

PROJECT 2024

May 7, 2024

TO: Pedro de Araujo
Emily Chan
FROM: Susan Ashley for Project 2024
RE: ePortfolio proposal

The following responds to Pedro's request for a more formal proposal before adopting a college-wide ePortfolio platform for faculty use in their courses and for students interested in archiving, recording, and reflecting on their learning in and beyond the classroom.

Proposal: To adopt CN CourseNetworking and phase it in over a period of five years. Introduce it to new students this fall in NSO and FYE and encourage FYE faculty to consider incorporating elements of it into their classes. Do the same the following four years, opening it to juniors and seniors in year 2.

CN CourseNetworking is a product of the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis CyberLab. Mengyuan (Alice) Zhao, Associate Director of R & D, and Jue Wang have been working with us.¹

Background

In Year 1 of Project 2024, enhancing learning outside the classroom emerged as one of the main areas for attention as faculty, students, and staff discussed how we can do what we do better.

The next year, a working group considered several forms of co-curricular and extra-curricular learning. In addition to focusing on ways to increase experiential learning opportunities for students, they discussed formats which allowed students to reflect on these learning experiences.²

They recommended that students create "knowledge portfolios" as a way to connect blocks and to reflect on their learning and to record and consider the impact of their extra and co-curricular activities over four years.

¹ Mengyuan Zhao, zhaomeng@iu.edu; Jue Wang, jue@coursenetworking.com

²They defined experiential learning as learning outside the traditional classroom: blocks abroad, summer internships, and faculty-student summer research collaboratives. The committee included Karen Roybal (co-chair), Matt Cooney (co-chair), Andrea Culp, Edwin Hamada, Maddi Schink; Peyton Marshak, Eli Fahrenkrug, and Ibrahima Wade.

Development of the proposal

This year an action group including Jennifer Golightly, Marion Hourdequin, Andrea Culp, Dustin Fife, Jacob McDougall, and Susan Ashley evaluated the idea and discussed goals, content, and implementation. Andrea Bruder, Jordan Radke, Aaron Stoller, Megan Nicklaus, and others contributed to the discussion.

The group addressed these questions:

1. Why ePortfolios?

They are one of several high impact practices identified by AAC&U. Studies confirm that they promote student success in a variety of areas.

ePortfolios are particularly effective when they help students tie other high impact practices together.

They would give students a place to

- 1) reflect on what they're learning;
- 2) find connections across classes and learning activities;
- 3) articulate what they've learned to potential employers;
- 3) record curricular and co-curricular learning activities;
- 4) archive their work.

2. What would a typical student ePortfolio include?

- 1) A few common elements and lots of room for individual reflection and customization;
- 2) Prompts for reflecting and connecting;
- 3) A place for copies or links to works they want to keep and/or syllabi;
- 4) A place to list learning experiences.

3. What do we want in a platform?

- 1) Has all the functions we value;
- 2) Readily accessible;
- 3) Students can take it with them and use it for free after graduation;
- 4) Up to date with appealing and customizable buttons;
- 5) Allows us to ask our own questions;
- 6) Gives students control over what they do and do not share;
- 7) Doesn't break the bank.

CN CourseNetworking

CN did a demo on April 3, 2024 for a group of students, faculty, and staff. Others who could not attend received links to the demo PowerPoint and recording.³

Link to the PowerPoint:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGBRtDBif0/NhyNlbHgbEk9g40CShmRWQ/view?utm_content=DAGBRtDBif0&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor

³ Eleven attended and nine received a recording of the demo and copy of the CN PowerPoint.

Link to recording:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/v810tv1o6kc3boujgg1eq/video2936544106.mp4?rlkey=h3h3b47rokmmjriz6mkx5rusv&st=vnhnc2ia&dl=0>

Participants responded positively to the idea of ePortfolios and to the functions and the flexibility CN offers. Reservations had to do with the need to encourage students and faculty to use it.

Pricing: At our request, CourseNetworking provided a pricing plan which seems reasonable in view of the number of students and faculty it serves and the options it offers.

Advantages:

Interfaces as a plug-in with Canvas.

Students have free access to their portfolios after graduation even if we do not continue with Course Networking.

Flexible and accessible.

Customizable by students and by us.

Students control what they share.

Has an endorsement feature (staff/faculty confirm participation in activities).

Provides analytics for institutional use.

Drawbacks:

Students report using LinkedIn, particularly for job applications. It will take some effort to inform students and faculty about CourseNetworking's broader capacities and its benefits.

Feedback on Course Networking ePortfolio demo

1. Pluses and minuses of the platform

Faculty member: I too liked the platform and especially the flexibility it provides. There are so many variants of programs that could use this based on the flexible nature. It would be great for students to use this throughout their journey at CC - but considering usage cases... I anticipate that students might want to pull one or two examples from their eportfolio in job interviews or work-related projects - instead of sending the entire eportfolio to a hiring manager. Perhaps we should further investigate use cases... Love the AI aspect and the tagging!

Student: I think that this platform is very useful in consolidating extracurriculars, classwork, and professional activities in one location. I especially like the concept of adding class projects/career competencies to the platform as students go through courses at CC. It is very easy to forget about the key takeaways from individual blocks when significant time has passed since a student has taken that block. I think it would be quite helpful not only as a tool for applying to jobs, but as a tool for recording experiences in college that can be reflected on for various applications to research positions or other undergraduate opportunities. I think the main drawback to this platform is that students already several years into their education may find it difficult to compile all past experiences when first getting onto the platform. I think it would be very useful for incoming students if they start college on the platform, which I gathered may be the idea for this type of a program moving forward.

Staff member: All in all I liked it and it looked like it could be very valuable to students, especially as they move into their first few post-CC years.

My one question/hesitation would be whether this would be duplicative of other more broadly used platforms like LinkedIn (in other words, would a student want to put a lot of effort into maintaining an ePortfolio profile in addition to all the other personal and professional platforms they use?) That said, I think it was different enough in the breadth and depth of how it could highlight student experience and expertise, that many students would find it valuable on top of everywhere else they maintain online profiles.

Faculty member: I like that it allows for flexibility; students can create many different links which they can make visible or invisible; I found the program relatively easy and intuitive in its design. The portfolios they showcased were good and showed the multiple dimensions of the students' lives.

I see potential for creating a liberal learning portfolio using it. Students can showcase the work, link, and reflect upon their various classes at the end of their four years. And this can then move (hopefully, without any additional costs to the students).

I would be willing to pilot it with seniors to see how they use it right now.

Student. I really like the idea of an e-portfolio. Particularly as someone with a somewhat interdisciplinary major (IPE), I think that it would really help to be able to reflect on the intersections between my classes. I love the idea of incorporating it into NSO so incoming students view it as just a part of what we do at CC and I think that the incorporation with Canvas will make it really easy to keep track of everything. I also think that it could be super helpful for experiential learning data because, if it catches on quickly, people will hopefully input their

experiential learning experiences and also will reflect on them.

I was a little skeptical the fact that they were only using one example student. I wondered if that meant that not a lot of students fill it out all the way or that they don't have a ton of users. I'm also a little skeptical of how thorough students will be in filling it out. Even if it's for an assignment, I think that there's a chance people would just see this as busy work and only fill in the bare minimum information without being thoughtful about their reflections. That said, people are passionate about LinkedIn so I wonder if that enthusiasm would transfer to e-portfolios.

2. Is the platform flexible enough?

Faculty: Yes, it seems to be. The great bonus would be if it served students throughout their life and career - like a digital wallet that houses key contributions made throughout life. Perhaps we could wrap in some Designing Your Life elements...

Student: The platform seemed clearly capable of supporting students after CC with the lifetime editability. Once a profile has been filled in with experiences in undergrad, additional experiences can easily be incorporated into the profile as an ongoing record of personal accomplishments.

Staff member: Yes, it appeared to be so, and it was helpful to hear from the vendor towards the end of our time that if CC stops paying or moves to a different platform, that students retain access to their accounts and that their data is exportable (I am pretty sure they said this last part).

Faculty member: My concern here is the cost of subscription. What happens when the college stops paying for the subscription; how portable is the program and how expensive. What part of it is transferable to which other platforms?

Student: I think it does seem pretty accessible and I love that we can continue to access and edit it for free after graduation. As I said above, though, I think it will be interesting to see how much effort people actually put into their profiles.

3. Accessible and compelling enough?

Faculty: Oh- I strongly suggest we ask a panel of students to test the platform to answer that question before investing in the program. Also = consider identifying key metrics (KPIs) to track and measure usage so that success and impact can be measured.

Student: I think this platform is easily accessible and compelling to students if they begin using it during the FYP. Without integrating it into the start of the college experience, college students will be less likely to maintain their profile and continue reflecting on their courses and extracurricular activities. It may be difficult to encourage students to use this platform outside of the rigorous coursework of the block plan, but small assignments could be incorporated into syllabi as the demo suggested. Many courses I have taken have had reflection components, and I think working with faculty to incorporate this platform into their reflective assignments will help students utilize this platform. A note on accessibility, I think this platform has so many features that may seem overwhelming when starting. Aligning with what I wrote earlier, an emphasis on navigating this platform during the FYP or orientation week will help ease students into using the platform. Overall, the platform seemed very well done from the demo. I think making sure that students appreciate and actively use the platform will be difficult without full integration into many courses/programming early on.

Staff: I think so, but I wouldn't personally recommend signing a contract before getting a lot more real student feedback, especially through a pilot program if possible.

Faculty: I think so.

Student: I like the endorsements section and think that it could be a motivating factor for students. I do wish they had shown the education section of the site more thoroughly in their presentation, as I think that's what makes it stand out most from LinkedIn, but I do think that being able to reflect on the common threads between classes is a really cool feature.

I'm not sure if it's necessarily better than LinkedIn partially because of the network size. I'm a little skeptical of whether employers or other outside organizations would be familiar enough with the software to look at it, but I do think that regardless it will be helpful to have for ourselves as a tool to reflect on what we've learned. I think that I would definitely use it and would love to join the trail with the first years next year if that would be at all possible.

4. Would faculty be interested?

Faculty: Heck yes, from me - but I'm a non-traditional faculty member. If adopted at CC, I'd rework my assignments to create strong entries in the ePortfolio in all my business and marketing classes. It would take a campus wide awareness program, training, and usage scenarios in how it's integrated into syllabi and assignments to be successful, in my humble opinion.

Staff: Not sure. If I were a faculty member I would love to have my students have the opportunity to keep more persistent digital artifacts of their coursework and learnings. But I don't know a tiny fraction of what all goes into teaching on the block plan so I am not a good person to answer this



Faculty: I think so.

General comments:

Faculty [different from the faculty above]: My initial impression is that this platform looks a lot like LinkedIn, though I do see that the platform makes it easier to file and share course assignments, videos, etc. Here are my questions: Would the platform be a substitute or a supplement for LinkedIn? Would the audience be primarily internal (for a student to compile some of their key work and reflections) or external (prospective employers, grad schools, etc.)? How much would it cost annually, and do students think it would be helpful and worth adopting? How widely used might it be in classes? Do we have funding for it? It seems to me that -- depending on the cost -- this would probably only be worth adopting if it were truly going to be widely used. Are there any free platforms that provide comparable resources?

One general challenge I see with any such platform is that what might be valuable for the students to collect for their records and the kinds of reflections that might be meaningful for their experiences might be different from what they want to share with the outside world, and I'm trying to figure out which goal this platform would best achieve (and if both, how those two sets of materials might be separated, with some materials visible publicly and others stored privately).