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STUDENT PORTFOLIOS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

Student Portfolios in Business Education at Ashland University

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Abstract

Student portfolios are an effective and innovative assessment technique that provide distinct and valuable benefits to students, instructors, and prospective employers. Attendees to this panel discussion will learn how portfolios were successfully integrated into a business organization course.

Interactive session (panel discussion):

Section 1

The objective of our panel discussion is to illustrate how student portfolios were integrated successfully into a business management course at Ashland University. Three undergraduate business students will explain examples of their portfolios and describe the benefits and learning outcomes associated with them.

The target audience is anyone with an interest in assessment in general or portfolios specifically. Given the recent popularity of portfolios as a developmental and assessment tool, the authors/presenters would anticipate that the topic would have particular appeal to educators and students alike. Business executives similarly would have an interest in drawing closer linkages between portfolio assignments and real life business experiences.

It is planned that all four co-authors of this paper (three undergraduate students and one faculty member) will be present for the panel discussion. We estimate that our presentation will be approximately 15-20 minutes in length with no special equipment required.

Section 2

Student portfolios consist of a collection of student work that demonstrates student skills and abilities over time. Portfolios can be used to showcase examples of a student's best work or they can be used to demonstrate progression in learning and skill mastery (Riegle & Shackelford, 1994). Portfolios are a very useful pedagogical tool when closely linked to educational outcomes (Pool, 2001)

Student portfolios have valuable benefits for the student, the instructor, and potential employers. In a study that investigated portfolio assignments at the college level, a majority of students reported that the portfolio experience was a powerful learning tool (LaBoskey, 2000). Pool (2001) describes that creating portfolios assists students in reflective learning, aids in integrating and synthesizing material from various courses, and encourages them to incorporate life experiences into their collection of assignments.

The value of portfolios to the instructor is significant as well. Zahn & Rajkumar (1996) discuss how portfolios can be used as an assessment instrument, to evaluate course

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effectiveness, to foster collaboration between student and instructor, and to increase opportunities for integration of knowledge and skills. Student portfolios enhance the overall curriculum and “are an innovative instructional and assessment tool in measuring educational outcomes” (Pool, 2001).

Prospective employers also benefit. Portfolios are very helpful during job interviews because they demonstrate and support student claims of accomplishments during their educational programs (Boyatzis, 1994). Assignments showcased in the portfolio often illustrate problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Zahn & Rajkumar, 1996) which are high on the list of importance with today’s employers.

Section 3

Student presenters will be able to display and discuss their business organization portfolios during our panel session. The subject areas included in their portfolios are: resume, leverage buyout technique, discounted earnings approach, structural dimensions, stakeholder approach, goals and strategies, fundamentals of organization structure, service business technology, organizational lifecycle, improving technological competitive position using the Haber R&D portfolio, organizational culture, and learning organizations. For each section, the students will define the purpose of the section, give a brief overview of the topic and provide specific examples of typical assignments.

Attendees will learn how the portfolio assignment was linked to learning objectives and course outcomes and be provided with a description of how a portfolio assignment was successfully implemented in a business management course that integrated course content, skill building, and real world application.

References

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