



STELLA AND CHARLES  
**GUTTMAN**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Doing Things Differently: Scaling Up at Guttman Community College

Laura M. Gambino, Chet Jordan, & Nate Mickelson

## **Summary**

Guttman Community College's scaling up story, in many ways, begins in August 2012, when we welcomed our first group of students to the college. But, in another important way, the conversation and focus on ePortfolio and learning began earlier than that, in the initial planning phases of the college. From the onset of the planning and preparation for this new college, the focus of our work has been to "do things differently." The use of ePortfolio is no exception to this mantra. We began with ePortfolio "at scale" – by the end of the first week of our Summer Bridge program every student at the college had an ePortfolio. In that first year, we were only 300 students and approximately 15 full-time faculty; we accomplished a tremendous amount while encountering many challenges along the way. Guttman's Scaling Up Story, while it does not span a large timeframe, is rich in successes, challenges, and lessons learned about the process of creating an institutional culture of learning using ePortfolio.

## **Part I: Current Status**

Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, formerly the New Community College at CUNY, is beginning its second academic year with ePortfolio as the centerpiece of institutional and pedagogical learning. Our core values reflect a college-wide initiative of collaborative learning and the integrated exchange of ideas. Focusing on high-impact practices, our college is deeply committed to student and faculty learning communities, an integrated first-year experience that serve as a pathway to the major curricula, the permeation of technology throughout teaching and learning, and active course, program, and institutional-level assessment. Each of these practices relies on ePortfolio as a source of connectivity, reflection, and collaborative analysis.

Our ePortfolio project is “at scale.” Every student at the college has an ePortfolio that they actively use throughout their first year experience and in their programs of study second-year courses. ePortfolio is the place where students demonstrate, articulate, and reflect on their learning while connecting their classroom experience to advising, co-curricular, and experiential learning. As we formally launch our outcomes assessment work in our college’s second year, ePortfolio is the means by which we will assess our Guttman Learning Outcomes (GLO). ePortfolio is also used by our Student Success Advocates (first year advisors) and our Career Strategists (second year advisors) to help student set goals, identify personal strengths and weaknesses, and develop academic and career plans.

Our first year was challenging. Much of our work focused on getting everyone at the college introduced to ePortfolio pedagogy – students, faculty, and administrators. We also worked to develop comprehensive plans for our GLO assessment and ePortfolio-related professional development. Over the course of the year, we did see a deepening of understanding of ePortfolio pedagogy from many of our faculty, and students began to take ownership of their ePortfolio and an understanding of the ways in which ePortfolio can help them connect their learning experiences into a cohesive whole. We learned from our first year’s work and made changes to the way we introduced ePortfolio to both students and faculty during this current academic year. We already see the positive results of our efforts – students are more engaged with ePortfolio and faculty are integrating ePortfolio pedagogy into their curriculum. Building on this success, we recently launched an ePortfolio taskforce, at the request of our president, Scott Evenbeck, to spread the use of ePortfolio across our institution.

Our C2L team views challenges as opportunities to consistently learn as we build, revisit, and revise our practices and processes. As we look forward, our most significant challenge will be integrating the use of ePortfolio in our second year coursework, which focuses on the programs of study. We are just beginning our second year here at the college and much work still needs to be done in this regard. We are confident, however, that we have built a solid base of understanding of ePortfolio as a pedagogical and advising tool. We look forward to the challenge of creating a “programs of study” ePortfolio experience for our students as they begin to prepare their portfolios for transfer and employment. With student learning as our focus, we are committed to using ePortfolio as an instructional practice that will inform senior colleges and future employers of student success.

## **Part II: Catalyst and Connector**

At Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, ePortfolio serves as both a catalyst and a connector in a number of ways. First and foremost, ePortfolio catalyzes learning – student learning, faculty learning, and institutional learning. The integration of ePortfolio into the Summer Bridge and First Year curricula provides students multiple opportunities to demonstrate, articulate, and reflect on their learning. Students also use ePortfolio to learn about themselves as they set goals, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop academic and career plans. By examining student ePortfolios, faculty learn about what works and doesn’t work at the course and program level. And, by using ePortfolios to work

with the Guttman Learning Outcomes, we are learning as an institution, identifying ways in which we can improve and create a better learning experience for our students.

ePortfolio also serves as a connector, bringing together pedagogy, professional development, and outcomes assessment. We see assessment as an inquiry-based professional development process. Our assessment plan outlines a three-year plan for assessing each GLO; the first year will focus on inquiry and investigation, the second on reflection, and the final year will focus on integration. Ways to improve our pedagogy will be the focus of the inquiry and on-going professional development is integrated throughout the process. ePortfolio also connects academic work and advising, bringing together faculty and staff to talk about the whole student – with students' ePortfolios at the center of that conversation.

## **Part III: Developmental History**

### **History**

The New Community College proposed to use the ePortfolio as a means of assessing student learning across the curriculum and co-curriculum and, more importantly, as a tool for enhancing student and institutional learning. Planning for the College's ePortfolio Initiative began in early 2010, in parallel with other development efforts, through the work of a committee of CUNY faculty, institutional researchers, and industry experts. The committee's report, issued in March 2010, recommended a "whole college portfolio assessment system" grounded in learning outcomes and collaboratively-scored rubrics. Thus from the beginning, the ePortfolio has been an institutional priority. The report emphasized that clear communication about learning outcomes, the use of the ePortfolio, and the results of assessment, along with consistent institutional support would be crucial to the success of the initiative. The report laid out a framework for developing the system, including the following points:

- Specifying course, program and institutional learning outcomes and rubrics for grading and assessment;
- Identifying artifacts students would submit during the mandatory pre-college program, 1<sup>st</sup> semester, 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, and at graduation;
- Conducting ongoing training for faculty, staff and students in the use of the system and in reflective pedagogy;
- Building assessment practices that include both formative and summative assessment by faculty and self-assessment by students;
- Linking portfolio assessment to faculty and curricular development efforts coordinated by the Center for College Effectiveness.

Committees of faculty and staff worked on the elements of this framework over the past two years. A team of faculty took part in the Making Connections ePortfolio and Mini-Grant Seminar Program during the 2010-2011 academic year. We made great progress prior to the opening of the college: Digication was selected as the ePortfolio platform; learning

outcomes and some rubrics were drafted; signature assignments were developed for submission during the first year; a template for student portfolios was created; professional development workshops were offered, including sessions with Elizabeth Clark (LaGuardia CC), Laura Gambino (Guttman), and Jeff Yan (CEO of Digication); and student work from the Summer Bridge program was sampled and assessed.

## **Decisions**

The key driver of the implementation of ePortfolio at Guttman has been commitment at every level to using the system to support and enhance student learning. While there have been logistical challenges, faculty and staff are in agreement about the value to students of integrating the ePortfolio in all courses and co-curricular activities. For example, on the recommendation of a committee of faculty and staff charged with developing co-curricular programs for the College during AY 2011-12, the student ePortfolio template includes a section titled “Campus & Community Connections” for showcasing and reflecting on learning students achieve off campus. The system is being viewed as a space where students will make connections among courses, experiences, and their daily lives.

## **Opening the College**

In August 2012, Guttman officially opened as the first new college in the CUNY system in over forty years. As a requirement of the institutional model and core curriculum, students participated in a three-week Summer Bridge Program. In order to establish what Randy Bass calls a “culture of learning” where students see themselves as stakeholders in their own education, one of the first objectives of Summer Bridge was to have each student create an ePortfolio using a predesigned template. Embedded within each student portfolio were pages that include several Signature Assignments which will be assessed using our institutional learning outcomes rubrics. One of our core goals is to extend the scope of the college outward into the City. During Summer Bridge, students and faculty participated in a field exercise which examined iconic New York City locales through multiple lenses. Students reported their findings through multimodal presentations in ePortfolio. Through the Center for College Effectiveness, Dr. Laura Gambino led a team of faculty in gathering and evaluating data from Summer Bridge.

The Center for College Effectiveness (CCE) is charged with collecting institutional data, analyzing and reporting information, and consulting with faculty and staff on best practices through professional development. Making Use of Evidence, Advancing through Professional Development, and Aligning with Institutional Planning are three vital Core Strategies that intersect in the Center on College Effectiveness. The reliance on these strategies for institutional growth allows us to continue to close the loop in developing practices that characterize a “learning-centered culture” for both students and faculty. As the Faculty Scholar for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Dr. Gambino serves as an active leader in the CCE. Leading this effort, the Center will guide the use of Portfolio as an integral tool for assessing our Guttman Learning Outcomes. This assessment will serve as a

learning process faculty and staff, and will provide recommendations for short- and long-term curricular planning.

We are actively developing pedagogical best practices within ePortfolio. Our first-year courses are designed to promote experiential learning and increase student success and retention rates. Students participate in a three-component City Seminar course which focuses on Reading and Writing, Quantitative Reasoning and Critical Issues. Not only are these sections linked through a tethered curriculum, classroom activities and scaffolded Signature Assignments are connected through ePortfolio, allowing students and instructors to participate in a dynamic exchange of reflection and idea-sharing.

Students also incorporate their co-curricular experiences into their ePortfolio. Students not only reflect on academic work, but on the entirety of their college experience. [Student Success Advocates](#), [Graduate Coordinators](#), and [Peer Mentors](#) serve as the point of intersection between academic courses and the co-curriculum. Graduate Coordinators and Peer Mentors work in collaboration with Student Success Advocates and faculty to ensure that each student is receiving individualized and supported instruction. Randy Bass argues that ePortfolio should “enable students to more easily make connections among the courses in a degree program and between General Education courses and program courses.” Students are actively working within their ePortfolios as they maneuver through their course assignments. Our college is not only embedding assignments into ePortfolio, we are also bringing the platform to the forefront in courses and in Studio. The visual presence of ePortfolio is alive in our classrooms. Guttman is committed to providing students with the skills they require to develop evidence-based inquiry projects that are relevant to contemporary issues and professions. In order to maximize input from various stakeholders, our peer mentors are trained to assist students in capitalizing on the functionality of ePortfolio as a way to showcase revised work.

## **Connections to Core Strategies**

The one Core Strategy that has and continues to be critical to the ePortfolio initiative at Guttman is our connection to the College’s outcomes assessment work. Throughout the planning and development stages, explicit connections were developed between ePortfolio and institutional outcomes assessment. These connections continue to grow as we move into our initial implementation phase. The purchase of Digication, the introduction of ePortfolio to the students in their summer bridge Program, and the decision to use ePortfolio and Digication in place of Blackboard demonstrate the strong institutional commitment to ePortfolio and outcomes assessment. This commitment focuses on using assessment **for** learning across the various layers of the institution; students, faculty, programs, and institution, with the ultimate goal of improving student learning, persistence, and success.

Guttman’s commitment to the ePortfolio signals its intent to develop and maintain a culture of learning across all levels: students, faculty, staff and administrators. By focusing assessment on “authentic student work, connected to real classroom activity,” the

ePortfolio draws attention to the College's core goals, and, as Bass suggests, makes visible "the richness of student work" beyond easily quantifiable metrics. In addition, the ePortfolio provides a means for accessing faculty expertise for evaluating student achievement of learning outcomes; their primary focus is creating conditions for learning and detecting opportunities for improvement in student work. We hope that integrating faculty into the assessment process in this way will ensure that learning, assessment, and improvement follow each other in a continuous cycle.

As we began our first year of implementation, we developed our assessment plan with the goal of assessing for learning. We completed an assessment of student ePortfolios from the Summer Bridge Program. Based on that evaluation, we identified key findings and next steps for changes to the bridge curriculum and the ways in which we introduce ePortfolio to our students. This work informed the planning for our community assessment days in late October and January. On these days, faculty and staff work together to assess student work and reflections from their ePortfolio. That assessment data was used by instructional teams and the institution in a number of ways. First, we evaluated the outcomes and rubrics themselves; this was our first experience applying them to student work. Second, we investigated if there was anything either individual teams or the collective faculty needed to adjust in the curriculum based on our assessment of student work. In addition, we examined the role that ePortfolio plays in our assessment work and ways to strengthen that connection to improve learning. Areas for improvement were identified and addressed across the student, course, and institution levels of the college.

We envision our assessment work as an ongoing, action research process. We will be planning, evaluating, reflecting and implementing changes in a cyclical process over time. Our work will mature and deepen as our students move through their programs at Guttman. Our goal is to be continually moving forward, learning and growing from the process, as our students learn and grow. The use of ePortfolio as the place to capture student learning and reflection will be a key connection to our outcomes assessment work.

## **Our Next Steps**

Guttman opened its doors to its first cohort of students on August 20, 2012 in a unique way. From our first day we integrated ePortfolio into our college culture and immediately went to scale – every student at Guttman has and is using ePortfolio. While this benefits our project in many ways, there are many challenges with this type of implementation. There is much work still to be done developing and sustaining a pervasive culture of ePortfolio and assessment for learning at Guttman. We continue to work across the multiple layers of the institution (students, faculty, programs, institution) engaging our students and developing and deepening our use of ePortfolio as an integrative social pedagogy as well as for institutional assessment of authentic student work.

Engaging students in our ePortfolio work is essential to developing an ePortfolio culture at Guttman. Students have to see themselves as the owners of their ePortfolio and that their ePortfolio is their place to develop and showcase their academic identity. During the

upcoming year, we also need to increase student understanding of and engagement with ePortfolio in their second year of study, working towards the goal of hosting an ePortfolio student showcase prior to our first commencement in June 2014.

In addition to working with students, a major component of our future work will be professional development for faculty and staff. We are launching our first professional development seminar series this year. Our first seminar focuses on reflective, integrative, and social pedagogies and ways to integrate these pedagogies into our curricula and practice. The second, a new faculty seminar series will introduce our new faculty to both our conceptual model of learning and the role ePortfolio plays in that model. We are also offering ongoing professional development opportunities for our adjunct faculty, both through workshops and brown bag lunches, making sure they are engaged with ePortfolio in their work with students.

Connecting the Career Strategists and programs of study courses to our ePortfolio work is also a key next step for us. Career Strategists help students successfully navigate the second year experience at Guttman and are in an ideal position to advance student engagement with their ePortfolio for goal-setting, transfer, and employment.

While there is much work to be done and there are many challenges ahead, we are excited about the prospects and possibilities. Already being at scale with students and having strong faculty buy-in to integrate ePortfolio across the curriculum will help us tremendously as we move forward with our work. We see ePortfolio as a pedagogy that works well with our unique educational model and will help us, as an institution, to learn and grow, while helping our students to succeed in achieving their goals.

## **Connections to Other Sectors of the Catalyst**

### **Pedagogy**

There is an observable difference in founding a college with ePortfolio as a technology at-scale and concurrently opening with ePortfolio pedagogy at-scale. Guttman achieved the former as every student, faculty, and staff member was issued an ePortfolio on opening day in August 2012. While the process of securing Digication as the most effective platform for our college concluded prior to the start of our inaugural Summer Bridge Program, the strategic plan to begin working with the college community on implementing ePortfolio pedagogy was at its beginning. ePortfolio pedagogy is a practice tethered to a rich vernacular, a language that affects emotive meaning and synchronizes with a variety of high-impact and experiential methods.

While the college's [Concept Paper](#) amplified the nature of the design of the first-year experience, City Seminar, and capitalized on research pointing to the effectiveness of high-impact practices, the newly on-boarded faculty were much less familiar with the terms "social pedagogy," "reflective practice," and "integrative learning." Our focus in this effort has been multifaceted. Guttman has the advantage of being a small, community-centered

college. Faculty, staff and students work closely together on instructional teams or, Houses. This has given our ePortfolio leadership team the opportunity to work one-on-one with faculty who are integrating ePortfolio pedagogy into their courses. Part of our approach has been to demystify the language of ePortfolio pedagogy.

The Studio component of City Seminar is often referenced as a place of practice. When its former structure as Group Workspace was revisited and revised after the Fall 2012 semester, faculty and staff believed the pedagogical framework for Studio should be crafted within the practices of Inquiry, Reflection, and Integration. With ePortfolio as the centerpiece of this work, Graduate Coordinators who facilitate Studio designed an array of projects that merged collaborative learning with embedded skills students require to be successful in their first-year courses. Another example of our effort to integrate ePortfolio pedagogy into the fabric of the institution has been our focus on Summer Bridge. This year's curriculum included project-based portfolio building activities that integrated students and faculty into the pedagogy through experiential education. To foster this culture of learning, our community also engaged in sustained professional development activities.

## **Professional Development**

Our professional development activities have been integral to our scaling up process. Throughout the course of our first year, faculty and staff engaged in a variety of workshops centered in reflective and integrative pedagogy. The first year of the college was largely focused on working with faculty and staff who were learning "on the go." As part of our larger institutional experiment, we identified key areas of ePortfolio practice where our community would benefit from sustained work. These workshops included processes for designing integrative assignments, creating reflective prompts, and working with the technology and pedagogy simultaneously.

As the college entered its second year, the ePortfolio team prepared new faculty workshops and seminars geared toward returning faculty. Members of the team worked closely with newly hired Peer Mentors and Graduate Coordinators who would be participating in classes and leading Studio sections of City Seminar. The new faculty workshops will focus on pedagogy and practice and participants are asked to read *How Learning Works* prior to attending the first session. In coordination with the Center for College Effectiveness, the leadership team will host a seminar on *ePortfolio: Integrating Pedagogy and Practice* that will identify methods for integrating social pedagogy into assignments, activities, and projects. The college is also transitioning its Inaugural Class into its second year. Students who are entering their major fields of study are working with faculty and Career Strategists to develop professional portfolios for transfer and employment. The Career Strategists have developed resource portfolios as a virtual hub for students to communicate, plan, and begin their transfer application process.

This year our philosophy has entered a proactive phase. Capitalizing on our experiences from the first year of the college, we are now at a place where we can strategically prepare

seminars and workshops that focus on the integral pedagogical practices we have identified as foundational to our model and institutional culture.

## **Outcomes Assessment**

A cornerstone of our model is outcomes assessment and assessment *for* learning. Guttman's unique educational model integrates high impact practices with experiential education and provides clear pathways to academic and personal success. Both at the course and institutional levels of our college, assessment is the key driver for consistent and evaluative learning. Our Assessment Days provide faculty and staff with time to reflect on student success using focused activities that evaluate ePortfolios through the lens of the Guttman Learning Outcomes (GLO). GLO were born out of the college's initial Institutional Learning Outcomes and reflect the values and mission of our college more accurately. It is most illustrative and interesting to articulate our Outcomes Assessment process through Inquiry, Reflection, and Integration.

Fall 1 2012-Spring 1 2013 **(Inquiry)**: During the first year we were asking questions and examining our process. Some of the major lines of inquiry that came out of our first series of Assessment Days were focused on how to evaluate student work using our Institutional Learning Outcomes, what the process for norming ePortfolios would be, and how the results from these activities would catalyze institutional learning. We practiced using Digication's assessment tool to evaluate student work based on specified learning outcomes and participated in a series of norming activities that spanned our entire first year. This phase of our development was critical to the strategic planning that would come later.

Spring 2 2013-Fall 1 2013 **(Reflection)**: As we have become active reflective practitioners over the course of our first year, we also have become participants in our own cognitive processes. Our questions from the first year led to the creation of the college's long-term assessment plan devised during the summer's AAC&U Institute. The tailoring of the Institutional Learning Outcomes and the creation of GLO allowed the assessment team to focus on the systematic and deliberate implementation of Digication's assessment tool for the first set of Assessment Days in Fall 1 2013. In collaboration with the ePortfolio team's 2013-2014 Project Plan designed at this year's C2L Summer Institute, Guttman is now entering a period of integration. We found that reflective pedagogy serves as a catalyst for change not only in student learning but also in institutional advancement.

Fall 1 2013-Spring 2 2014 **(Integration)**: The aforementioned assessment plan will be launched this fall. The three-year proposal will focus on the assessment of each GLO and will provide the college with a detailed picture of both student learning and curricular effectiveness. Student ePortfolios will be evaluated using Digication's assessment tool and will be a collaborative effort across all instructional teams and within the majors.

## **Technology**

While we do not anticipate any major changes in our ePortfolio platform in the coming years, we do acknowledge that technology literacy plays a key role in scaling-up pedagogical practices in our classrooms. Our diverse student body enters the college with a range of experiences and skills related to web-based software system and general computing. We are currently working with our onsite Wellness Clinician to ensure that our students with disabilities are able to actively participate in ePortfolio activities. One of the major challenges in scaling up ePortfolio technology in the second year has been the extension of our campus to a satellite facility two blocks north of our 40<sup>th</sup> Street location. Because this building is being occupied by multiple entities, our IT team is working to provide laptops and install wireless Internet access for faculty and students. This year we have also created portfolios dedicated to each Instructional Team so that course content can be shared across all components of the integrated first-year curriculum. This embodies portfolio-thinking and illustrates the type of connectivity that generates active learning.

## **Conclusion**

At Stella and Charles Guttman Community College ePortfolio is the centerpiece of our unique educational model. Despite our brief history, we have made tremendous strides in integrating ePortfolio into all aspects of our work, creating a culture of learning, for students, faculty, staff, and administrators at the college. ePortfolio catalyzes learning while keeping students at the center of our planning and decision-making. ePortfolio connects the curricular and co-curricular, academic and advising, and assessment and professional development. We continue to learn, improve, and deepen our use of ePortfolio in each of these areas.

### Citation

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