A GUIDE TO YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO
Don't leave home without one

"The only job security you can count on is the transportability of your own skills... The new emphasis on skills portability suggests that you must do whatever it takes to keep your qualifications package up to date."
Martin Kimeldorf

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio allows you a visual and tangible way to represent your credentials, skills and achievements.

Port means that a person's credentials are portable, transportable, convenient, and manageable. They provide an image or picture of one's experience, interests, achievements, goals and capabilities.

Folio means a packaging of one's credentials through photographs, reproduced evidence, work samples, videos, audio, and other formats.

A career portfolio is organized evidence of your work background, readiness for the job and specific job skills that make you qualified for the job for which you are applying. Remember this is supporting evidence of why you are the best candidate for the job, so be sure to show the skills employers are seeking.

WHY CREATE AND USE A PORTFOLIO?

• The portfolio allows you a visual tool to highlight the skills employers are seeking.

• Candidates with portfolios gain a 10% advantage over other candidates because they demonstrate a serious commitment to the job interview process. It allows you to sell yourself in the best way possible.

• The portfolio allows you to integrate college education with work-based learning and illustrates how one supports the other.

• Assembling a portfolio gives you a sense of direction and accomplishment through personal reflection. Thus, it provides a view of the big picture.

• It is impressive to the prospective employer that thought and work, over a period of time, have gone into the decision to apply for a specific job.

• During the interview process, the portfolio will lend support to your reference letters. These are maintained in the Career Planning Office and sent to prospective employers upon request.

WHEN SHOULD I BEGIN ASSEMBLING A PORTFOLIO?

RIGHT NOW! You can begin as early as during your Freshman experience. You will have a variety of experiences during your college years that will demonstrate your skills and proficiencies in the areas that employers are seeking.

These can include teaching related experiences, conferences, special projects, internships and photos of you at work.

One of the biggest complaints our office hears from recent grads is "I wish I had started earlier. I did this - I did that, but I don't have anything visual."

WHAT SHOULD A PORTFOLIO ACCOMPLISH?

When planning and designing your portfolio you should be creating it in terms of accomplishing the following:

1) Show only your best work in a style and format that is believable to the employer. Open and close with your very best work. It's as important to end well as to begin well. Don't show anything you feel uncomfortable with or apologize for -- these could result in a red flag to the interviewer.

2) Be targeted to the job and audience that will review the portfolio. It should match what you are selling to the potential employer -- skills, talents, expertise, experience and potential.

3) The portfolio will demonstrate to the employer that you understand the skill standards and performance expectations of the job. It presents to the employer an objective judgment about your capabilities through your presentation. It shows you want the job enough to know its requirements and are prepared to win through tailored representations of your related work.

WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY PORTFOLIO?

It is important that you start collecting everything now and keep your mementos in a "steamer trunk" or a scrapbook so they don't get lost. However, it is important that you do not confuse these items with your portfolio.

Steamer trunk - large container filled to the brim with assorted paper/projects.

Scrapbook - collection of eye-catching and heart warming mementos that have strong personal meaning for the portfolio owner.

The following are some general categories to consider for topics to include in your general portfolio.

Skills Using Knowledge in your Field:
• Data (graphs, charts, tables, testing results) • Special projects • Innovative class projects • Display of performance materials, formal and technical documents
• Photographs highlighting your skills: team work, teaching, on the job, presentations

General Work Performance :
• Artifacts of your work • Job descriptions
• Records of your performance • Letters of reference
• Commendations, honors and awards for accomplishment
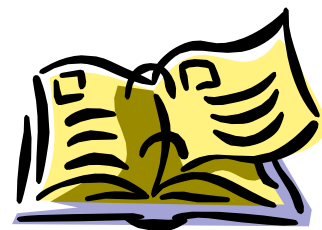
Communication Skills:
• Evidence of planning, employee training packets, interview sheets • Evidence of interpersonal and leadership experiences • Writing samples • Extra-curricular activities
• Community involvement record • Newsletters you have created • Press releases

Formal and Informal Education and Training :
• Diplomas • Certificates • Brochures from workshops and other training events
• Academic work samples: your best report, lab, research abstracts
• Internship documentation • Professional development training such as conferences
• Scholarship documentation • Second language evidence (include sign language)
• Brochures describing training events, retreats, workshops clinics or lecture series

Skills Using Technology, Tools and Equipment:
• Multi-media presentations, photos in action and actual items that you can handle.
• Multi-media samples • Technology demonstration - copy of a WWW Homepage presentation

Other suggested items for your portfolio:
• A table of contents
• Networking Card
• Grant writing samples
• Military Service documentation
• Public mention in the media
• Transcript
• Extra copies of your resume
• Letters of Reference
• Licensure Papers

IDEAS FOR EDUCATORS: Your philosophy of education should be the center theme for your portfolio and the other exhibits should support it.
• Highlights of your philosophy of education (very important)
• An overview of your behavior modification plan
• Sample lesson plan and Unit plan • Teacher certification results
• Samples of students' work • A case study of a student
• A page from your plan book to illustrate how you organize your planning
• Photos of bulletin boards or displays with brief explanation
• Exercises or tests you created for students to complete, reports you designed, awards you created
• Evidence of use of technology in the classroom • Unsolicited letters from parents, students or teachers
• Student or community newspaper • A school newsletter • Evidence of programs you planned

IDEAS FOR BUSINESS OF MUSIC MAJORS: Your transferable skills to the music business field should be the center theme for your portfolio and your exhibits should support it.
• **General Operations** - Program productions - Events management - Recording scheduling Policies and procedure data - Sample of audio/visual library catalogue - Network list
• **Promotion Materials** - Flyers - Labels - E-mail - Brochures - Correspondence Post cards - Newsletters - Webpage banners
• **Equipment** - Before and after repair and maintenance pictures - Set up pictures
Set design pictures - Equipment upgrade research - Pictures of costume and wardrobe designs
• **Computers** - Sample page database systems - Brief overview web site – Computer graphics - List computer music programs you know- Use your computer skills when designing your portfolio
• **Research** - Results on competitive stations and new products research - Summary/status reports on projects - Submission and reviews of scripts and films - Research on acquisition of information, materials, events, news stories, ratings, etc. Articles you have written - Analysis of royalties and financial reports - Audience research
• **Law** - Client intake and interview forms - Licensing procedure for merchandising
Sample contracts on negotiating licensing rights - Musical copyright information

HOW SHOULD I ASSEMBLE MY PORTFOLIO?

Containers: There are a variety of portfolio containers for which to choose. Portfolios take many forms including: a simple soft plastic booklet with about 10 pages of sheet protectors, a small three ring binder; stand-up containers.
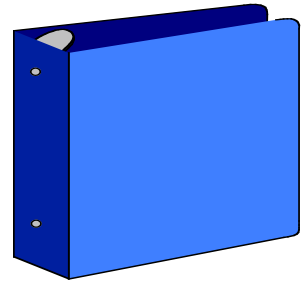
Organization: Your portfolio should not be a scrapbook but rather a well-organized and planned exhibit of your abilities and background. Be sure to have properly labeled displays in a quality container. Remember, the portfolio will reflect your organizational skills. Appearance is very important so be sure your portfolio is as professional as possible.

Tailored to the job: Your portfolio should be more than a miscellaneous collection of artifacts or an extended list of professional activities. You must be flexible to change your portfolio at any time to suit the specific demands of a particular company or school system. Start with your strongest and best pieces and end with your strongest and best pieces.

Here are some tips:

• Ten (10) back-to-back pages are the recommended number of displays. This will be the most difficult part of assembling your portfolio. You must remember you only have 30-60 minutes to sell yourself and the portfolio presentation is only part of what you have to say about yourself and your ability.
• Type brief descriptions/captions using concise statements to accompany your exhibit page.
• Use plastic sheet-protectors, preferably not the type with holes in the page itself. You can
   buy these with extra plastic margin holes.

The Career Planning Office has several versions of portfolios and containers available for your viewing with information on where to purchase portfolio holders. The SUNY Potsdam Bookstore has some portfolio holders for sale as do office supply stores.

HOW SHOULD I USE MY PORTFOLIO DURING AN INTERVIEW?

When applying for a job, let the employers know you have a portfolio and that you are serious about getting a job. If possible, refer to it in your resume or cover letter stating, "Portfolio available."

There is an art to using your portfolio during the interview and it can be thought of as a balancing act. Keep in mind that most interviews average 30-60 minutes and during that time you must convince the prospective employer that you are the best candidate. The portfolio is a tool that will assist you in demonstrating your abilities, skills and competencies. It provides visual evidence to backup what you are saying. Your portfolio should have been organized using the same research and preparation as you did for the interview. The sheer task of putting the portfolio together will assist you in organizing your thoughts prior to the interview. Be sure to know exactly what is in the portfolio and how it is organized

Don't be surprised, however, if you aren't presented with an opportunity to use your portfolio. The last thing you want to do is to force the portfolio on the interviewer. Also be cautious, that you don't interrupt the flow of the interview with inappropriate use of the portfolio. Recognize when opportunities arise to highlight your strengths in your portfolio during the interview. When the interviewer asks a question that can be answered by discussion of an item in the portfolio, bring it out. Many times, the icebreaker question is "Tell me about yourself." You might reply, " I think I can do that best by talking about some of my achievements. In fact, I have some I'd like to illustrate". Then open your portfolio.

Here are some additional examples:

You are asked a question in regards to your technological/computer skills. Start out with a brief explanation discussing the computer programs and platforms you use, and then mention that you could illustrate your background by showing exhibits in your portfolio. These could include a copy of your homepage or other technology related exhibits.

The interviewer would like to know about your communication skills. You could again give a brief introduction and then mention that you would like to show some exhibits of writing pieces (letters, brochures, etc) or to show pictures of you conducting a presentation.

If you don't have an opportunity to show your portfolio, you should mention that you brought one and ask if there is time to show some of your exhibits. Or, you could offer to leave it so the interviewer could review it at their convenience. Note: if you do leave your portfolio, be sure it is self explanatory. Be sure to make arrangements to pick up the portfolio at a later date. You may also consider making two portfolios in the event you have separate interview schedules close together.

THE PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST
_____1. Does the portfolio show your best and most recent work?

_____2. Are your skills impeccable and uncompromising?

_____3. Have you included samples to match all competencies required of the job that match those you possess?

_____4. Are all exhibits properly labeled, self explanatory and spell checked?

_____5. Does your portfolio show that you can begin work at a professional level?

_____6. Does the portfolio predict that you will grow on the job?

_____7. Have you conducted a practice interview (test run) using your portfolio?

_____8. Did you obtain professional advice for your portfolio from people in the field or career planning staff?

_____9. Have you viewed the portfolio tape at the Career Planning Office? (It will provide you with some useful tips for constructing your portfolio)

One final note:
"One can never be certain where our careers will lead today. Therefore, use a portfolio to keep track of where you've been. It just may help you get where you're going next."

Martin Kimeldorf

INTERVIEW PORTFOLIO TIPS

Portfolios designed for employment interviews:
provide hiring officials & search teams with further documentation of your philosophy, personality and professionalism. Carefully select items that showcase your abilities that match with the competencies required of the job.

- Choose only the best examples of your work. Disregard items that do not illustrate your finest work.

- During your internship, student teaching, or summer employment, collect materials for a portfolio that will document your growth and accomplishment as a career professional.

- Design pages for impact and for ease in reading. Capture attention by providing variety. Allow for some white space and be careful not to cram too much text or too many items on one page.

- Select artifacts that present concrete evidence of effective teaching materials. Photographs can convey this message if artifact is too bulky to include.

- Label each item for easy identification. Even in your absence, clear labeling allows readers to peruse materials quickly.

- Include technology applications including CD-ROMs, videotapes, computer discs or other multi media presentations. Portfolios are no longer restricted to paper versions.

- Portfolios should be unique. Employers want to see evidence of your organizational skills, writing ability, and overall creativity.

- Once employed, collect materials for a portfolio that will document your growth and accomplishments as a career professional.

100 TEACHER PORTFOLIO SUGGESTIONS

academic work samples
action plans
administrative items
 or support
age-appropriate materials
anecdotal records
assessment instruments
assessment results
audiotape
autobiography
behavior management plans
booklists for students
booklists for teacher
case study
character references
class lecture notes
classroom photographs
classroom management plans
coaching philosophy
coaching activities & record
collaborative projects
commendations
committee participation
communication samples
community service record
computer-generated teaching
 materials
course syllabi
course descriptions
credentials
curriculum writing abstract
educational certificates
evaluations from cooperating
 teacher/supervisor
extra-duty activities

grading philosophy
grading records/spreadsheets
grant writing sample
Individual Education Plans
in-service documentation
innovative class projects
integrated instruction
 example
lab/technical reports
learning logs
lesson plan adaptations
lesson plans
letters of appreciation
licensure documents
long-term goals
military service
 documentation
performance evaluations
personal career statements
photographs of classroom
planning materials
press releases
presentations
professional growth plan
professional development
 training
projects showing diversity,
 inclusion, multiculturalism
public attention in media
published work
reading philosophy
report cards
résumé
sample goals/objectives
scholarship documentation

second-language evidence
self-evaluation statements
self-reflection in journal
short -term goals
snapshots of projects
student artifacts
student portfolio sample
Study Guide(s)
summative appraisals
teacher journal
teaching license (copy)
teaching philosophy
teaching awards
teaching-style documentation
team-planning minutes
team-teaching lesson abstract
technology sample
technology integration in
 lesson plans
technology philosophy
test scores – state exams
test scores – national exams
transcripts
units of instruction
unsolicited letters from
 parents, staff, colleagues
video segment (10 minutes)
whole-class profiles
5 years from now essay
writing samples
www Homepage