

Strategies for Building Faculty Support and Engagement for Campus-wide ePortfolio Initiatives

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About us:



Manhattanville College is located in Purchase, New York on a beautiful 100-acre suburban campus, 10 minutes from downtown White Plains and just 30 miles from New York City. It has an amazingly diverse mix of students from more than 30 states and 50 countries. The College has 1,700 undergraduates and 1,000 graduate students.

Our Challenge: A Forty Year-old Portfolio System with a lot of baggage!

It's amazing how much
you can fit into one of
these in four years.



The PORTFOLIO System—the heart of Manhattanville's distinctive approach to a liberal arts education—personalizes your college degree, helps you choose your major and plan for a career.

**MANHATTANVILLE
COLLEGE**

Portfolio System's Original Purpose:

- Academic planning
- Declaring the major
- Demonstrating competency in various fields
- Understanding the value of a Liberal Arts education
- Linking to the College's mission
- Linking curricular and co-curricular activities

Student complaints about portfolio:

- It was one more hoop they had to jump through to get to graduation
- It required too much time to acquire all of the necessary signatures
- They received little or no guidance in preparing their portfolios
- It was difficult to anticipate what the Board on Academic Standards (faculty committee overseeing Portfolio) would approve
- It had no use/relevance in their lives

Faculty complaints about Portfolio:

- It was “uncompensated work” that was part of their advising function
- Advising loads are not equally distributed
- The format of the Portfolio left students little room for creativity
- Faculty and administrators had to spend a lot of time getting students to submit “delinquent” Portfolios
- Portfolio was beyond their disciplinary training and area of expertise

We quickly learned that things wouldn't be that easy....

The Portfolio System at Manhattanville College was launched in 1971. A flagship curricular requirement, it emphasized integrative learning campus-wide. Sadly, due to limited resources, the Portfolio became divisive, at times described as "busy work" and "too costly" for tight budgets. Shifted from paper to ePortfolio, the Portfolio added issues with technology to the list of problems. Eventually, a faculty vote suspended the Portfolio as an undergraduate requirement. A committee was charged with developing an optional, credit-bearing, low-cost alternative.

The Task:

- Making everyone on campus feel heard
- Defining new program goals
- Developing the program
- Getting campus buy-in to approve that program

The Methodology:

- Committee members met with faculty, administrators, students and alumni, gathering their ideas and recommendations
- With administrative support, we applied for and received a two-year \$100,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Faculty approved the first pilot courses to be offered during the semester just completed

Strategies for gaining faculty buy in:

- Invite all faculty members to consider teaching in the program and offer a small stipend for the development of courses in the program (from grant money)
- Faculty members teaching ATLAS (new, credit-bearing program name) courses invite faculty and staff from across campus to be guest speakers
- Hold public Showcase events
- Offer training through our Center for Teaching, Learning and Scholarship on reflective learning (from grant money), using faculty members with expertise in the field as workshop leaders
- Collect and publicize student “testimonials” about the value of the course

Student Reaction to first Atlas course:

“My favorite part of the course was the fact that it was mostly centered around reflection. In other classes, you don't get the opportunity to talk about yourself and your work, without its being compared to other students' work. Every person in the class was willing to give constructive criticism and wanted to help you present your best work...it was a great way to present all your work to a broad audience and immediately find the hiccups that needed correcting. I wish the class was developed sooner, because I would definitely have benefited from the class as a junior, sophomore, or even as a freshman...”(Lisa Colten '16)

Another student perspective

“One of my favorite parts of working on my portfolio was getting to work with different members of the Manhattanville community to get their opinion of how I should showcase my work with them. My other favorite part of this process was the aftermath of deciding what to feature and seeing how much I have gotten out of my college career in only three years.”

(Jackie Kerner '17)

Showcase of student work



Continuing challenges:

- Recruiting faculty to offer the courses
 - Competing with departmental courses
 - Competing with other specialized courses such as First-Year Seminars or Honors Program
- Encouraging departments to offer classes that could integrate with the program
 - This seems like the best strategy but is proving difficult
- Future funding to develop the program when the grant money runs out

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