



March 2, 2010. Vol.9, Issue 9

## E-portfolios: a new initiative at AUC

*Dr. Aziza Ellozy, Director, Center for Learning and Teaching  
Associate Dean for Learning Technologies*

***"An e-portfolio is a purposeful aggregation of digital items - ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc, which 'presents' a selected audience with evidence of a person's learning and/or ability." Sutherland and Powell (2007)***

A little over a year ago, I wrote a piece in this newsletter entitled *"Reflections on assessment, rubrics and e-portfolios"* (New Chalk Talk, Vol.8, Issue 6), where I made the argument that we should adopt e-portfolios for students if we wanted to assess and document learning. The argument was made in part in the context of AUC's recent push for institutional assessment and accountability of student learning, a requirement that is now expected of all institutions of higher education. This suggestion was also made in the context of a recommendation put forth to us by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education where the adoption of "course" portfolios was specifically mentioned.

I am happy to say that, as of this semester, several departments and programs have pushed for the adoption of e-portfolios and are piloting the "Epsilon" platform recently acquired by AUC. The initiative is supported by the collaborative effort of the CLT, UACT and the IR office. The departments/programs in question - Architectural Engineering, the Graduate School of Education, the department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the First-Year Experience (FYE) Program - will be requiring that all their students keep an e-portfolio during the course of their study within the major or, as in the case of the FYE, during the length of the program.

When designed properly these portfolios let students assess and showcase their learning according to specific criteria. The Epsilon e-portfolio allows for this type of record keeping. The agreement with the licensing company is such that students, faculty and alumni can own their portfolios for life as long as they have their AUC email account (even if AUC decides to terminate the Epsilon license).

At present the stakeholders participating in the pilot are, for the most part, motivated by the accreditation process (the FYE program is the exception). But program or school accreditations are not the only reason to promote e-portfolio adoption.

As Helen Barrett (known as the e-portfolio "guru") reminds us, **e-portfolios have "two faces"**: the e-portfolio as **product/showcase** and the e-portfolio as **process/workspace**. The table on the next page is a simplified version of Barrett's "Balancing the two faces of e-portfolios". Each "face" has different purposes: the former is for accountability or employment and the latter is for learning and reflection.

In summary, e-portfolios allow students to provide employers or graduate school admissions with examples of their work, to keep a record of their credentials, to get instructor feedback and to reflect and engage in their learning over time.

In the months to come, I and other e-portfolio advocates will be writing, presenting and launching a campus-wide conversation about this important initiative for our students and our programs.

<b>THE TWO FACES OF E-PORTFOLIOS<sup>1</sup></b>		
	<b>A. Portfolio as PROCESS/workspace</b>	<b>B. Portfolio as PRODUCT/showcase</b>
<b>Primary purpose</b>	Learning or Reflection	Showcase or accountability
<b>Documentation</b>	Documenting growth and learning over time - primarily for internal audiences	Documenting achievement of learning outcomes/standards – primarily for external audiences
<b>Reflection</b>	Immediate	Retrospective
<b>Assessment</b>	Assessment for continuous improvement (Formative)	Assessment for accountability (Summative)
	<b>Documentation Of Learning</b>	<b>Documentation Of Achievement</b>

Today however, I would like to encourage faculty, especially young tenure-track faculty, to think about adopting e-portfolios for their own professional growth.

In last week's AUC planning forum on hiring and retaining quality faculty, the need for mentoring tenure-track faculty was brought up among many other teaching/research related issues. In my opinion, e-portfolios would be the most appropriate and powerful way for them to track, keep record and showcase their work at AUC. They would then be used in the promotion and tenure process.

In addition, keeping a teaching portfolio may be the answer to the present dissatisfaction of faculty with student evaluations as the sole criteria for evaluating teaching. Portfolios would provide a more authentic evidence of teaching.

Finally, I urge faculty not to be intimidated by yet another e-tool: one-on-one support for you or your students is available through the Student Technology Assistants (STAs) at the CLT and in the Library Learning Commons, whereas CLT and UACT staff will work with you to plan and customize the needs of your students, course, program, or project.

### **Sources:**

- Sutherland, S, and A Powell. "e-Portfolios: An overview of JISC activities September 2007." *JISC*. 09 07 2010. JISC, Web. 1 Mar 2010. <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2007/eportfoliooverviewv2>
- Barret, Helen. "Balancing the two faces of e-portfolios." *E-portfolios for learning*. 30 01 2009. Helen Barrett, Web. 1 Mar 2010. <<http://electronicportfolios.org/blog/2009/01/balancing-2-faces-of-eportfolios.html>>.

<sup>1</sup> This is an adaptation of Helen Barrett's "Balancing the two faces of e-portfolios" diagram found at <http://electronicportfolios.com/balance/index.html> (Last retrieved on February 27, 2010)