Supporting Integration of Learning, Transitions, and Assessment: ePortfolios in Capstone Seminars at IUPUI

Marta Antón, Tyrone Freeman, and Susan Kahn

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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U.S. Higher Ed Model

- General education: courses in various disciplines to achieve breadth and cross-cutting learning outcomes

- The major: study of a specialized field to achieve depth and refine/apply gen ed skills

Capstone Experiences

- Capstone: culminating experience intended to bring together learning in gen ed and major via a research or creative project and/or an ePortfolio
- Achieve sense of closure, accomplishment, purpose, and agency
- Prepare for transition to life as professionals and members of various communities
- Capture above in an ePortfolio, which can then provide evidence for assessment of student learning and development

Capstone Seminar in English "Composing a Life Story"

- "Composing a life…has to do with the ways in which you compose your own *versions* of your life….the stories you use as lenses for interpreting experience as it comes along. What I want to say is that you can play with, compose, multiple versions of a life." (Bateson, *Willing to Learn: Passages of Personal Discovery,* 2004)

Students Reading the Essay

- "I've kind of always thought that my story goes one way and it can't be altered...it's interesting to think that I can be in complete control over my life story, how it is perceived, and what I decide it will mean for me. It's actually kind of liberating."

Life Stories Reflection

1. Create two one-page narratives that represent different versions of your life story

2. Re-read your stories and write a reflection that addresses one or more of the questions below

3. Conclude the reflection by telling us which story your ePortfolio will focus on and how its elements will convey that story to your audience

Reflection questions

- How did you frame your stories—i.e., what perspectives do they represent?

- Have other people's stories (like your parents' stories) or points of view influenced yours? In what ways?

- What are the major similarities and differences between your two stories?

- Does one have more continuity than the other? Why?

- Which story do you prefer? Why?

- Was it difficult for you to compose one or both stories? If so, why?

- What insights did you gain from composing and re-reading your two stories?

Spencer

It was difficult for me to compose both stories. Approaching the capstone, I was ready to think about life after my degree. I was not prepared to reconsider all the decisions I made previously. But an idea in Mary Catherine Bateson's "Composing a Life Story" did make these stories come out a little easier. She mentions "making creative choices in how you look at your life" (462). Previously I had only thought of my life as one continuous story, and I had never examined my life in different, unrelated ways. I feel that interpreting my own story in as many ways as possible is the first step to learning more about myself in order to discover what I would like to do with the rest of my life.

Devon

The first story presents my life as an accumulation of my loved ones' experiences. I believe that a person's story is strongly entwined with those they care about, even as a bystander….In the first story, it may seem as though I simply watched as the events occurred. But that is not the case….I provided compassion, attention, time, or resources to helping my loved ones…I had not thought about that element of the story until I read the comments on my draft submission: "It sounds to me as though your first story might be one of yourself as a caretaker and supporter of others – which may be why your own passion isn't at the top of your consciousness." I was very grateful for this comment, because I had never considered myself as fulfilling those roles. But it is true. For much of my life, my priority was the quality of life experienced by others. I think the second version of my life story presents a nice contrast to the first version of me.

Hannah

Rather than focusing on only one of these stories in my ePortfolio, I have included ideas from both. My fields of study truly are linked, and I wanted to demonstrate that theme, showing how what I'm learning in one area strengthens the other and has led me to the career path that I am now pursuing. Threading these narratives together…my Work Showcase pages display work completed in my different areas of study…. As a whole, my ePortfolio shows…the convergence of my interests…It embodies the harmony of my studies, connected by my deep love of language in its varying forms.

ePortfolio pedagogy

- Constructivist approach to knowledge
- Integrative approach to learning and experience
- Metacognition
- Identity representation and development
- Student engagement, agency, purpose
- Social pedagogy

Contact us

Marta Anton: manton@iupui.edu

Tyrone Freeman: tyfreema@iupui.edu

Susan Kahn: skahn@iupui.edu