

The Portfolio Program

What is it and why should I have one?

A portfolio is broadly defined as evidence of an individual's knowledge and skills. It includes everything from a resume, transcripts, reference letters, and statement of philosophy, awards, honors, and examples of work. Portfolios are used in evaluating performances, in a job or internship interview, and in reflection activities.

The development of a portfolio is a task for all mobile contemporary workers who plan to be successful in the future. Today you need to collect your "experiences" and be able to take advantage of employment opportunities at a moment's notice. In this portable work environment, all labor market forecasts predict workers will hold multiple positions in several industries throughout their lifetime. While a resume was the 60's way of highlighting experience, a portfolio is the contemporary tool to use in telling someone about you.

A portfolio can help you answer questions like

- "Tell me about yourself?"
- "Why are you qualified for this job or internship?"
- "Why should we promote you?"
- "Why should we give you a loan to start a business?"
- "Why should you get a scholarship for graduate school?"

At Radford University, we want every student to graduate with a great portfolio. *Our goal is for RU students to have a portfolio started by the time they are sophomores.* We believe it is a way for our students to become more career mature and ultimately successful. Students who develop portfolios will:

- Reflect on and understand their accomplishments
- Talk about their skills and give examples
- Highlight their achievements
- Build confidence
- Organize and track their academic coursework, out of class experiences, awards, references, and other credentials
- Track samples of work and projects from a variety of worksites
- Effectively market select components of their portfolio to potential internship/employment sites
- Illustrate their fit for a job and/or promotion

How can a portfolio be utilized?

- It is an excellent way of demonstrating your knowledge, previous performance, skills, or accomplishments to any future employer in an interview situation.
- It is also a lifelong tool to help you reflect on what you have learned in the classroom and accomplished in work environments. You will want to keep it updated so that each time you make a future career decision you can reflect on the portfolio as part of your goal setting and job search strategies.
- If you are considering graduate school, a portfolio will highlight your academic accomplishments for an admissions committee.

How do I begin?

A portfolio is a collection of your credentials kept in a secure fashion and displayed as necessary in either a paper/notebook format or in a virtual or electronic site. You will want to collect samples that will reflect your:

- Personal Characteristics
- Experience
- Accomplishments
- Knowledge
- Skills

From the general collection of documents and samples you can build a targeted portfolio for each job search, performance evaluation, etc.

How should a portfolio be presented?

Since your portfolio is a professional representation of you, it should be created with care to make a superior and lasting impression. The style of presentation you use should support the impression you are interested in creating. There are three possible styles or ways to format the portfolio including:

Notebook or binder – In an office supply or art store, you should be able to find a three ring portfolio for this purpose. A leather binder gives both a professional appearance and is a long-term investment for this purpose. You will want to showcase your documents in the portfolio through protective sheaths to both protect documents and create a uniform appearance for a variety of documents.

Online – If you have created a web page for yourself at RU, you may want to add a section specifically for features from your portfolio.

Zip Disc or CD – These make popular choices for job seekers who wish to leave copies of their portfolio with an employer. Make sure that the information on the disc or CD is selected for the particular targeted employer, and that you have not violated any intellectual property rights with the items you have chosen to highlight.

How do I use a portfolio during an interview process?

Once you have developed a portfolio collection, it is possible to add, “portfolio available on request” at the end of your cover letters or on your resume. During the actual interview situation do not plan to hand over the entire portfolio but rather to use different elements of your portfolio to emphasis particular points about your accomplishments or skills. Be selective in what you display and how you integrate this display into your conversation. Remember, the portfolio is not the central part of an interview *but a support* to the points you are making.

What specific items should I include in my general portfolio collection?

Here is a list of items you might like to include as you begin. You will not have all of these as you get started. It is important to collect documentation and keep it in one centralized notebook or storage container. Then you can select various elements as needed for your specific target every time you need the portfolio.

| | Possible Items Related to Formal and Informal Education | | Possible Items Related to Work Experiences |
|--|---|--|---|
| | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | Transcripts | | Internship, part time, or full time job descriptions |
| | Teacher Evaluations | | Descriptive material about the organization (annual report, brochure, etc.) |
| | Test Results | | Employer evaluations or reviews |
| | Course Descriptions/Syllabi | | Letters of reference |
| | Samples from classes (papers, reports, projects, displays, case studies, interviews, journals, research, video clips, etc.) | | Organizational chart showing personnel or resources |
| | Licenses | | Logs, lists, or charts that show the general level of your effort (hours worked, number of telephone calls answered, volume of e-mail, case load, transactions completed, sales volume, etc.) |
| | Grants, loans, scholarships for schooling | | Attendance records |
| | Degrees or certificates of completion/mastery | | Records showing what your students, clients, or patients did after receiving your service (thank you letters, quotes) |
| | Descriptions of training events, retreats, workshops | | Samples from your work (projects, displays, agendas, newsletters, memos, photographs, case notes, proposals, cost analyses, surveys, papers, etc.) |
| | Charts or lists showing hours or time involved in various areas of study | | Surveys showing satisfaction by customers, clients, students, etc. (thank you notes, commendations, citations, awards) |
| | | | Resume |
| | Possible Items Related to Out of Class Experiences | | Each time you develop a targeted portfolio, it will include the following: |
| | A record or listing of clubs and activities | | Table of Contents |
| | Items showing your leadership activities and titles | | Related Academic and/or Personal Information |
| | Community service listing and documentation of hours of work | | Related Skills and Technical Abilities |
| | Certificates of accomplishment | | Related Work Experience/ Professional Accomplishments |
| | Thank you letters | | Related Honors/Award Information |
| | References from faculty advisors | | Resume |
| | Awards | | List of References |