reader to copies of documents (syllabi, course outlines, sample exams, spreadsheets analyzing teaching evaluations, copies of awards and letters of recognition), or to other Web sites (conference presentations, course Web pages, student products). They might also make available video clips of classroom activities, photographs of students at work, audio recordings of question-and-answer sessions with students, and other selected, supportive illustrations of one's knowledge, skills, and achievements.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has developed eFolio Minnesota as a free statewide resource for students, educators, and workers. Faculty may use eFolio Minnesota in a number of ways; for example, it can become a teaching portfolio, an online professional development plan organizer, an interactive curriculum vitae for applying for grants and jobs, or a place to track development and outcomes in individual courses.

The links below can give you a head-start on reviewing the tremendous resources available on why and how to construct a portfolio. Spring is a good season for looking back at the year and planning for the one coming up. Write up those reflections and plans in your own professional portfolio.

-Lynda Milne

Chism, N. V. (1998). "Developing a philosophy of teaching statement." *Essays on Teaching Excellence: Toward the Best in the Academy*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1997-1998. Retrieved March 30, 2007 from <http://www.cs.tufts.edu/%7Eablumer/portfolio.html#Appendix%20B>.

Mues, F. and Sorcinelli, M.D. (2000). Preparing a teaching portfolio. Center for Teaching, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Retrieved March 30, 2007 from <http://www.umass.edu/cft/publications/teaching%20portfolio.pdf>.

Sources continued on page 2

Teaching Tip of the Week

An Online Student's Physical Classroom

Most of the time instructor talk about the "virtual classroom", the platform on which a course resides and the interaction between students during learning activities. Seldom do we think or talk about the physical learning space of the student.

Some of the considerations for good student learning should include the space in which they attend your course via the computer.

- Check the height of the computer monitor and keyboard with the line of vision to avoid improper posture and wrist issues.
- Use a comfortable, adjustable chair.
- Find a desk or table that will offer workspace.
- Plan for a good lighting source.
- Create a filing system to keep course materials organized.
- Avoid distractions – decide how you best study with or without music, TV, telephone, etc.
- Control your climate (heating/cooling). Decide the time of day that is best for you to "attend" class.
- Keep a steady schedule so others know when you busy studying.
- Keep a clock within view to help keep you on schedule.
- Plan for regular breaks to get up and move around.

Using these considerations should help your students enjoy your class from the "comfort" of their home, while helping them to achieve their best.

-Zala Fashant

[For additional information on college students and the importance of ergonomic studies.](#)

Committed to Improving Student Learning

Dates to Remember!

Spring Discipline Workshops

APR 2: PROMOTING HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Inver Hills Community College. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

APR 18-20: HEALTH EDUCATORS – GROWING TOGETHER: EDUCATING, ENRICHING, AND EMPOWERING

Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center, Alexandria.

[Discipline Workshop Information](#)

APR 21: WHAT NEW SIGN LANGUAGES CAN TEACH US ABOUT ASL

North Star Academy, St. Paul. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

APR 27-28: MATHEMATICS: SHARPEN THE FOCUS

Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

MAY 1: LIBRARY REFERENCE AND INFORMATION LITERACY SERVICES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

North Hennepin Community College. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

Regional Conferences

APR 12-13: KEEPING OUR FACULTIES IV: RECRUITING, RETAINING, AND ADVANCING FACULTY OF COLOR

Radisson University Hotel, Minneapolis. [Conference Information](#)

MAY 22: CLASSROOMS OF THE FUTURE CONFERENCE - Teaching, Learning, & Technology: In that Order. Keynote speaker: Steve Gilbert, The TLT Group

Hamline University. [Conference Information](#)

CTL Resources for Faculty

Faculty Development Centers around the World (Part 2)

This is the second week we look at the resources that CTL has gathered into our ITeach Center. To visit any of these resources, simply point to www.ctl.mnscu.edu/iteach/resources/ni_itrtfdc.php and choose from the nearly 50 links on that page.

Here are some (more) especially interesting highlights from that page.

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION. This organization is preeminent in their research and collection of resources about first-year students. There is a terrific catalog of resources available from this site, ranging from sample syllabi from first-year seminars to research about first-year seminars, to an annotated bibliography of first-year experience resources.

OFFICE OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS AND INNOVATION. Clemson University's OTEI contains many of great resources for faculty members. But this site is particularly good in their discussion of how faculty members can use Web sites in their teaching, and electronic and digital portfolios.

- Thomas Wortman

CTL Report

Riverland Community College Campus Visit

[CTL's Campus Leader Program](#) supports faculty members at each of our system's campuses who serve their colleagues by notifying them about faculty and professional development opportunities, or organizing the opportunities themselves. CTL staff members routinely respond to requests from our leaders to visit their campuses, meet with their faculty development leadership, and present on a topic of interest to their faculty. On Wednesday, March 28, I had the pleasure to visit Riverland Community College's Austin campus. Situated in the rolling farmland of Southwestern Minnesota, about 30 miles from the Iowa Border, Riverland Community College serves, in addition to Austin, the communities of Albert Lea and Owatonna.

Faculty members at Riverland Community College are particularly interested in incorporating multimedia elements into their on-ground and online courses. I presented about this topic to 12 faculty members, most of whom were already using multi-media elements in their courses. Discussion during the presentation was productive, and participants reported in their evaluations that they acquired new ideas or strategies.

Interested in learning more about CTL campus visits? Contact your [Campus Leader!](#)

- Martin Springborg

Sources from SoCTL

Shulman, L.S. (1993). "Teaching as community property: Putting an end to pedagogical solitude." *Change* 25 (6): 6-7 (November/December 1993). Retrieved March 30, 2007 from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1254/is_n6_v25/ai_15451386.

Portfolio Resources

ePortfolio Portal:

<http://www.danwilton.com/eportfolios/>

The Teaching Portfolio:

<http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/portfolios/>

An Overview of E-Portfolios:

<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI3001.pdf>