



Praxis and Pedagogy: Professional Development

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Summary

Guttman Community College is capitalizing on the high-touch, high-impact, and student-centered model that makes it unique. Professional development for faculty and staff mirrors the kinds of activities taking place in the classroom. Highlighting reflection, focused-inquiry, and multidimensional connection, professional development activities are designed to give faculty and staff the opportunity to practice and discuss integrative pedagogical strategies that create a culture of learning around ePortfolio.

Background

Stella and Charles Guttman Community College opened in August 2012 and immediately launched an active cycle of professional development. Workshops at the beginning of the fall semester addressed faculty/staff buy-in and the creation of an ePortfolio culture for our new college. The workshops focused on the basic functionality of the Digication ePortfolio system. From there, we implemented Drop-In workshops where faculty/staff receive individualized support for specific pedagogical or technical inquiries. At the midpoint of the fall semester, the entire faculty/staff participated in Guttman's Assessment Days, two days devoted to assessment of student learning. The overarching goals of the days' activities were to create a culture of evidence and assessment and to introduce the ePortfolio as a catalyst for change. Participants collectively reflected on and evaluated student work from the first six weeks of the semester in view of specific institutional learning outcomes.

Successes

Beginning with our Summer Bridge Program in August, we have focused our professional development work around the College's First-Year Experience. Workshops have increased awareness of and resulted in growth in the following two areas, in particular:

1. Creating a Culture of Evidence and Assessment: During our Assessment Days, faculty, staff, and administration participated in structured workshops that integrated institutional learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and reflection through evaluation of student work. Instructional teams, including faculty and Student Success Advocates, were trained on assessment strategies and evaluating student work using institutional rubrics. In conversations during collaborative breakout sessions, the teams generated ideas about how to more effectively integrate assignments across the first-year experience in order to align student learning with outcomes.

2. Creating a Culture of Learning: Through active professional development, it is becoming clear that use of the ePortfolio is promoting discussion of student learning across college. As part of a small faculty, it is our goal to bring the idea of Reflection as Connection into the daily dialogue on campus. Since our instructional teams meet weekly for 90 minutes, we have been able to engage in active professional development outside of planned workshops. During weekly meetings, instructional teams reflect on student work and identify areas of opportunity within the integrated curriculum. Our C2L leaders are spread across these learning communities and are ambassadors of our shared philosophy. As professional development leaders, we believe that integrated social pedagogy in the classroom begins by engaging faculty/staff in discussions on the value of making connections across the disciplines and within courses. This is then translated into the classroom, across the co-curriculum, and into student learning.

Challenges

Our challenges relate directly to our infancy: we are not only creating an active ePortfolio initiative, we are also building a campus culture. As a result of this challenge, we believe that our professional development effort must be sustainable in order to be effective.

Our Professional Development Philosophy and Conceptual Framework

Inquiry

Guttman is an ideal place for innovative practice and complex, focused inquiry. Our instructional team model, integrated first-year experience, and commitment to outcomes assessment are key drivers for collaboration. Some questions we are beginning to ask as we develop our ePortfolio framework are:

- How can we establish a common language that translates from the administration, to faculty/staff, and into the classroom for students? Who develops this language and how does it permeate through the culture of the college?
- How do we create structured professional development while recognizing that engagement, learning, reflection, and assessment are non-linear?
- What outcomes will be achieved by our professional development initiatives (curricular, cultural, outcomes, etc.)?
- What is our plan for bringing faculty and staff from all areas of the college into professional development in order to close the loop?

Reflection

Our reflection strategies will inform the nature of our Scaling Up process as we move into our second year. These strategies will include:

- Scaffolding professional development workshops so that faculty/staff are able to implement their new knowledge effectively and to build on practices they are already using.
- Gathering and reporting data from Faculty and Student Survey.
- Identifying areas for curricular revision and improvement based on evidence generated during Assessment Days.
- Working with the Center on College Effectiveness to revise and align institutional and course learning outcomes.

Integration

As we begin to integrate our philosophies and practices, we are considering the following questions:

- How do we integrate Student Success Advocates, Admissions Staff, Peer Mentors, Graduate Coordinators, part-time and consortial faculty, and other members of the college community into professional development?
- As we define our ePortfolio framework and College culture, how do we maintain focus on intersections of student's curricular and extra-curricular experiences? It is at these intersections that we believe active professional development will significantly impact student learning.
- How do we achieve our goal of collaborative scholarship and teaching in a manner that supports students both inside and outside of the classroom? Developing ePortfolios as an integrative pedagogy across all areas of the college will further our vision of creating sustainable community partnerships.

Professional Development for Scaling Up

We are currently seeking to deepen our culture of learning by establishing a professional development workshop series and network that links all areas of the college. We are unique in that institution-wide use of the ePortfolio is part of our innovative model, and yet we are keenly aware of the challenges we face in creating a sustainable and complex design for professional development. Linking Student Success Advocates, our burgeoning co-curriculum, and support staff with the faculty and administration will allow for the organic exchange of ideas that defines collaboration and help us to close the loop. This commitment to collaboration and evidence-based change speaks directly to the "new paradigm" for higher education.

Our plan for professional development matches reflection with curricular change. Guttman's First-Year Experience is a vital barometer for assessing the skill areas our students find most challenging. Professional development workshops that focus on how both self- and collaborative reflection can enhance student learning will encourage faculty/staff to look more deeply at their own pedagogical practices. We also plan to invite ePortfolio leaders from other campuses to share their experiences and strategies with our faculty/staff. This practice reflects our strong desire to focus on integration as a mechanism for deepening our culture of learning and establishing a dialogue germane to our vision, model, and innovative practices.

Many of our professional development workshops have been focused on reflective pedagogy and the integration of ePortfolio into courses. Our faculty and staff have participated in a series of workshops and seminars where they have engaged with ePortfolio as reflective practitioners. During Assessment Days and throughout the academic year, we have generated evidence that supports inquiry-based learning focused on ePortfolio best practices. Below are some examples of this work.

In response to a reflective prompt prior to the opening of the ePortfolio and the Arts professional development workshop, one of Guttman's Graduate Coordinators suggested that:

First off, I think the basic syllabus for the course has been put together really nicely and coordinates personal reflection (journal entries) with critical inquiry (Art Synthesis, Visual Analysis) very well. I am also pleased with the integration of site visits into the course. My general thoughts on the questions are the following:

1) While the ePort medium does have some relationship to the course, I think we could probably use it better as a way for students to add to and collect pieces representative of their own worlds of art. We've talked a bit in our class about the space of museums and the contexts in which we usually encounter art. We also talked about Facebook as a personal museum. However, I had not yet thought of ePort as a way for students to perform the tasks of curator or artist in the virtual space of the portfolio. I'd like to think about doing that in future.

2) For the moment, I have been using ePort as a receptacle for assignments. This is really my own failing as someone who is still somewhat new to the possibilities of ePort and its functionality. Room for improvement here!

This articulation is indicative of the use of ePortfolio as a means of expression, a space of practice, and a showcase of work.

Graduate Coordinators and Peer Mentors participated in a three-hour ePortfolio Bootcamp focused on reflective pedagogy for the Studio section of City Seminar. Prompted to read the Carol Rodgers piece on reflection, participants began the session with a brief reflection on what ePortfolio meant to them and how they were using the portfolio individually and outside of the classroom. Here is an example of what one of our participants wrote:

So far, I've created two e-Portfolios -- one that is public and one that is private only to the faculty and other Graduate Coordinators. I've been more active with the latter one, posting descriptions of what the Peer Mentors and I did in GWS sessions and reflecting on how our lessons did and did not work. I've also collected some teaching materials there. My public profile started off well, but I have not maintained it. I'd like to work on making it a better representation of my academic work and teaching. Finally, in Arts in NYC, I really only used the course area of e-Port, which became an area for students to deposit work. It served almost no other purpose, alas.

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What we can ascertain from this comment is a series of interconnected subjects of inquiry. One is that there is a difference between a public and private space, and the benefits of both classifications. We also see the acknowledgement that an ePortfolio is more than just a repository for work, that it should mean more, and that it should be a “representation” of the individual.

Qualitative evidence is valuable to our growing institution. Having reflections ready for new faculty and staff to read creates a sense of community and illustrates the value of ePortfolio on our campus through shared stories. In fact, our evidence itself is creating a community of practice because each story intersects with another and centers on the mainstays and foundations of portfolio-based practice.

Visit some of the ePortfolios that have been used to capture the moments of professional development at Guttman:

1. Bootcamp
2. Arts
3. Assessment Days Portfolio

Connections to Other Sectors of the Catalyst

Pedagogy

Our professional development activities directly impact the pedagogy of our integrated course curricula. Focusing on Inquiry, Reflection, and Integration, we have established a culture of learning through direct engagement with hands-on and collaborative ePortfolio workshops. Each of our seminars has been crafted around a major component of our first and second year programs. In the first year, participants have identified ways to integrate reflective practices and project-based inquiry projects into the City Seminar curriculum. When the Group Workspace component of City Seminar was redesigned and ultimately translated into Studio, reflective pedagogy became the keystone of the shared place of practice. Graduate Coordinators and Peer Mentors came together to practice what they would later implement into their Studio sections. This praxis-based experience positioned participants of the workshop as learners so that they could close-the-loop in understanding the effectiveness and power of reflective pedagogy. As Guttman moved into its second year, faculty who were assigned to teach in the programs of study participated in a workshop that gave examples of how to implement specialized course material through and across the ePortfolio platform. Sharing ideas about how to craft integrative projects for the major courses was a key element in successfully opening Guttman's "first second year."

Scaling Up

Professional development is integral to the unique educational model at Guttman. The Center for College Effectiveness plays a major role in identifying the areas of focus for professional development activities. At the opening of the 2013-2014 academic year, the entire campus community came together to participate in a retreat that built on the previous year's Foundations of Excellence conversations and workshops. Teams met during the morning session to identify key areas of strength in areas like communication, the educational model, and student experience. Using a series of reflective prompts, team members documented their discussions and findings in a retreat ePortfolio. One example of this discussion is shown below:

The Stella and Charles Guttman Community College will provide students with opportunities to achieve academically, grow socially, and contribute to the college and the community.

To this end we will:

- o Maintain student learning as the primary driver for all decisions made throughout the institution;
- o Increase our capacity to serve all our students, including those with special needs and difficult life circumstances;
- o Equip students to use technology in their careers and throughout their lives;
- o Provide multiple opportunities for students to develop mentoring relationships with faculty and staff throughout the course of the year;

During this retreat, all members of the campus community came together in a shared ePortfolio. The creation of this common intellectual and reflective experience signifies Guttman's growth as an ePortfolio-centered campus and culture. This type of activity also generated conversation about ePortfolio as a platform and as a pedagogy. The "How To's" are answered by faculty who have implemented ePortfolio as an integrative social pedagogy in their courses. Members of the staff are able to visualize what portfolios look like and their effectiveness as showcases of work. This retreat was a major component of our Strategic Plan and serves as an institutional model for how ePortfolio is being implemented across all areas of the college.

Outcomes Assessment

During the Spring semester of the 2012-2013 academic year, faculty participated in a pilot program using the Digication system to assess student ePortfolios. With the recent implementation of the Guttman Learning Outcomes (GLO), this pilot program was intended to familiarize participants with how to analyze student work through the lens of GLO using the assessment tool. In essence, this two-day workshop was intense professional development. Inquiry and Reflection were both critical to the success of this pilot. Primarily, faculty were able to ask questions, focus in on the issues of norming, technology literacy, and the acquisition of student work within student ePortfolios. At the conclusion of the Spring Assessment Days, participants reflected on their experience and offered feedback about how to improve the process for the following year when the institution's assessment plan was put into action.

Technology

Guttman is equipped with SmartBoard technology and laptops in every classroom. ePortfolio can be easily accessed from any room and professional development activities are designed to be hands-on and participant-centered. One major challenge was connecting student ePortfolios to the proper GLO in the assessment tool during the Spring Assessment Days. The leadership team worked with the Help Desk at Digication to remedy the situation so that faculty could proceed with the pilot assessment program. Our ability

to be nimble, particularly when it comes to exploring new technologies, is a defining characteristic of our institution. The pilot program was able to proceed and data were generated to provide a baseline for the following year.

Connections to Other Polished Practices

Nate Mickelson's Arts in New York City course employed some of the practices discussed in the ePortfolio and The Arts professional development workshop. [You can click here to read more about his Social Pedagogy piece.](#)

Conclusion

Professional development is a key part of closing-the-loop at Guttman Community College. As a newly opened institution, we are constantly revising and redesigning our curriculum and college culture to meet the needs of our expanding student population. Our desire to provide a hands-on experience for our faculty and staff is indicative of our commitment to the experiential and high-impact culture we strive for in the classroom. Active, sustained, and deliberate professional development activities give our faculty, staff, and administration the opportunity to come together to share in a common educational experience that can be translated into all areas of the college.

Citation

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