To: Michael Arnush, Associate Professor and Chair, CEPP; Sarah Goodwin, Professor, Faculty Assessment Coordinator and Kenan Professor of Liberal Arts; Lisa Christenson, Assessment Facilitator

From: Katie Hauser, Chair, Art History

Re: AAEEBL (Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning) Conference, July 2012.

Date: 21 July 2012

Sessions Attended:

1. TA2 [DOC] **The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: The Truth About Implementing ePortfolios**, *Wende Garrison and C. Edward Watson, Virginia Tech*
2. TA12 [ASSESS] **Lose the Jargon: Assessment for the Benefit of the Student,** *Gigi Devanney, Chalk and Wire; Linda Amerigo-Piccolo, Queens College, Jenn King, Florida Southern College*
3. TA 17 [Plenary] Official Conference Opening and Speaker, Barbara Cambridge, *ePortfolios for Individual and Common Good: Personal and Political Power*
4. TP29 [SOTL] **Increasing Students' Engagement With Their Own Eportfolios: How Our Data Can Help Your Local Eportfolio Implementation**, *Wende Garrison, Lisa McNair; Virginia Tech*
5. TP33 [ASSESS] **ePortfolios for Pedagogy and Assessment: How Do We Make It Happen?** *Kathryne Drezek McConnell, Mary Ann Lewis, Virginia Tech*
6. WA43 [ASSESS] **Inside Out: ePortfolios for Program Assessment**, *Jamie Langlois, Scott Berlin, Julia A. Guevara, Lindsay Tryk: Grand Valley State University*
7. WA49 [DOC] **Making Connections and Supporting ePortfolio Use at Indiana University**, *Debra Dunlap Runshe, IUPUI*
8. WA55 Plenary Presentation -- **Reflective and Reflexive Writing to Inspire ePortfolios**, *Gillie Bolton*
9. WP63 [SOTL] **Social Capital: Determining a Student's ePortfolio Net Worth**, *Cindy P. Stevens; Wentworth Institute of Technology*
10. WP64 [SOTL] **Portfolios, Used Well, Can Be Transformational**, *Janice Smith, Three Canoes, LLC*
11. Th81 [ASSESS] **Fostering the Use of ePortfolios in Liberal Arts**, *Karen Ramsay Johnson, Susan Kahn, IUPUI*
12. Th86 [LLLW] **Tackling the Liberal Arts: How to Include ePortfolios in a Diversified Environment**, *Jessica Sender, Erin Dell, Leah Dunn; Guilford College.*
13. Th96 [LLLW] **e-Portfolio Format Can Enhance Appeal of Job Applications**, *Benjamin R. Stephens, Clemson University*
14. Th100 Conference closing and final Plenary Session: **Overcoming Apathy and Creating Excitement in the Classroom**

Thank you for supporting my attendance at AAEEBL. The conference attendees were a great group of inspired and inspiring faculty, administrators, and technical support folk who care deeply about student engagement and the effectiveness of eports (my abbreviation of eportfolios).

In a nutshell, eports have three potential uses:

- Assessment
- Student reflection and engagement
- Student professional development

There is some disagreement about whether or not an eport could fulfill ALL of those uses. A number of presenters suggested that the student benefit must come first, and assessment use second. I would agree with this perspective; if a student isn't engaged in a meaningful activity it makes no sense to use it as assessment. That said, there could be ways to use the portfolio for all functions. I did not find any concrete examples in the liberal arts, however. Most attendees were from STEM fields, social work, teaching, etc. The only place I saw eports used in the humanities was in writing/English. What seems especially problematic is what platform an institution chooses. Depending on the platform, one could find more uses for the eport. Just using WordPress or Google Sites might make it hard to use an eport for assessment. Using a structured platform would give the institution a "back door" for data mining. I did not consciously research platforms (out of my depth there), but did hear that Sakai was not especially effective. One liberal arts college has adopted Digication and they like it and especially the support behind it very much. What seemed especially productive for some people was adopting their eport platform as their LMS (learning management system). So instead of using Blackboard, an institution might use Sakai, which means that all assignments can be made through Sakai. So when a student uploads an assignment it can automatically go into their eport. These issues are way beyond my pay grade.

Implementation of eports:

- Get various constituencies on board and collaborating: faculty, administrators, technical support, librarians, career services, study abroad, FYE
- One college found it more effective to bypass the faculty and work with study abroad, career services, and FYE first. Then students would start querying their faculty about whether or not a particular assignment was appropriate as an eport "artifact" (the lingo for whatever [evidence] goes into an eport). This was a grass-roots approach.
- Before implementation assess faculty, administrative and student needs – ask them what they want from potential eports.
- Faculty will complain (with good reason) that this is yet another task added on to their workload. Two possible solutions: 1) try to integrate grading and assessment –

so one can grade an assignment while also assessing the program – the more complex platforms like Sakai (or Chalk and Wire) would make that easier I think. This works best if one shifts to a kind of global, narrative grading process rather than a nitpicking one that looks for minor errors; 2) be concrete about what we're "taking away" from faculty workload: emphasize that eports represent a shift from content- to process-based learning, and in that kind of learning the faculty does not have to spend as much time prepping content…. This is a stretch. The faculty who have this concern are probably not going to be willing to see the benefits of process-based learning. Perhaps a more concerted effort that distributes research that demonstrates its effectiveness might be helpful?

- Could "ease" faculty into it by suggesting they create a single class eport that all students contribute to.
- Must be clear that junior faculty will be rewarded for the work that goes into this.

Issues/ideas to ensure effective eports:

1. Provide effective prompts (can't just say – "go reflect on an assignment"); there are plenty of resources online (start with the AAEEBL site) for prompts. Have them reflect multiple times on the same issue/question so that change over time can be perceived. Provide effective examples of eports.
2. Encourage students to make connections between classes.
3. Bring together first-year students and students in capstone so that more advanced students can mentor the first years and model eport effectiveness.
4. Be sure that the students can "take it with them." You don't want to use a proprietary platform/system that expires when they graduate (to continue using a platform the student would have to pay to continue the license – some schools do this). Programs that are free (and thus easy for the student to transport) often may not allow for assessment because they're not specific to the institution or college assessment.
5. However, don't commit to an inflexible, unwieldy platform, since technology changes so quickly.
6. Students need to be taught how to transform an eport they use for academic purposes into an appropriate professional showcase.
7. Frequently solicit feedback from students about how to increase effectiveness of eports.
8. Frequently provide positive feedback on eports (faculty).
9. Create a student cohort engaged with eports; they can critique each other, provide helpful feedback and realize the potential of eports. Have students come up with questions about their own eports that they want their fellow students to consider.

10. Students need to learn how to give effective feedback and take it – these are excellent skills for the "real" world.
11. Linking eports to career plans can be more effective than just having them create eports in a vacuum; the more eports are about them, the more effective they are for them, the better results you'll see.
12. Can be used for extra-curricular activities – so students can document leadership, athletics, study-abroad, research projects, etc.
13. Could be linked to advising – all first years create eports and then advisers can look them over during advising; advisers could provide feedback on them.
14. Can have an eport "lab" run by a student mentor.

Some questions, issues, I came away with:

- Is there an "ontology" of eports? One plenary lecture suggested these "non-negotiable" aspects of eports: *interaction* of artifacts can generate meaningful outcomes/reflections, etc.; reflection on artifacts can help one understand one's beliefs and increase open-mindedness (meta-reflection, basically); reflection can help lead to authenticity and courage to be flexible and critical in one's thinking.
- How does one really best use the "e" part of portfolios? I wondered, for example, if one could ask students to copy and paste in one document thesis statements from papers written for 100- to 300-level courses and compare them for complexity, etc. The point being that it's much easier to copy and paste electronically than it is to do so by hand….
- Would we want to come up with a college standard for eports?
- Are eports really effective professionally? One study suggests yes, HOWEVER, I think it must be stressed to everyone that it would depend on the kind of job whether or not one would want to submit an eport in lieu of a resume. A compromise is a hyper-linked resume. I think an eport could quickly sink a candidate, or make them stand out – much more quickly than a traditional resume because effort will be immediately visible (or not). (A student could use an eport as a follow up – an interviewer asks questions about a specific job/activity and in the thank you note the student can attach the URL for that specific part of the eport.)