

**Electronic Portfolio Implementation in
the
Metro Academies Program at
San Francisco State University and
City College of San Francisco**

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Executive Summary

This paper addresses the challenges in successfully implementing and sustaining electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) into higher education programs and curriculum. The paper specifically looks at ePortfolio implementation in the Metro Academies program (Metro) at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and City College of San Francisco (CCSF). Metro is a new program for the first two years of college, aiming to improve graduation rates for low-income, first-generation college students and improve the quality of their college academic experience. The program was developed in response to chronically poor outcomes of today's college students—in terms of both low and inequitable college completion and low academic achievement (in terms of development of skills).

ePortfolios are digital portfolios that can be showcased online. They can serve as a pedagogical tool to foster reflective learning, help students build academic identity, make connections across coursework and various aspects of their lives, and allow for formative assessments by faculty and advisors. Metro has begun to make ePortfolios available to its students but has not yet determined a way to fully integrate ePortfolios into the curriculum and overall program. Through surveys and informal interviews, Metro instructors have indicated both excitement and concern about integrating ePortfolios into their courses.

ePortfolios are part of a growing movement across higher education institutions nationwide and worldwide. As a pedagogical tool, they show a great deal of promise for improving student engagement and retention, as well as improving students' grade point averages (GPAs), course pass rates, and overall education in terms of helping students deepen their learning and their ability to articulate and apply their knowledge to all aspects of their lives.

Although many colleges and universities are now using ePortfolios, their success (in terms of sustainability and improved student outcomes) largely depends on how deeply ePortfolios are integrated into curriculum and culture. ePortfolios can represent a change in both technology and pedagogy, thus integration is often difficult to fully achieve. Metro recognizes the challenges in developing a successful and sustainable implementation. The goal of this paper is to help Metro overcome these challenges and develop a successful and sustainable implementation of ePortfolios.

This paper is framed around the following two research questions: 1) how can we ensure that ePortfolios are deeply integrated into curriculum and program, thus creating a sustainable ePortfolio practice?, and 2) how can ePortfolios help Metro Academies achieve its goals? To answer these questions, I conducted an analysis of five case studies of ePortfolio implementations in academic programs throughout the U.S. and interviewed ten faculty members who use ePortfolios at SFSU.

This research sheds light on several common implementation challenges, provides recommendations at the course level and program level, and discusses best practices for ePortfolios and their curricular integration. Key best practices include class discussions of online security and equity, student reflection, continuous goal setting and planning, peer review processes, documenting resources, and consistency in communication.

A stakeholder analysis, followed by a strategic discussion with key stakeholders is essential to program success. Other essential actions for a successful implementation include providing students and instructors with support, resources and time, and to have a strategic process that maintains some flexibility. Regarding the format and structure of ePortfolio templates, I recommend creating a basic structure based off of the LaGuardia Community College model and then allowing for potential additions and creative elements if the student wishes to go beyond the basic requirements. At the program level of ePortfolio implementation, I recommend:

1. Implementing ePortfolios incrementally; beginning with Metro's gateway and capstone courses and allowing for gradual implementation with the other courses.
2. Providing resources to help instructors make pedagogical shifts.
3. Developing a plan for program assessment.
4. Integrating ePortfolios into advising.
5. Providing tailored support to some students and faculty.
6. Creating a culture of making connections across curriculum and life experiences, setting goals, and envisioning a future self.
7. Understanding the potential audiences, including who they are, what their needs are, and how they may contribute to and benefit from ePortfolios.
8. Providing documentation of resources for instructors and students.
9. Planning long term.

At the course level, I recommend:

1. Making room for new curriculum.
2. Allowing for some instructor autonomy in course-level integration.
3. Encouraging best practices.
4. Using a common grading rubric.
5. Integrating peer review into ePortfolio evaluation.
6. Beginning each ePortfolio with an autobiography and goals statement.
7. Determining the level of flexibility allowed in proof of competencies (regarding number required, what course/s artifacts come from, and in what medium they are created).
8. Integrating ePortfolios into course theme.
9. Focusing on process, not product.

To begin the implementation process, I recommend that Metro’s leadership and instructors discuss the following (non mutually-exclusive) ways to potentially integrate ePortfolios into the program:

Program level	<p>Implement in gateway and capstone courses only. Create a one-unit ePortfolio course. Supplement gateway and capstone course with periodic portfolio workshops. Have faculty members facilitate peer review groups for evaluation. Hire a student assistant to help support the ePortfolio program. Assign one staff member to be an ePortfolio ‘go to’ person.</p>
Course level	<p>Schedule an ePortfolio workshop with Academic Technology. Schedule an additional follow up workshop to troubleshoot. Conduct final presentations in the computer lab. Isolate the ePortfolio assignment into a few weeks of the course. Spread the ePortfolio assignment throughout the semester. Consider the overall ePortfolio and the reflections or write-ups for each artifact when grading the ePortfolio (but do not re-grade the artifact).</p>

I then advise using the following brief implementation plan to inform the initial process and conversations about a strategic implementation with short- and long-term goals.

Summer 2011 – Spring 2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop ePortfolio template format. 2) Integrate into gateway and capstone courses with an autobiographical statement. 3) Mention ePortfolios consistently in all course syllabi. 4) Develop written and visual resources for students and instructors. 5) Develop goals and plan for program-level integration. 6) Identify and communicate with all stakeholders (regarding perceived benefits, potential contributions, concerns, and expectations). 7) Determine if program should build capacity to support ePortfolio project. 8) Discuss ‘best practices’ regarding reflective practices during faculty meetings. 9) Determine how ePortfolio program will be assessed.
Summer 2012 – Spring 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Further develop at a program level (e.g., in advising, developmental workshops, showcasing events, etc.). 2) Have an ePortfolio ‘best practices’ survey and group discussion to support implementation in additional courses. 3) Discuss plan for ePortfolios in further Metro dissemination.

These recommendations are specific to the Metro Academies and take into consideration the culture of the program and its home institutions—San Francisco State University and City College. The program is relatively small and has a strong culture of collaboration, faculty development, and pedagogy, though it does not have a strong technology culture. Metro’s students are generally low-income, first-generation college students. San Francisco State University has a well-established ePortfolio program that is almost always implemented at the department level. The university has used eFolio software for several years and has substantial technical support for this platform. Challenges specific to the Metro program are that it spans two institutions and it is in the process of growing into additional departments. These recommendations may only be generalizable to other programs to the extent that a program is similar in some of these ways.