

Reactions to Curricular and Co-curricular Learning as Documented in an ePortfolio
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Candace M. Ford, M.S.
Jill A. Lumsden, Ed.S.
Beth Lulgjuraj, Ed.S.

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The Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development
Dunlap Success Center
The Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4162

850-644-6431 (voice) 850-644-3273 (FAX)
<http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/>

in cooperation with
The Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research



Candace M. Ford is Assistant Director for Career Placement Services, Jill A. Lumsden is Associate Director and project manager of the Career Portfolio, and Beth Lulgjuraj is Assistant Director for Career Advising, Counseling, and Programming, all at the Florida State University Career Center.

Additional contributors to this research include the remaining members of the FSU Cohort III team for the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research: Jeff Garis, Janet Lenz, Sarah Lucas Hartley, Laura Osteen, and Carrie Sandahl.

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Abstract

This exploratory study was conducted to examine readers' reactions to curricular and co-curricular learning as evidenced in an eportfolio. Structured interviews of three groups including employers, faculty, and students were conducted. Each group viewed three sample portfolios and responded to questions based on items they found significant, memorable, and valued. From these interviews, the researchers hoped to explore how eportfolio readers value curricular and co-curricular learning. Analysis of the data showed similar themes emerged from employer, faculty, and student groups and that each group rated co-curricular experiences as being slightly more than curricular experiences.

Reactions to Curricular and Co-curricular Learning as Documented in an ePortfolio

Electronic portfolios have been studied for many years regarding their effectiveness in engaging students in learning, promoting reflection on experiences, integration of learning, and career development (Cambridge, Kahn, Tompkins, & Yancey, 2001; Cambridge, Cambridge, & Yancey, 2009; Garis & Dalton, 2007). Eportfolios themselves have been created out of many different campus departments and for many purposes. In most eportfolios, however, there is an expectation that someone besides the creator will view or interact with the eportfolio. For example these “readers” could be faculty members, employers, other students, parents, or admission committees. Research on the reactions of these groups to student eportfolios is scarce.

Some data does exist on what employers are looking for in graduates. An early study found that employers valued related work experience in potential employees, as well as having a leadership role in a student organization (Reardon, Lenz, & Folsom, 1998). Heinrich, Bhattacharya, and Rayudu (2007) reported that involvement in outside activities is seen as invaluable to employers. Other articles discuss whether employers will even use eportfolios (Ward & Moser, 2008), with some reporting excellent results (Brammer, 2007).

Learning takes place in and outside of the classroom (Kuh, 1993; Kuh 1995; NASPA/ACPA, 2004; NASPA, 2006), and since eportfolios have the capability to showcase students’ curricular and co-curricular learning, the researchers wanted to determine what the reactions of different groups of readers – students, employers, and faculty members – would be to the curricular and co-curricular evidence in an eportfolio.

The ePortfolio at Florida State University

The development of an electronic portfolio at Florida State University (FSU) (Lumsden, Garis, Reardon, Unger, & Arkin, 2001; Reardon, Lumsden, & Meyer, 2004; Reardon, Lumsden, & Meyer, 2005) came about due to the interest and support of the university president, who wanted the Career Center to assist students in developing workforce skills and/or validating the development of those skills in graduates. This top level support garnered new staffing in the project management and technical areas that enabled FSU to build a system that would meet its goals. The development team at FSU sought to create:

1. a comprehensive system for helping students connect learning opportunities with employer needs;
2. a program for helping students integrate curricular and co-curricular experiences (e.g., academic/career advising, courses, and service learning);
3. an innovative Internet-based system to promote student learning, career preparation, and employment; and
4. a high-visibility program to positively support student recruitment and retention.

With respect to student learner outcomes, it was determined that as a result of using the FSU Career Portfolio Program students would be able to:

1. develop strategic planning skills that prepare them for the job campaign;
2. be aware of the importance of identifying and developing workforce skills;
3. identify learning opportunities that foster workforce skills; and

4. know how to communicate and market workforce skills to potential employers (Reardon, Lumsden, & Meyer, 2004).

The FSU Career Portfolio was launched campus-wide in April 2002, and since that time, over 62,000 students have initiated electronic portfolios. It is used by students at all levels, undergraduate and graduate, and in all colleges across campus. The Career Portfolio is a requirement in many departments, including Theatre, Higher Education, Nursing, and Human Sciences (Athletic Training, Nutrition, Dietetics, Child Development, and Merchandising). In addition, the FIG (Freshman Interest Group) program, affiliated with Undergraduate Studies, requires use of the Career Portfolio. The Career Portfolio is also a component of the University's reaccreditation Quality Enhancement Plan. More about the Career Portfolio's history can be found in Reardon, Lumsden, & Meyer (2004).

Florida State University's Career Portfolio is a student-managed tool; students have control over what information is made available for viewing. When entering the portfolio, students choose whether to build their portfolio, manage current entries, or learn about activities to further build skills. As students build and manage their portfolio, they can use this valuable tool to market themselves to employers and graduate/professional schools, prepare for interviews, identify skills to improve, and learn how to gain new skills.

The heart of the FSU Career Portfolio is the Skills Matrix. In the Skills Matrix, students document the experiences in which they have developed various transferable skills. The skills that are integrated in the portfolio are: Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Leadership, Life Management, Research/Project Development, Social Responsibility, Teamwork, and Technical/Scientific. Students have the ability to add their own skills, which may include skills that are more directly related to their academic major or career goals. The experiences students can use to reflect on the skills they have gained include: Jobs/Internships, Courses, Service/Volunteer Work, Memberships/Activities, and Interests/Life Experiences. These are both in- and out-of-class experiences and students are able to identify how both types of experiences assist them in developing life-long skills. In addition, students can include examples of their work in the Artifacts and Examples section. This allows students to reflect on the skills they have developed, as well as show "readers" evidence of those skills.

Students are encouraged to reflect on and include both curricular and co-curricular experiences in their Career Portfolios. During workshops and presentations delivered to students, facilitators discuss how skills can be gained from various types of experiences, and have the students brainstorm the activities in which they are involved and how those activities have led to the development of various skills. Prompts are provided for reflection writing and example reflection statements to make the process of reflecting on experiences more comfortable to students.

Through interaction with students that have created a Career Portfolio, it has been observed that students are learning how *both* in- and out-of-class experiences lead them to develop a wide range of employable skills. One student had this to say about her experience creating a Career Portfolio: "The portfolio has been so useful in helping me realize what skills I've learned through the experiences I've had and classes I've taken. Having my classes and jobs organized according to the skills I've gained from them allows me to see what I've actually accomplished through my education... The portfolio really has proven to be a powerful tool that forced me for the first time to consider what I've done with my college career. It brings a whole new way of thinking about classes;

instead of just evaluating success through test scores and completed requirements I'm seeing what valuable skills I've gained that will help me in the future."

Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research Partnership

The Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research (I/NCEPR) convenes research/practitioners to study the impact of eportfolios on student learning and educational outcomes. Each year ten institutions selected through an application process constitute a three-year cohort.

I/NCEPR Cohort III

FSU applied and was accepted into Cohort III. The third cohort of the I/NCEPR focused on how student affairs staff could collaborate with academic affairs on their campuses to support in-class and out-of-class learning through the use of eportfolios. FSU's exploratory study with I/NCEPR focused on the preparation of a "showcase" portfolio in which students document both in-class and out-of-class experiences through reflective statements and inclusion of artifacts. Students can share their eportfolio with anyone they choose, including employers, faculty, and peers; these individuals are known as "readers." Our research question is intended to answer how these different groups of readers value curricular (in-class) and co-curricular (out-of-class) learning.

I/NCEPR and the Florida State University Community

Over the course of research, the I/NCEPR team at FSU has built many relationships and encouraged professors, staff, and employers to work together to contribute to the success of the eportfolio on FSU's campus. Initially, the Portfolio Committee members worked to get buy in to the research from those individuals who had previous relationships with the Career Center, mostly with faculty and staff who had requested the portfolio be used by students in their department or program. These contacts were used to develop a team that would meet to create research questions, data collection methods, and contribute additional efforts to the research process.

The FSU I/NCEPR team consisted of two Career Center staff members dedicated to the eportfolio, three Career Center staff members that contributed to data collection efforts, one Career Center graduate assistant dedicated to the eportfolio, the director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Education at FSU, and one theatre department faculty member. The director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Education became involved out of the Center's interest in using the portfolio as a way for student leaders on campus to demonstrate leadership competencies. The faculty member in theatre became involved out of the department's desire for theatre students to complete a portfolio of their experiences as a part of their senior seminar course. The FSU team found that having these individuals be part of the I/NCEPR committee helped the team understand the type of research that would be most helpful for various groups of students.

Question

The assumption that learning takes place both in and out of the classroom has led us to examine how eportfolio readers value curricular (in-class) and co-curricular (out-of-class) learning.

Methodology

Structured interviews with faculty, employers, and students were used to determine what experiences, as documented in the eportfolio, they value and whether these readers placed higher value on curricular or co-curricular learning.

Participants

The participants (or readers) in the study were solicited through email messages sent from the Career Center outlining the study's purpose. Customized emails were sent to students, faculty, and employer contacts to peak their interest in participating. This study focused on students and faculty within the College of Business, as well as employers that hire students with a business background. The employers that participated were those the Career Center had prior contact with through career expositions and on-campus recruiting. The College of Business faculty that participated were those who also had prior interaction with Career Center staff members. Student participants were members of student organizations within the College of Business. The field of study, area of interest, or industry of the participants, as well as their level of prior experience with the Career Portfolio, can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Background of study participants

Identifier	Field of Study, Area of Interest, or Industry	Prior Career Portfolio Experience
<i>Student 1</i>	Accounting	Previously used in class
<i>Student 2</i>	Marketing and Creative Writing	Previously used in class
<i>Student 3</i>	Finance and Accounting	Previously used in class
<i>Student 4</i>	Accounting	None
<i>Faculty 1</i>	Management	None
<i>Faculty 2</i>	Marketing- Sales	Uses as course assignment
<i>Faculty 3</i>	Risk Management and Insurance	None
<i>Faculty 4</i>	Hospitality	None
<i>Employer 1</i>	Retail	None
<i>Employer 2</i>	Financial Services	None
<i>Employer 3</i>	Automotive and Transportation	None
<i>Employer 4</i>	Financial Services	None

Procedures

Each of the readers in the student, faculty, and employer groups viewed three portfolios from students with majors in the College of Business. The three eportfolios used in the study were chosen from portfolios submitted by students as part of a scholarship contest. The identities of these students' portfolios were concealed and each of the portfolios was given a pseudonym. The readers were given up to one hour to view all three of the portfolios and 30 minutes was allotted for interview questions.

While the reader viewed each of the portfolios, a researcher made observations about the reader including how much time the reader spent in each section, how much time was spent on each portfolio, in what order skill areas were viewed, and which artifacts were viewed. After the reader viewed all three portfolios, the researcher then asked a series of questions related to what the reader valued most about the students' portfolios. Two researchers were present for each interview. One

researcher observed readers while they viewed the portfolios and one conducted the interviews. The researchers followed set procedures to make the interviews consistent. The procedures can be found in Appendix A. The responses were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The interview questions focused on asking readers to provide specific examples of items from the portfolios that stood out to them as being significant. From that point, researchers hoped to identify if readers valued curricular or co-curricular experiences based on the examples they provided. For a list of interview questions, refer to Appendix C. The interview questions avoided the use of the terms “curricular” and “co-curricular” to avoid informing participants what the study was examining and leading them to specific answers based on the study question. The final two interview questions asked participants to define the terms curricular and co-curricular as well as rate their importance as demonstrated in an eportfolio. This rating gave the researchers a quantifiable measure to examine.

Two pilot interviews were conducted prior to launching the study. Through those pilot interviews, the questions were further developed to include a quantitative measure by asking the readers to rank how they value curricular and co-curricular experience on a scale of one to five. This quantitative measure proved extremely useful in measuring the value placed on curricular and co-curricular experiences by each group of readers. From this pilot group, researchers saw the need to add sub questions within the interview questions to further probe the participants responses.

Results

The data was captured by having each of the interviews transcribed. The researchers then read through the transcripts and analyzed responses given by the readers to the interview questions. Two researchers analyzed each group of participant responses. From these interviews, several themes emerged within the employer, faculty, and student groups. In the results, the participants are referred to by identifiers assigned during the study. Please refer to Table 1 to reference the participants’ identifiers as well as their background.

From each group participants, themes emerged from the responses given. Table 2 shows the themes that were identified by employers, faculty, and students.

Table 2. Themes from participant groups

Participant Group	Themes Emerging from Responses
Employers	Resumes Description and reflection Evidence of performance Prior employment experience
Faculty	Relevance Written communication Range of experiences Artifacts supporting skills
Students	First impression Resumes Content selectivity Out-of-class experiences

Employer Reactions

Four employers from the retail, financial services, and automotive and transportation industries participated in the research. These employers typically recruit students with business majors and had previous relationships with the Career Center through on-campus recruiting and career expositions, but none had prior experience with eportfolios or with the FSU Career Portfolio. All employers were very interested in the portfolio and how it could be used in the hiring process in their organizations and by students to demonstrate competencies. Themes that emerged from this group of readers included importance of the resume, description and reflection on experiences, evidence of performance through use of artifacts, and prior employment experience.

Resumes. When employers were asked to identify the most significant piece of the Career Portfolio, three of the four employers identified resumes. The resume has long been a critical document for students to be successful in their job search. Employers in this study indicated that eportfolios should not be expected to replace resumes in the near future, but may be used as a supplement to the resume and other application materials. Employer 3 indicated that the resume is a format “I am used to, comfortable with, and know how to gage.” One of the research portfolios used in this study did not include a resume and all four employers commented that this was an essential and useful element that should be included in a student’s portfolio. Employer 1 noted, “I think for me the resume is the most significant just because it’s them in a snapshot. It’s very easy to read, bullet pointed. It’s something that you can look at and kind of get a quick picture of what they’ve done and what they’ve accomplished.”

Description and reflection. When asked whether it was the experience itself or the way in which students described their experiences, three of the four employers believed that a student’s ability to effectively describe his or her experience outweighs the experience itself. Employer 3 said s/he wanted to know “what were the job duties that [the student] performed at that company so I can feel like I was in their seat performing that job. So the description is definitely key.” Another employer, Employer 4, noted that while the experience itself may have peaked his interest, the description by the student “provided some clarification” so he could get a “complete picture” of the experience.

Evidence of performance. Employers were drawn to the artifacts and examples section of the Career Portfolios they viewed. Evidence of performance through the use of artifacts emerged from interviews with each of the four employers as being a significant component of the students’ portfolios. Employer 2 stated, “an example or artifact in one’s portfolio that directly supports reflections on skills is a valuable tool in using a portfolio for employability.” Employer 1 mentioned the eportfolio as a way to gather more information about the student s/he is interviewing and noted, “I think it kind of gives you more information about the quality and the time that they put into things, which is really important, and a lot of them have really great pieces.” Employers also mentioned that “receiving a degree from FSU shows the student can learn” but the artifacts demonstrate the student’s “ability.” Employer 2 stated, “those are the projects they worked on. They’ve really taken their time here to put forth effort to finding opportunities and then illustrating them.”

Prior employment experience. Employers were focused on internship experiences and other evidence of a well-rounded candidate. Two of the four employers stated that they were more

interested in seeing what a student could “do” rather than the courses they took. To an employer, graduating with a degree is evidence enough that you can learn, but they want to see what students do with what they learn. Employer 3 noted, “the main thing we look for is the experience, and how [students’] past experience from their resume can relate to what we’re looking for as a company.” When asked what experience they remembered from a student’s portfolio, one Employer (4) expressed, “definitely the type of roles that they’ve played during internships, during leadership positions.” Employers expressed that most of an interview is asking students to speak about past experiences and what skills students have gained. Employer 3 said, “one thing that the employer looks at is past experience you’ve had.”

Faculty Reactions

Four faculty members in the College of Business participated in the research. The specialization areas of these faculty members included management, marketing/sales, risk management/insurance, and hospitality. Only one of the faculty members had experience with the Career Portfolio through use as an assignment in his/her classes. The remaining three faculty members had no experience with it. Themes related to this group include relevance/length, written communication, range of experience, and artifacts supporting skills.

Relevance. The Career Portfolio allows students the ability to customize what is shown to a reader (or referred user). Students decide how much and which information is shown. Three of the four faculty participants mentioned either the importance of including items in the portfolio that are relevant or targeted, or avoiding having too many items in the eportfolio. Both of these scenarios relate to the theme of relevance/length, as faculty suggested that users think about what would be relevant and avoid long lists of items that may not be relevant to a reader. For example, Faculty 1 mentioned, “A couple [skills] didn’t seem as relevant.” Faculty 4 stated, “I don’t need to see every class that they’ve had. It’s not relevant...”

Written communication. Three of the four faculty participants commented on the students’ writing style or written communication skills. Faculty 1 noticed that the eportfolio “shed some light on [the students’] written communication skills...” Faculty 2 mentioned students’ writing skills when asked what aspect is most important for them in demonstrating their competencies. Faculty 3 stated, “I think the way they write in the artifacts ...proves it.”

Range of experiences. Faculty reacted to the wide range of experiences that students described in their eportfolio. When asked what they valued most in the eportfolio, Faculty 2 responded, “the wide range of experiences of these students... these students had a lot of experiences in a broad range of areas of wide variety and skills.” When asked what they remembered most about the eportfolio, Faculty 3 responded, “the extent of experience ... internships, service activities, experience with foreign languages, and job experiences.”

Artifacts supporting skills. Faculty noted that the artifacts could support the skills that students have. Faculty 3 noted that he “look[ed] at artifacts to see if they really do possess the skills that they describe.” Faculty 4 mentioned that the importance of artifacts being used to verify a skill.

Student Reactions

Four students participated in the research. All student participants had different majors within business and different levels of experience with the Career Portfolio, ranging from having never seen or heard of it to having a Career Portfolio and feeling very confident in utilizing this tool. For more information on the students' background, see Table 1. Themes that emerged from the student group included first impression, resumes, content selectivity, and out-of-class experiences.

First impression. Two of the four students identified the profile of the eportfolios as being significant in capturing the attention of readers and giving a snapshot of their portfolio. Student 1 acknowledged the "welcome page" of the eportfolios and specified "The welcome page... tells me the most about the [students] are like if they're in graduate school, what they're looking for." Student 3 spoke of the importance of the profile in terms of what they believed an employer would value saying, "it really kind of sums up who the student is, their achievements, in just kind of a succinct manner. A recruiter will typically look at the profile and go straight to the resume."

Resumes. When students were asked to identify the most significant piece of the eportfolios, three of the four students believed it was the resume. Students believed that the resume was important in attracting the attention of employers who would view the portfolio. Student 2 stated, "I feel like presenting yourself in a professional resume, put together correctly, that's the most important." The focus on the employer opinions with respect to the resume was also identified by Student 3 observing, "The resume, that would be the most noticeable. With the resume I think a recruiter would put more weight on that than anything else." Another student recognized the importance of the resume in terms of how they could make themselves more competitive against their peers. Student 4 said, "Well I kind of like the resumes. It gave me something to know what mine should look like and know what I should be striving for and what kind of competition is out there."

Content selectivity. Students also noted the importance of being selective when considering what to include. Student 2 stated that there was "too much repetition" and expressed "looking at the same course titles and I was less and less interested." This student went on to say that portfolios should be "direct" and "organized." Student 3 reflected a similar thought in the following statement: "I don't take the time to read all of it" and also shared "If you have an experience and you don't describe it well, it makes it seem less than it was." Student 4 also shared his/her thoughts on the importance of selectivity in relation to brevity by stating "Some of it was kind of boring because they did a lot of stuff . . . put in too much." In addition, Student 2 made comments about the importance of only including relevant information. S/he shared the belief that users "should leave out information that isn't impressive."

Out-of-class experiences. Students that participated in the study consistently observed the importance of out-of-class experiences as demonstrated in the eportfolio. In response to being asked about a specific item that s/he remembered the most, Student 4 stated, "I don't know how good it is to have the classes on there. It seems, I don't know if better is the right word, to have your work experience." Student 1 stated when asked to discuss a specific item, "Work experience, life experiences were pretty amazing for all three of them. I wish I had their lives." Student 1 believed that the experience itself had more bearing on the significance of the item than the way the information was described in the portfolio and explained by saying "The fact that they had [the

experience] is pretty amazing. There was one [student] that went to China and is working on . . . counterfeiting. That's, that's, wow."

Two of the students chose specific examples of artifacts that demonstrated out-of-class experiences as being items within the portfolios that were memorable. Student 2 recalled, "There was the one person who was the president of the Seminole Student Boosters and . . . I thought that was impressive." Student 3 shared that s/he valued international experience and stated that the "Hispanic Student Award" in the artifacts of one portfolio was what stood out for him/her.

Value of Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences

Each of the three participant groups were asked to respond to the questions, "What value do you place on curricular experiences as demonstrated in the Career Portfolio?" and "What value do you place on co-curricular experiences as demonstrated in the Career Portfolio?" They were asked to rate this value on a scale of one to five with five being the highest. These two questions yielded a quantitative measure by which to answer the research question. For the purposes of the study, "curricular" was defined as "experiences that are credit-bearing" and co-curricular as "experiences that do not count for course credit." Employers, faculty, and students ranked co-curricular experiences higher than curricular.

Table 3. Rating of Curricular versus Co-Curricular as demonstrated in the ePortfolio

Subject Identifier	Curricular	Co-curricular
Employer 1	4	4
Employer 2	4	4
Employer 3	5	5
Employer 4	3.5	5
<i>Employer Average</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>4.5</i>
Faculty 1	4	4
Faculty 2	3	3
Faculty 3	5	4.5
Faculty 4	3	5
<i>Faculty Average</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>4.1</i>
Student 1	4	4
Student 2	2	4.5
Student 3	4.5	3.5
Student 4	4	4
<i>Student Average</i>	<i>3.625</i>	<i>4</i>

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Consistent themes emerged from employers, faculty, and students. Interestingly, the faculty and student participants hypothesized what they believed employers would value in an eportfolio and often included in their responses, "I think a recruiter would find that important." In fact, one

faculty member continued to predict what employers would think, even after the interviewer asked him to provide his opinion as a faculty member. It appears that readers have a difficult time separating their opinion from what they view as the goal of the Career Portfolio – to impress employers and find a job.

Only one of the themes emerged related to our research question regarding the value of curricular vs. co-curricular, and this was in the student group. Students placed a higher value on the out-of-class experiences they viewed in other students' eportfolios. They specifically noted work experience, leadership, and involvement in co-curricular as more valuable than coursework being completed. One faculty member believed, on the other hand, coursework to be more valuable because the experiences were "verifiable."

All three participant groups identified artifacts as evidence of past accomplishments and performance to be significant in an eportfolio. Artifacts go beyond a traditional resume and allow students to present work they are proud of and personally value. All three groups valued artifacts that allowed the reader to develop a more in depth understanding of the student and commented on how the artifacts helped them to "relate" to the creator of the portfolio.

Employers and students identified resumes as being a significant component of an eportfolio. Both groups focused on the resume as being a traditional and essential document for a professional. Students mentioned that they valued resumes because they felt that it was important to employers, which was the case in this study. Employers found resumes to be a quick way to identify qualified candidates and that an eportfolio would be used to learn more about a potential candidate.

Limitations

During this exploratory study, some limitations were observed that need to be considered before generalizations can be made based on the results. The first is the extent of subjects' prior experience using the eportfolio as seen in Table 1. Subjects with less experience with the portfolio generally had to spend some time familiarizing themselves with the system during their interview, whereas those subjects with prior experience seemed to have an expectation of what they would see in the eportfolios.

The structure of the data collection process was such that each subject viewed three separate examples of student eportfolios. The purpose of having three portfolios was to give subjects the opportunity to value entries or attributes across portfolios that they considered significant and be able to describe to the researchers. It was observed that subjects actually began to compare the three portfolios by describing what one lacked as opposed to another. It appeared to be difficult for the participants to identify specific examples that could be identified as curricular or co-curricular. The researchers hypothesize that having three eportfolios to view led to comparisons between the three, instead of a more in-depth analysis of one. Additionally, the participants all spent varying times viewing the eportfolio. They were asked to spend one hour viewing all three eportfolios. Some participants mentioned in their interviews that they did not view certain parts, or that they did not read the eportfolio in depth. If the study were to be repeated, using one example of a student portfolio would potentially yield richer data by allowing subjects to examine a portfolio more thoroughly and provide specific examples of items they found significant.

Another limitation resulting from the study's methodology is that when multiple researchers are used, varying interviewing styles emerged. In order to conduct consistent interviews, an interview protocol was developed. For the study's procedures, see Appendix A. It was observed when analyzing transcripts from the interviews that in one incident the researcher may have led the subject to their response.

The study may have also been limited by the subjects' understanding of curricular and co-curricular experiences. The final interview question asked subjects to rank the value of curricular versus co-curricular experiences, but also asked how the subject defined the terms "curricular" and "co-curricular." One employer and two faculty members were unable to define co-curricular and one employer struggled to define curricular. Some participants specifically struggled with defining internships as curricular or co-curricular as the distinction can vary between academic programs. For the study's purpose, internships were defined as co-curricular and were treated as such for data analysis. Additionally, some participants defined "anything that happens on campus" as co-curricular and "anything that happens off-campus" as extracurricular. It may be helpful in subsequent studies to define curricular and co-curricular prior to beginning the interviews and give examples of each.

The sample size in this exploratory study was also limiting and makes it difficult to generalize the results. It would be interesting to examine if the same themes and ratings of curricular and co-curricular would emerge from the participant groups. For example, one student participant was somewhat of an outlier rating curricular as 2 and thus bringing down the overall ranking of the curricular in the student group.

Conclusions and Implications

Throughout I/NCEPR research at FSU, relationships were fostered with employers, faculty, and students. Employers that participated in the study were interested in learning more about how eportfolios could be used in the hiring process and how students could use it to demonstrate competencies. Also, faculty reactions to the eportfolio provided insight into how faculty would like to see students utilize the portfolio in their coursework and made faculty members more aware of the resource. As a result of his research participation, one business faculty member became interested in having his students use the portfolio. Through the help of the students, employers, and faculty members, knowledge has been gained that can benefit students tremendously. This knowledge will allow students to better understand what each audience values in an eportfolio and how they can best utilize this tool.

Implications for Practice

With the exploratory nature of this study and small sample size, we must be careful applying the results. However, suggestions can be given to students when using their eportfolios for job searching. The themes that emerged among the faculty and employer groups can be used to inform Career Center staff about what students should include in their eportfolios. Many of the readers mentioned the importance of targeting the eportfolio to the audience and focusing on relevant information rather than the overall length of the eportfolio. Also, the importance of artifacts that specifically relate to experiences and future goals were also identified as important. Students need to also be aware of the importance of their writing skills when reflecting on skills in their eportfolio

and spend time reviewing and editing these reflections as it is an important element of a strong portfolio.

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Appendix A

**I/NCEPR Cohort III
Florida State University
DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

Preparation

Items needed for data collection:

(all forms can be found at K:\CC-Shared\Portfolio\NCEPR Research)

- Tape recorder
- Consent Form
- Participant Instructions (for appropriate audience – faculty, employer, or student)
- Interview Notes page
- Interview Questions sheet
- Lunch ticket (kept in Jill's top desk drawer)

Have the computer prepared with all three sample portfolios.

Have the tape recorder prepared. Ensure tape is at the beginning.

Have consent form and interview questions ready.

Offer a drink to the interviewee.

Before Viewing Career Portfolios

To facilitate our note-taking, we would like to audio tape our conversations today. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. All data collected will be identified by a number, not by name. In addition, please sign this form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

Have the participant sign the Consent Form.

We have planned this process to last no longer than one and ½ hours. During this time, you will be viewing three Career Portfolios and answering questions we have about those portfolios. The purpose of the interview will be to explore reactions to viewing students' Career Portfolios.

We are not looking for you to compare the different portfolios that you will view, but we will be asking you questions about your overall reactions to viewing Career Portfolios.

Have the participant sit in front of the computer.

Give the participant the Participant Instruction sheet and go over the sheet with her/him.

Pull up the first portfolio.

As you view the portfolios, we will be taking notes. Please do not let this affect the way in which you view the portfolios and let us know if you have any questions. Let us know when you finish viewing this portfolio, and we will bring up the next portfolio.

Pull up the next two portfolios after the interviewee indicates he/she is finished viewing.

Using the I/NCEPR Interview Notes sheet:

- Write down the times they viewed each portfolio.
- Write down the order in which the interviewee viewed the portfolios.
- Write down the order in which the interviewee viewed the various sections of the portfolios.
- Write down any questions the participant asked while viewing the portfolios.

After Viewing Career Portfolios

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your reactions to the portfolios you viewed. Again, I do not want you to compare the three portfolios. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Using the Interview Questions sheet, read the interview questions and use prompts when necessary.

When the interview is completed:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Feel free to contact Jill Lumsden if you would like more information or results of this study.

Give participant a lunch ticket

Appendix B

**I/NCEPR Cohort III
Florida State University
STUDENT PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET**

Date: _____

Name _____

Age _____ Gender _____

Major(s) _____

Class level

- freshman
 sophomore
 junior
 senior
 grad student

Ethnic Group (please check)

- African-American
 Asian-American
 Hispanic-American
 Multi-ethnic
 Native American
 White/Caucasian
 Other _____
 Prefer Not to Respond

Have you previously used FSU Online Career Portfolio?

yes no unsure

Appendix C

I/NCEPR Cohort III Florida State University INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experience with the FSU Career Portfolio prior to participating in this study.
2. What do you remember most about these students' Career Portfolios?
 - a. *If they say a section:*
 - b. What specific items or entries?
 - c. Why?
 - d. *If the entry is an artifact or a skill:*
 - e. Did the experience itself or the way it was described have more bearing on your choice of this item?
3. What do you think is the most significant piece of these students' Career Portfolios?
 - a. *If they say a section:*
 - b. What specific item or entry?
 - c. Why?
 - d. *If the entry is an artifact or a skill:*
 - e. Did the experience itself or the way it was described have more bearing on your choice of this item?
4. What aspects of these students' Career Portfolios do you believe are most important for them in demonstrating their competencies?
 - a. *If they say a section:*
 - b. What specific item or entry?
 - c. Why?
 - d. *If the entry is an artifact or a skill:*
 - e. Did the experience itself or the way it was described have more bearing on your choice of this item?
5. What do you value most about these students' Career Portfolios?
 - a. *If they say a section:*
 - b. What specific item or entry?
 - c. Why?
 - d. *If the entry is an artifact or a skill:*
 - e. Did the experience itself or the way it was described have more bearing on your choice of this item?
6. What could these students have added (if anything) to their Career Portfolios to help make the students' case?
7. What could these students have left out of their Career Portfolios? (Or, what didn't help to make these students' cases?)

8. On a scale of 1 – 5 (5 being the highest), what value do you place on students' curricular experiences as demonstrated in the Career Portfolio?
 - a. If asked what curricular is, "experiences that are credit-bearing"
 - b. If not asked what curricular is, after the participant answers, ask: How do you define curricular? What would curricular include?
9. On a scale of 1 – 5 (5 being the highest), what value do you place on students' co-curricular experiences as demonstrated in the Career Portfolio?
 - a. If asked what co-curricular is, "experiences that do not count for course credit"
 - b. If not asked what co-curricular is, after the participant answers, ask: How do you define co-curricular? What would curricular include?

Appendix D

I/NCEPR Cohort III Florida State University PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

Participant Instructions – Employers

You are looking at this student's Career Portfolio as an employer who is hiring.

- You have 1 hour to view 3 students' Career Portfolios.
- Please view each section of each Career Portfolio.
- Please be thorough in your review of the students' skills, experiences, and qualifications as it related to their goals and objectives, as we will be asking specific questions about your reactions to different parts of the Career Portfolio.
- We are not asking you to compare these students or the Career Portfolios.
- When you finish reviewing each student's portfolio, notify the researcher to access the next portfolio.
- Feel free to take notes on the bottom of this paper, especially as is relates to things that stand out.
- Ask any of the researchers if you have a question.

Participant Instructions – Faculty

You are looking at this student's Career Portfolio as a faculty member evaluating the student's competencies.

- You have 1 hour to view 3 students' Career Portfolios.
- Please view each section of each Career Portfolio.
- Please be thorough in your review of this student's skills, experiences, and qualifications as it relates to his/her goals and objectives, as we will be asking specific questions about your reactions to different parts of the Career Portfolio.
- We are not asking you to compare these students or the Career Portfolios.
- When you finish reviewing each student's portfolio, notify the researcher to access the next portfolio.
- Feel free to take notes on the bottom of this paper, especially as is relates to things that stand out.
- Ask any of the researchers if you have a question.

Participant Instructions – Students

You are looking at this student's Career Portfolio as a fellow student, evaluating this student's competencies.

- You have 1 hour to view 3 students' Career Portfolios.
- Please view each section of each Career Portfolio.
- Please be thorough in your review of this student's skills, experiences, and qualifications as it relates to his/her goals and objectives, as we will be asking specific questions about your reactions to different parts of the Career Portfolio.
- We are not asking you to compare these students or the Career Portfolios.
- When you finish reviewing each student's portfolio, notify the researcher to access the next portfolio.
- Feel free to take notes on the bottom of this paper, especially as is relates to things that stand out.
- Ask any of the researchers if you have a question.

Appendix E

**I/NCEPR Cohort III
Florida State University
LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS
(portfolio creators)**

Dear Participant,

The Career Center is conducting a research study on the FSU Career Portfolio. Jill Lumsden, a Career Development Coordinator at the Career Center, will be the principal investigator. We are conducting this study in order to increase knowledge of the use of the Career Portfolio.

Your participation in this study will involve allowing FSU students and faculty, as well as external employers, to view your Career Portfolio contents without any personally identifying information. Students, faculty, and employers will view your portfolio and then participate in an interview with the researchers. The purpose of the interview will be to explore reactions to viewing students' Career Portfolios. Participants will be viewing your Career Portfolio, but they will not have access to any information such as your name, contact information, and educational information. All participants will agree to keep the content of your portfolio confidential. All participant data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a Career Center office and will be accessible only to the researchers. All data will be shredded and audiotapes destroyed by December 31, 2011. Any information obtained during the course of the study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a participant in this study. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefits of your participation are future improvements in the use of an online career portfolio and increased awareness of how to use this tool in career and life planning.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Jill Lumsden at (850) 644-6433, jlumsden@admin.fsu.edu. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Office of the Vice President for Research at (850) 644-8633.

Thank you!

I give my consent to participate in the above study.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

Appendix F

**I/NCEPR Cohort III
Florida State University
INTERVIEW NOTES**

Date: _____

Place: _____

Participant Identification: _____

Start Time: _____

Finish Time: _____

Order of Viewed Portfolios: _____, _____, _____

1st viewed portfolio: _____

Start: _____

Finish: _____

Order of Viewed Portfolio Sections _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____

2nd viewed portfolio: _____

Start: _____

Finish: _____

Order of Viewed Portfolio Sections _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____

3rd viewed portfolio: _____

Start: _____

Finish: _____

Order of Viewed Portfolio Sections _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____

Appendix G

Screenshots of Research Sample ePortfolios Profiles

Profile Skills References Artifacts



A. Falls

Career Goal
To work for a company with global presence, where I can utilize my financial, linguistic, and international knowledge & experience on a daily basis.

Academics

- Expected B.A. in French/Finance, April 2006
- Minors: International Affairs & Spanish
- GPA: 4.0
- Courses in Accounting, Economics, Marketing, International Management, Multinational Business Operations

International Experience

- Study Abroad: Valencia, Spain (Summer 2005)
- Intensive French Language Program: L'Institut Catholique de Paris, France (Summer 2004)
- Fluent in French; proficient in Spanish; basic knowledge of German

[Email me](#) for more information.

Profile Resume Skills Transcript References Artifacts



A. West

Welcome
My name is A. West and I am dual majoring in Multinational Business and Economics with a minor in Geography. This past summer I studied abroad with FSU in Tianjin, China where I took two Mandarin Chinese language courses and a course in Chinese culture and history. My experiences in China greatly impacted my worldview as I was able to experience a country that I'd previously only been able to get to know through books.

Career Objectives
Ultimately I would like to work with American companies that are trying to enter the Chinese market by providing them with information about policies, laws, local culture and business practices. China already plays a substantial role in the global marketplace and will only continue to grow in importance. Ensuring that American businesses are well equipped with the information to enter and compete in such a different market is essential for their success and our nation's success as a whole. I hope to begin the journey toward gaining the extensive knowledge necessary for consulting through spending a year in China after graduation in an intensive language program, and later returning to the United States to work for the International Trade Administration analyzing foreign trade, specializing in intellectual property rights in China.

[Email me](#) for more information.

Profile **Resume** **Skills** **Transcript** **References** **Artifacts**





K. Miller

Welcome

Welcome. Thank you for taking the time to view my portfolio. In the pages ahead, you'll learn more about my goals, skills and experiences. This site also includes examples of my work. Please feel free to look around. If you have any questions about the material you see here, you may refer to the email link at the bottom of the page to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Objective

To obtain a position in an in-house communication/marketing department within a hospital while utilizing my Hispanic Marketing, public relations and event planning skills.

Education

- Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
- M.A. Integrated Marketing Communication
- Emphasis in Hispanic Marketing
- GPA: 3.60
- Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
- B.A. Communication and Spanish
- GPA: 3.8

Qualifications

- Excellent oral communication skills
- Knowledge of Hispanic Market
- Experience with public relations, advertising, marketing and special events
- Knowledge of moderating focus groups
- Experience in leadership and group management
- Fluent in Spanish

[Email me](#) for more information.