

Creating Your Professional Portfolio



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The Professional Portfolio

I. What is a professional portfolio?

A professional portfolio is a tool judiciously and carefully crafted to appropriately showcase the work of a professional while providing evidence of career growth. It is **NOT** simply a gathering of all the papers and assignments completed during your course of study at Towson University that have been placed in a notebook. Campbell, Melenyzer, Nettles, and Wyman (*How to Develop a Professional Portfolio: A Manual for Teachers*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997) defined a portfolio as an “organized goal-driven exhibit providing evidence of understanding and performance.”

As a major in an Interdisciplinary Studies program at Towson University, the portfolio you develop is an evolving structure that will document growth over time. It promotes self-analysis and critical reflection in ways that help you and others to understand the complexities of your educational achievement. Serving as a thread that weaves all parts of the Interdisciplinary Studies major together, the portfolio helps you to integrate knowledge and basic skills from across diverse courses and experiences during your years of study at Towson University. The portfolio process allows you, your instructors, and prospective employers to visualize the entire conceptual framework of your Interdisciplinary Studies major program with all the diverse theoretical and practical activities that shape learning.

A professional portfolio offers you a means of presenting your case coherently. It shows employers why you are worthy of special notice, and gives them the opportunity to view materials beyond those in the standard application. Your portfolio design can showcase your strengths and abilities in a way that is both professional and uniquely your own.

Your portfolio will include a variety of documents to highlight your professional achievements in a cohesive manner. The portfolio may be in a hardcopy paper copy or electronic format. The electronic format offers the distinct advantages of portability,

accessibility, and connectivity. It is much faster and less costly to send an electronic version of your portfolio to interested parties.

II. What is the portfolio process?

Your portfolio can be a perpetual workspace in which to examine and evaluate various aspects of your career preparation. Initially you will want to collect everything that might be of interest including presentations, papers on relevant topics, video recordings, letters of recommendation, and other supporting items.

The key to the portfolio process is in understanding the relationship between **collection, selection, and reflection**. A portfolio only begins to take shape as you select and arrange the evidence contained in your collection with a particular audience or purpose in mind. Then, when you go on to compose reflections exploring the meaning of the evidence, your work folder is transformed into a potentially powerful document representing a self-aware professional.

II. A. Collection. The first step in portfolio preparation is collection. You may well want to become a “pack rat”, collecting everything related to your work. This might include:

- Journal reflections
- Samples of evaluations by professors, peers, and supervisors
- Field experience evaluation forms, e.g. internships
- Video and audio tapes, dvds
- Photographs,
- Papers and/or reviews of professional literature
- Web addresses or links to sites you have developed or which include important information about you and your work
- Letters of recommendation and appreciation
- Activities in professional organizations
- Attendance and presentations at conferences

- Certificates
- Newspaper and newsletter articles
- Honors and awards
- Volunteer services
- Inspirational or general learning experiences
- Evidence of being a life-long learner
- Personal interests, talents, and skills related to your professional and personal development
- Written reflections on the meaning of your education

There is no need to organize your collection yet, just keep legible copies and electronic versions of all artifacts where possible. It would be helpful to electronically scan and save items, including graphics and photographs, to be available as needed.

Keep journals and write regularly about your thinking, your readings, and your professional progress. Collect work from your field experiences, e.g. study abroad, travel study, field work for a research paper, field trips, internships, etc. Do not hesitate to request that your professors write extensive evaluation remarks on research papers and other assignments that you might want to include in your portfolio.

II. B. Selection. Four general rules can help you select those items from your collection that will show who you are.

1. *guide the reader*
2. *explain the artifacts*
3. *consider the variety and flexibility when selecting artifacts*

II. B. 1. Guide the reader. Create a table of contents. You can use additional items in a paper portfolio such as notebook dividers or colored tabs. In either paper or electronic format, the organization should lead the reader through your thinking. Include an introductory statement explaining how and why the portfolio is organized as it is, and what the viewer will experience going through it.

II. B. 2. Explain the artifacts. Locate all sample artifacts in the appendix. These artifacts will not stand on their own. Through detailed description in the body of the portfolio, you will show the reader how each artifact illustrates the multiple competencies you have developed. Include specific examples from the artifacts when you refer to them to draw out their unique features. Artifacts from each stage of your development will demonstrate how you have grown professionally over time.

II. B. 3. Consider the variety and flexibility when selecting artifacts. Include as many different kinds of artifacts as possible to make the portfolio interesting and to demonstrate your diversity. Different research paper topics, pictures, assessments from multiple sources, will show different aspects of your capabilities.

II. C. Reflection. Once you have collected and selected the artifacts to use in your portfolio. You need to reflect on the significance and meaning of major events in your professional development as well as the relevancy of the curriculum and requirements of your major program of study. Your portfolio should give evidence of growth and change in your philosophy as well as connecting your education to your career goals and needs. You will want to continue to develop your portfolio as you navigate through your career.

In a reflective essay you should evaluate the work in your portfolio in terms of your growth in these areas:

- your knowledge of the disciplines in your program
- your ability to integrate these disciplines
- your ability to write research papers and analytical essays on subjects in the disciplines in your program
- the technological skills you have acquired through your major
- your intellectual growth during your years as an IDIS major at Towson University

III. Guidelines

While the process of developing a portfolio may seem like a daunting task at first, the key to making this task manageable is to follow the guidelines provided for developing the portfolio. These guidelines will help you as you begin your portfolio preparation. These are the minimum requirements for your portfolio; however, you are encouraged to extend beyond the minimum so that your portfolio becomes a document that reflects your creativity and individuality. While a well-organized and correctly written portfolio is essential, it may not be adequate. **You need to be creative. You need to make your portfolio stand out among others. You need a “hook”.** You need to get the reader to stop and take notice of your portfolio.

III. A. Portfolio Content (Outlined in brief)

Portfolio Organization & Introduction

Title Page

Table of Contents

Introductory Statement

Professional Preparation

Educational background: high school, college major & minor programs, curriculum, and earned certificates.

Professional Commitment

Essay: 2-3 pages: your growth as a professional and relevance of your education as outlined above in II.C. Reflection. Be sure to reference your major artifacts. Clearly describe in what ways each referenced artifact illustrates your growth and professional goals.

Appendix

This will consist of your selected collection of artifacts.

III. B. Portfolio Content (Detailed description)

III. B. 1. Portfolio Organization & Introduction

A. Document Format

- keep all portfolio materials in a 3-ring binder
- use dividers to separate your portfolio into the following sections: Introduction, Professional Preparation, Professional Commitment, Appendix.
- All items in the portfolio should be clearly labeled
- Clearly label the outside of the binder with your name, program name, degree you are working towards, and anticipated graduation date.

B. Title Page

Begin this section with a title page that includes your name, address, telephone number, email address, program name, degree you are working towards, and anticipated graduation date.

C. Table of Contents

Should reflect sections as outlined above

D. Introductory Statement

This is a one-page statement providing an overview of your portfolio. Summarize **YOUR GROWTH** (professional preparation and professional commitment).

E. Professional Preparation

As described above.

F. Professional Commitment

As described above.

G. Appendix

IV. Submitting Your Portfolio

If a professional portfolio is a requirement in your major program of study, meet with your program director in the semester prior to your graduation. The program director will be able to give you a due date for submitting your portfolio. It is wise to submit your portfolio well in advance of the final due date in order to leave time to enable you to make any adjustments/changes that might be needed. Although your portfolio might be a requirement in your program of study, its ultimate purpose is to serve as the vehicle to present yourself as a professional.

Appendix

SOCIAL SCIENCES MAJORS ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO

Every student majoring in Social Sciences at Towson University is required to submit a portfolio of work to the Director of the Social Sciences Program. In order to be cleared for graduation, the portfolio should be submitted by midterm. This portfolio will consist of essays and research papers written during your years at Towson, as well as a reflective essay written at the end of your undergraduate career.

Student participation is vital to the success of the assessment process. Rest assured that your portfolio will not affect your ability to graduate or your GPA. Its contents will be read only after you have graduated, and the evaluators of the portfolio will report only general data about all graduates. The purpose of the portfolio is not the evaluation of individual students, but the assessment of the major program, its requirements and courses.

CONTENTS OF PORTFOLIO

- **Three essays or research papers** written for classes in Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science or Sociology.
 - ✓ At least one of these papers must involve research in one or more of the disciplines of the social sciences.
 - ✓ If possible, include an essay or research paper that takes an interdisciplinary approach, that is, integrates two or more of the disciplines of the social sciences.
 - ✓ Copies of papers containing the professor's comments and evaluation are preferred.
 - ✓ Include with each paper a description of the assignment; attach a copy of the professor's specific requirements for the paper, if possible.
 - ✓ Select those papers that you regard as your best work.
 - ✓ Be sure each paper contains the name of the course and the date (or semester) submitted. Try to include work from a range of semesters.

- **A reflective essay** in which you evaluate the work in your portfolio in terms of your growth in these areas:
 - ✓ your knowledge of the disciplines of the social sciences;
 - ✓ your ability to integrate these disciplines;
 - ✓ your ability to write research papers and analytical essays on subjects in the social sciences;
 - ✓ the technological skills you have acquired through your major;
 - ✓ your intellectual growth during your years as a social sciences major at Towson University.

You should write this essay and place it in your portfolio by midterm of the semester in which you plan to graduate. The essay should be a minimum of three double-spaced typed pages in length.

You will need to review the portfolio during the semester in which you will graduate to ensure that it is complete and contains your best work. You cannot be cleared for graduation until the portfolio is complete.

**CALL 410-704-2128 OR STOP BY LINTHICUM 108
TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT.**