

The ePortfolio Project: Learn It, Live It, Create It, Share It
Auburn University's Quality Enhancement Plan: Executive Summary

In support of the reaffirmation of its accreditation in 2013, Auburn University has identified as its Quality Enhancement Plan a project to enhance student learning through professional ePortfolios—personal web sites designed to develop, communicate, and showcase students' skills, experiences, and learning. As a learning process, ePortfolios engage students in assembling, revising, and contextualizing artifacts and performances from across their academic career. As a product, ePortfolios offer evidence of learning and capacity for graduate study or employment. Though it uses web-based technology, the heart of Auburn's ePortfolio Project is the additional learning that happens as students revisit and reconsider the evidence of their learning experiences and present that learning to a real audience.

Chosen through a broad-based, evidence-rich process, Auburn's ePortfolio Project extends a Writing Initiative, begun in 2010, that is providing students in each undergraduate major with guided opportunities to practice the kinds of writing most relevant to their field of study and future careers. This new project will broaden the Initiative by stimulating new modes of learning and communication, with a specific emphasis on effective communication, critical and reflective thinking, technical competence, and visual literacy in a 21st-century setting. Abundant research supports the potential of ePortfolios to enhance students' learning in these areas and suggests that professional ePortfolios, in particular, promote ongoing student and faculty engagement.

Auburn's ePortfolio Project is overseen by the Director of University Writing, working with an Assistant Director for ePortfolios and advised by a faculty-led Steering Committee. An ePortfolio Ambassadors Program allows students to participate in and shape the development of the project, and industry advisory boards have been consulted to ensure that the project is attentive to external constituencies.

Implementation is occurring in stages, using carefully selected cohort groups. Initial cohort members represent both curricular and co-curricular learning settings and both undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students. Going forward, any department, educational program, student or co-curricular organization may apply to join a subsequent cohort. The implementation plan includes action steps to:

- Develop new infrastructure and expand existing academic support services;
- Support faculty as they integrate ePortfolios in their teaching and research and as they mentor students throughout the process of creating professional ePortfolios;
- Encourage departments as they integrate isolated writing experiences into coherent instruction, incorporate reflection, and include technology and visual literacy; and
- Assess the project's impact on expected learning outcomes and institutional practices, and then use assessment data to guide subsequent decisions.

Guided by Auburn's land-grant mission, the ePortfolio Project will help students forge and communicate thoughtful connections among their academic studies and their practical experiences—course assignments and study abroad, undergraduate research and co-op experiences, professional internships and engagement in student organizations. It thus promises to enhance student learning and enable student success both within and beyond the curriculum.

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