

IUPUI Program Review and Assessment Committee Assessment Project Proposal

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Project Title: Designing a Sustainable Assessment Plan for the Communication Studies Gateway-to-Capstone ePortfolio Initiative

Project Dates: May 2021 - May 2022

Project Checklist:

- Statement of support from Dr. Kristine Karnick, Chair, will be emailed to Linda Houser
- Brief budget narrative included in proposal
- IRB application will be submitted if proposal is funded

Abstract:

The Department of Communication Studies implemented a “Gateway-to-Capstone” ePortfolio Initiative in January 2019. The intent of this project is to develop a sustainable assessment plan that can be implemented to evaluate the degree to which student learning outcomes (i.e., IUPUI POLs and Department Learning Outcomes) are met as demonstrated in student ePortfolios. Funds will be used to support the development of direct measures of student performance, as evidenced through the quantity and quality of artifacts showcased in the 10 folders of the ePortfolio, and an indirect measure of student learning experiences through a survey questionnaire.

Designing a Sustainable Assessment Plan for the Communication Studies Gateway-to-Capstone ePortfolio Initiative

Project Purpose:

The purpose of the grant project is to develop a sustainable assessment plan that includes direct and indirect measures that can be implemented to evaluate the degree to which student learning outcomes, the IUPUI POLs and the Department's Learning Outcomes, are met in the Communication Studies "Gateway-to-Capstone" ePortfolio initiative.

The Department of Communication Studies recently launched a "Gateway-to-Capstone" ePortfolio initiative. This initiative grew out of a disciplinary tuning project undertaken by the discipline's national professional organization, the National Communication Association (NCA), in 2014. NCA recruited a group of 30 faculty members from a variety of communication departments across the country, including one of the project directors, Dr. Elizabeth Goering, and challenged them to answer the question "What should a graduate with a communication degree know, understand, and be able to do?" That project resulted in the identification of 9 Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOCs) that Communication departments nationwide could use as a framework for curriculum design at the local level (NCA, n.d.). After the launch of the LOCs, the Department of Communication Studies at IUPUI spent a year aligning its curriculum with NCA's LOCs. Ultimately, faculty in the Department of Communication Studies at IUPUI identified 10 LOCs that are consistent with NCA's guidelines and with university POLs and priorities. The Department then developed an independent capstone course as the culminating experience in the "Gateway-to-Capstone" initiative

to ensure LOCs were being met. Capstone experiences are important curriculum developments that are capable of “enhancing students’ abilities to become critical thinkers who are skilled in analysis and argument around a complex problem” (Budwig & Jessen-Marshall, 2018, p. 4) and provide clear connections between university and department learning objectives and student learning (Nusche, 2008; Shattuck, 2018).

One way to enrich capstone experiences is to include a high-impact educational practice, and ePortfolios are seen as an effective tool for higher education to demonstrate learning outcomes (Clemson University, n.d.; Indiana University, n.d.; Kahn, 2014; Miller & Morgaine, 2009; Tremblay et al., 2012). To maximize the potential of the ePortfolio, it was embedded throughout the curriculum in the “Gateway-to-Capstone” ePortfolio initiative. In the gateway course (COMM-G100), students are introduced to the concept of ePortfolios and given workshops to help them set up their own CN ePortfolio. Students create folders for each of the LOCs in which they can archive evidence of their learning throughout their program of study to demonstrate their emerging communication professional identity. In each of the required core classes in the major, students complete a signature ePortfolio assignment (e.g., telling the story of themselves as a communication researcher in the required research methods course). In the elective courses in the major, professors encourage students to archive assignments in their ePortfolios. Then, in the capstone class (COMM-G480), students focus on transforming the ePortfolio archive they have been maintaining throughout their course of study into an effective showcase of their knowledge, skills, and competencies. The students complete a series of reflection papers to later be modified and included in each folder, and also an intervention project that reinforces the 10th

learning outcome identified by the Department. This ePortfolio initiative was piloted in Spring 2019 and expanded to all COMM-G100 and COMM-G480 sections in Fall 2019.

This proposal seeks funding to support the development and implementation of a sustainable strategy for assessing the student learning related to the LOCs and IUPUI's Profiles that is evidenced in this initiative, particularly through the ePortfolios.

Intended Outcomes of the Project:

The general outcome of this project will be a sustainable assessment plan that can be used in the "Gateway-to-Capstone" initiative. The specific intended outcomes are: (1) a direct measure that can be used to evaluate the quality of content in the folders of the ePortfolios, and (2) an indirect measure, a reliable and valid survey questionnaire that measures student perceptions of their knowledge, competence, and confidence regarding the Department's LOCs and the University's POLs.

Assessment Method:

The direct measure, ePortfolio assessment, based on rubrics for assessing the quality of the work uploaded in the folders related to each of the 10 LOCs, will be developed and piloted. Content areas and characteristics to assess will be brainstormed and developed into a user-friendly assessment tool. The work-intensive process of using rubrics to evaluate the folders created by 60-75 students across 3 sections of the capstone in an academic year, with up to 750 folders that contain one or more artifacts, will be made manageable through random sampling procedures. During the pilot year, the sustainability of the process will be assessed before making modifications moving forward.

The indirect measure, a quantitative assessment via a survey questionnaire, will be developed and piloted in the gateway (COMM-G100), required major (COMM-G201, COMM-310), and capstone (COMM-G480) courses in a pre-post design. Having measures at the beginning, mid-point, and end of students' undergraduate career will provide longitudinal data of student perceptions of knowledge, competence, and confidence. The survey will be administered at the beginning and end of each section of each required course during the Fall and Spring semesters. This will provide not only annual assessment data for the program holistically, but the Department will also be able to track each student longitudinally. Based on results, a final strategic assessment plan will include annual data collection and analysis procedures.

Data Analysis:

Several methods of data analysis will be implemented in analyzing the data from the direct measure, the ePortfolio assessment. Working out the details of data analysis is part of the proposed project, but analytical strategies likely to be included are:

- Quantifying the artifacts in LOC folders
- Assessing the quality of artifacts in the randomly selected LOC folders based on the rubrics designed during the grant period

Quantitative analyses of the indirect measure (the survey questionnaire) will be administered in a pre-post design each semester. Measures of reliability and validity will be calculated for the survey questionnaire. Statistical analysis of the pre- and post-surveys will be analyzed using a paired t-test to determine any significant shifts in student perceptions of knowledge, competence, and confidence.

Evaluation and Dissemination of Results:

In addition to completing the reporting requirements of the grant, the results of this project will be presented to faculty in the Department of Communication Studies to discuss at a monthly faculty meeting. The results of the assessment grant work will also be submitted for presentation at the 2022 Assessment Institute hosted by IUPUI and to the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE).

Intended Use of Findings for Program Improvement:

After discussing the results with faculty in the Department, final revisions to the assessment tools will be made, and training of all departmental faculty on how to use the assessment materials will begin. Training will ensure that faculty within the department understand not only how to assess the “Gateway-to-Capstone” ePortfolio initiative, but also that they recognize the value of the assessment plan and are more encouraged to develop an ePortfolio assignment in one of their courses. The addition of more ePortfolio assignments will increase the breadth and depth of the “Gateway-to-Capstone” ePortfolio initiative. Additionally, by training all faculty to use the tools, the sustainability of the initiative and of the assessment plan is strengthened.

Budget:

Grant funds (\$4,995) are needed to support the project directors and a graduate student research assistant (GRA). Each project director will receive \$1500 to support the work over the summer, fall, and spring terms, and conference fees estimated at \$700 (\$350 each: IUPUI Assessment Institute and AALHE conference). The GRA is expected to assist in item generation for the direct measure, pilot-testing of the ePortfolio assessment measure, and statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test of the surveys. The GRA will be paid an hourly wage ($\$15/\text{hour} \times 33 \text{ hours} = \495).

Supplemental Materials: References

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<https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2018/Spring/Analysis>
- Clemson University. (n.d.). *The what, why and how of Eportfolios*.
<https://www.clemson.edu/academics/programs/eportfolio/information.html>
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- Kahn, S. (2014, Winter). E-portfolios: A look at where we've been, where we are now, and where we're (possibly) going. *Peer Review*, 16(1).
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- Nusche, D. (2008). Assessment of learning outcomes in higher education: A comparative review of selected articles. *OECD Education Working Papers No. 15*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/19939019>
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