

INSTITUTE WRITING PROGRAM

THE WRITING CENTER

Four reasons to use ePortfolio in your classroom: A guide for faculty

Though ePortfolio-based pedagogy is relatively young, a growing body of research supports cross-disciplinary, integrative, and reflective learning facilitated by student-designed ePortfolios as a particularly effective strategy for educating students in the 21st century.

Four reasons to use ePortfolio in your classroom

1. To encourage reflective learning and cross-disciplinary thinking

Because ePortfolios encourage the collection of intellectual work across disciplinary boundaries and throughout a student's undergraduate career, building one allows students to track their own development and draw connections across classes and disciplines. Both the reflective process of compiling past work for an ePortfolio *and* the existence of such a storehouse itself both allow students unique opportunities for self-reflection. This encourages the development of self-reflective, lifelong learners who can successfully evaluate their own work and synthesize information from diverse fields.

2. To encourage student ownership of course work

Because students are the owners, designers, and curators of their ePortfolios, they are encouraged to take ownership of their course work in a way that transcends grades. While students sometimes think of class assignments primarily as hoops to jump through, reflecting on and publishing this work in their own digital space returns ownership of course work to the students and pushes them to see how that work fits into their broader development as students and human beings.

3. To strengthen digital literacies and prepare students for the job market

Building an ePortfolio requires that students learn the mechanics of online publishing (including popular platforms, visual design, and content organization) while also learning to write appropriately and professionally in an online environment for a diverse audience. While these skills are themselves increasingly useful in a wide variety of careers, because VMI's Wordpress-based ePortfolio system makes exporting an ePortfolio in its entirety so easy, students can (and have) created publically-available versions of their ePortfolios to link to their resumes, giving potential employers concrete examples of these students' work while also encouraging students to create professional online identities.

4. To develop students' rhetorical skills

While students are used to writing for their professors, writing for a larger, more public audience builds a number of critically-important rhetorical skills that will serve students well in their academic, civic, professional, and private lives. Because ePortfolios at VMI are semi-public (visible to anyone in the VMI community), students have an incentive to post their best work while also carefully balancing their rhetorical goals with the needs and expectations of their audiences in terms of content and design.