WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio allows you to organize and highlight information about yourself. It is typically assembled as a binder with entries in clear plastic sleeves. Art majors may use a larger case/notebook designed specifically for this purpose. Portfolios help you organize items that demonstrate your skills in a format that will highlight your strongest attributes to potential employers and graduate schools. As you grow professionally, your portfolio will continually change and be updated.

WHY DO I NEED A PORTFOLIO?

In an interview a portfolio can serve as proof of your skills and abilities. It can provide samples of your work, lists of your skills, letters of recommendation, and/or pictures of you in action. You can use it to help market yourself to potential employers or graduate schools. Since not everyone takes the time to prepare a portfolio, having one can give you an edge.

HOW TO USE YOUR PORTFOLIO

Make the potential employer aware of the fact that you have a portfolio in your cover letter. Then, remember to bring an abbreviated copy of your portfolio with you to interviews. It is not necessary to take your entire portfolio with you to an interview. Instead, bring only the sections of your portfolio that include the attributes you want the employer to notice. This “mini-portfolio” can be compiled and presented in a smaller binder in place of your complete portfolio. Alternately, you may rearrange your portfolio putting the items you want the interviewer to see at the front.

- During the interview, you can use your portfolio to support your responses to interview questions and to demonstrate the scope of your ability
- Do not rely solely on your portfolio during the interview-it is not necessary to lead the employer through every page
- Keep in mind that in some interview situations referring to your portfolio may be inappropriate due to time constraints or other factors
- Be sensitive and perceptive to the interviewer’s style and needs when deciding to utilize this information
- Refer to it only when appropriate, and you will find it to be a useful tool both in job searching and in self assessment of your goals and accomplishments

COLLECTING ITEMS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

First of all, it is important to keep materials which you may want to include in a portfolio. The list of what to include is virtually limitless. You will want to consider objects that help depict skills or attributes visually, such as written text, pictures and documents. Begin your collection now. Items which can impress an interviewer in a few-second overview, without the necessity of significant reading, are most desirable.
ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PORTFOLIO

- Newspaper clippings that address special achievements
- Letters of nomination for honors, awards and academic organizations
- Lists of certificates, awards, honors and special training
- Samples of your work – drawings, brochures, newspaper/newsletter articles you have written, etc.
- Photos of you in action – teaching, training, leading a group, participating in volunteer work, etc.
- Letters of recommendation and thank you letters from advisors, professors and employers
- Copies of college transcripts
- Evidence of campus involvement (co-curricular transcript)
- Information to show foreign language proficiency and/or international study/work experience
- Copies of professional licensure or certification, and any special licenses
- Documentation of activities, achievements, etc., that demonstrate that you know how to learn, communicate well, are adaptable, work as part of a team and are a self manager
- Evidence of technical, communication, and computer skills. Keep a list of special software programs and your level of skill. Include samples created from various programs
- Examples of professional research
- Documentation of volunteerism
- An on-going fact sheet of special skills
- Evidence of creative projects, writing samples, presentations, technical drawings, artistic pieces, etc.
- Any skills related to future work situations
- Anything to support the scope of your written and verbal communication abilities, including class papers, newsletters, articles, brochures, flyers, published articles, poems, samples of technical writing and outlines of presentations
- List student organizations related to your field of study and social groups, and the special projects, teamwork activities, and leadership positions you held
- Future teachers can specifically include sample lesson plans, videotapes of you teaching, learning packets you created for students, statement of teaching philosophy, notes from and pictures of students, evaluations, etc.

ORGANIZING YOUR PORTFOLIO

To begin you will need an attractive 3-ring notebook (possibly zippered), sheet protectors, and extra wide 3-ring tabs with labels. Sections you may want to include are resume and letters of recommendation, work samples, awards and other categories to suit your occupational goal. Neatness and careful planning and organization are essential in producing a portfolio which will be an asset.

NEED MORE HELP?

Please feel free to contact the Office of Career Services should you have any questions about assembling your portfolio. We are also happy to review your portfolio for content and share suggestions for improvement at your request!