

Career Portfolio

STUDENTS in Health Science Technology learn a significant number of basic and entry-level occupational skills in addition to many transferable workplace and employability skills. Students should be aware of methods by which they can showcase the acquired skills so they can improve their potential for admission to the college programs of their choice and improve the likelihood of finding entry-level employment in the health care industry while they pursue their education. Compiling a career portfolio is one of the best ways to showcase your strengths.



Objective:



Explain and demonstrate how a career portfolio can be useful in the process of career planning and job seeking.

Key Terms:



hard copy
portfolio
soft copy

Career Planning and Job Seeking

There is competition everywhere, including entry for schools and jobs. As a result, it is helpful to know how to “market” yourself to increase your chances of employment and/or college admission. A career portfolio can assist you by tracking and recording your progress and skills as well as by helping you showcase your accomplishments and achievements.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Career Portfolios

Begin your own personal career portfolio. Collect or complete the items listed under “Portfolio Contents.” Then share the items with your instructor for feedback. Consider how you want to display and organize your items. The school Career Resource Center may have some great ideas to share with you.

Visit the following link or others like it to assist with your portfolio development:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~csrc/students/portfolio/examples/index.html>

PORTFOLIO

A **portfolio** is a portable collection of materials, papers, and artifacts that showcase a student’s abilities, skills, and accomplishments. It is a portable marketing or self-promotional tool that helps a student present himself or herself to a college and/or a prospective employer. A portfolio is also a collection of records and products of learning and work that help a student gain new work opportunities.

Evidence of Accomplishments

There are many reasons, rationales, and purposes for maintaining a career portfolio. Portfolios are an excellent way to help you feel good about yourself and your accomplishments.

Also, they are excellent tools for review and evaluation. They provide a means by which students can track and record their learning experiences and identify their transferable skills. In addition, portfolios provide tangible evidence of growth, progress, and accomplishments over time.

Evaluation

Portfolios give you the opportunity for self-evaluation, so you can identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas where improvement may be needed. It is a valuable tool for you and for any advisor who may be reviewing your work. Portfolios provide a way to demonstrate achievements and accomplishments to parents, colleges, and prospective employers. In addition, portfolios help validate what happens in the classroom. They are proof of your hard work, and they can develop skills in organization and goal setting.

TYPES OF PORTFOLIOS

There are two types of portfolios: hard copy and soft copy.

Hard Copy

A **hard copy** is a paper or print version of the portfolio. The paper/print data can be collected and stored in:

- ◆ A binder
- ◆ An accordion-style file folder
- ◆ A briefcase

Soft Copy

A **soft copy** portfolio is an electronic version of a portfolio. A variety of Internet sites offer formats for electronic portfolios.



FIGURE 1. A portfolio can be placed on a recordable CD.

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

The contents of the portfolio are typical. The following items are widely accepted among professionals and would be looked for by reviewers. The contents should be as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Table of contents
3. Learning style survey and a written reflection
4. Copy of career plan
5. Kuder (or other) career interest/skills/values survey or assessment
6. Workplace skills assessment
7. Sample job application
8. Résumé
9. List of references
10. List of experiences or special training that relate to your career plan
11. Samples of your work (e.g., writing samples and projects)
12. Copies of awards, certificates, and honors
13. Copies of letters of recommendation
14. Copies of positive evaluations, progress reports, or report cards

15. Descriptions or verifications of volunteer experience
16. Written report of job shadow or internship experiences
17. Samples of professional/business writing (e.g., cover letter or thank-you letter)
18. Personal statement or copy of college essay
19. Official copy of transcripts (high school and college)

ORGANIZATION AND STYLE OF PORTFOLIO

After the contents have been collected, it is important to give the portfolio organization and style. Without this, it is just a pile of stuff. You must make the portfolio easy and enjoyable to read. The following are must haves for any portfolio:

- ◆ Use a table of contents.
- ◆ Label each section according to the table of contents.
- ◆ Consider organizing samples into skill areas.
- ◆ Choose items that highlight skills important to the viewer, and arrange the portfolio to show how your abilities and skills relate to the employer's needs.
- ◆ The recommended maximum length is 10 to 15 items.
- ◆ Consider having two portfolios: one with original documents used to “showcase” your skills and accomplishments during an interview and the other with copies of all the same documents that you can leave with the interviewer to review after the interview is concluded. (Do not leave original documents with the interviewer.)
- ◆ Do not punch holes in your documents. Place document copies in plastic sheets or page protectors.
- ◆ Use quality paper and printers for all copies.
- ◆ Keep font types and sizes fairly consistent, and spell- and grammar-check all documents.
- ◆ Tailor the portfolio so it is appropriate for each opportunity (e.g., college or job).
- ◆ Be creative!

WHEN TO USE THE PORTFOLIO

It is best to rehearse with your portfolio before you have to present it. Just like a job interview, you want to practice your questions and presentations before the interview. Rehearse using your portfolio during a mock interview with an instructor, career counselor, or parent. Get feedback on your portfolio's content and design as well as on your effectiveness in using it during the interview. Review and revise your portfolio as suggested.

During an Interview

Then use your portfolio during a job interview. Do not send a copy of the portfolio with your résumé and cover letter. Use it during the interview to illustrate skills you are asked to describe. Use it to show proof of accomplishments, hard work, and determination. It is excellent proof of growth and learning as well as workplace, employability, and occupational skills.

You can also use it to help you answer interviewer questions, such as:

- ◆ Why do you think you are qualified for this job?
- ◆ What skills can you contribute to this organization?
- ◆ Why should we grant you an award/scholarship/admission?



FIGURE 2. Bring your portfolio for use during your interview.

Job Performance Evaluation

A portfolio is also a valuable tool for a job performance evaluation. It can remind an employer of your contributions and accomplishments, show progress on the job, and document leadership qualities. Therefore, once you get the job, you still must maintain your portfolio.

Summary:



A portfolio is a portable collection of materials, papers, and artifacts that showcase a student's abilities, skills, and accomplishments. It is a portable marketing or self-promotional tool that helps a student present himself or herself to a college or a prospective employer. A portfolio is a collection of records and products of learning and work that help a student gain new work opportunities.

There are many reasons, rationales, and purposes for maintaining a career portfolio. For example, portfolios are an excellent way to help you feel good about yourself and your accomplishments. Also, portfolios are excellent tools for review and for evaluation. They provide a means by which students can track and record their learning experiences and identify their transferable skills. Portfolios also provide tangible evidence of growth, progress, and accomplishments over time.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Define and describe “career portfolio.”
2. List six items that could be included in a portfolio.
3. Define soft copy portfolio.
4. Do portfolios need to be maintained even after you get the job?
5. Should you take a portfolio with you to a job interview?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Ask your health education advisor if there are any career portfolios on file for you to review. If not, ask if he or she remembers a student’s portfolio that was excellent. Ask what made it excellent. If possible, ask to review the portfolio and take notes.

Web Links:



Creating Your Portfolio

<http://www2.biz.colostate.edu/career/portfolio.htm>

Tutorial: Career Portfolio

<http://www.careerservices.uvic.ca/tutorials/career-portfolio.html#approach>

Professional Employment Portfolios

<http://www.bsu.edu/students/careers/media/pdf/portfolio1007.pdf>