



## PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

### PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

#### What is a Portfolio?

The Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) Master's degree portfolio is both a product and a process. It serves as the culminating academic work demonstrating your development as a scholar-practitioner. Additionally, the process of creating the portfolio is an opportunity to cultivate a reflective practice (Kline, 2015; Schön, 1983) as a professional in the field. Reflective practice is a learning orientation emphasizing:

...the process of thinking analytically about what we are doing, thinking, and/or feeling, both as we are doing it and later in review from an observer perspective that allows us to include ourselves and the wider value-laden context in the frame, and which may lead to changes in or consolidation of our practice. (Scaife, 2010, p.4)

Grounded in qualitative, autoethnographic research methods, the portfolio process includes collecting data and presenting findings as narrative, storied accounts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of personal experience that, through reflection (Espino et al., 2012; Kline, 2015; Schön, 1983) and the application of theory and literature, demonstrate progress towards the 33 SAHE Knowledge and Professional Competencies. These narrative accounts are referred to as portfolio "reflections," designed to encourage writing as a method to question and explore (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) what it means to develop as a professional in the field of Student Affairs.

Your development into a scholar-practitioner in Student Affairs is neither objective nor universal. The SAHE program, the systems and organizations you are a part of through assistantships and practicums, and you yourself are all grounded in social, historical, political, and economic contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2004). With this awareness, you are encouraged to use reflections to examine the full range of your identities as a lens for analyzing your experiences (Collins, 1993) and your environment (Museus, 2014). As a result, reflections may present counter-narratives (Espino et al., 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that expose and illuminate exclusionary theories, norms, and practices in higher education, Student Affairs, and your own preparatory experience as a graduate student by resisting their application to your own experience. As counter-narratives, reflections become a way to introduce and honor your own ways of knowing, doing, and being as a scholar-practitioner (Espino et al.).

Whether presented in print or electronically, the portfolio process requires you to reflect *on* action as a way to develop the professional skill of being able to reflect *in* action (Schön, 1983).

#### Portfolio Format

The portfolio is a scholarly work and is formatted using the standard guidelines of the profession: the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Sixth

Edition. Additionally, as the portfolio is grounded in autoethnographic methods, it is written in a qualitative first-person voice (Ellis, 2004; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

**Note:** The APA Manual currently does not include comprehensive standards for gender inclusive pronouns in academic writing. According to the manual, the following are strategies for avoiding the biased use of gendered pronouns:

- Rephrase the sentence
- Use plural nouns or plural pronouns - this way you can use "they" or "their"
- Replace the pronoun with an article - instead of the gendered pronoun, use "the"
- Drop the pronoun - many sentences sound fine if you just omit the gendered pronoun from the sentence
- Replace the pronoun with a noun such as "person," "individual," "child," "researcher," etc. (American Psychological Association, 2010)

Beyond the APA guidelines and in keeping with inclusive standards within the field of Student Affairs, the singular "they" is appropriate. When referring to specific persons, use the pronouns they use to refer to themselves.

### **Portfolio Content**

The following are components of the portfolio. Whether print or electronic, as a scholar-practitioner you are free to organize the portfolio so as to best represent your learning and professional development during your graduate experience.

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**RESUME:** A current resume that includes skills, abilities, and accomplishments attained while completing the SAHE Program.

**PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT:** An aspirational statement explaining who you are and who you are becoming as a scholar-practitioner. The statement encompasses a professional philosophy, as well as values and goals related to the Student Affairs profession and is grounded in both personal narrative as well as literature supporting these beliefs and choices.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** A plan for continued growth and learning as a scholar-practitioner five- to 10-years post-graduation. The plan should demonstrate a commitment to the profession and ongoing development of competencies gained through participation in service activities, research, publication, presentations, preparation for a career path, and, potentially, further formal education.

**REFLECTIONS:** Scholarly writing that demonstrates an ability to analyze experience using theoretical tools and research literature as well as progress towards the SAHE Professional Practice and Knowledge Competencies. Reflections are autoethnographic personal narratives that explore and make meaning of the individual process of becoming a professional in the broader context of Student Affairs and higher education.

## Reflection as Research: Doing and Writing Autoethnography

According to Ellis (2004), autoethnography is the scholarly analysis (*graphy*) of personal experience (*auto*) to promote understanding of cultural experience (*ethno*). In the language of autoethnography, the portfolio is the scholarly analysis (*graphy*) of your personal journey (*auto*) through coursework and practical experience opportunities in order to demonstrate what it means for you to be/become professionals in Student Affairs and higher education (*ethno*).

### The Research Setting

The setting for autoethnographic portfolio research is the bounded case (Yin, 2014) of the individual student's two-year experience in the Student Affairs in Higher Education Master's program at Colorado State University.

### Data Collection

Qualitative data for the portfolio is collected in three primary ways: observation (Merriam, 1998), document and artifact collection (Yin, 2014), and collaborative/active interviews (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Espino et al., 2012).

#### *Observation*

As a participant observer in your own experience, you are required to keep a handwritten or digital autoethnographic notebook to consistently record and capture learning moments related to the SAHE Competencies. Observational data may include but is not limited to:

- Capturing the progression of events and happenings in:
  - academic coursework and classroom engagement in the SAHE Program of study
  - assistantship/employment experiences related to learning moments or personal growth
  - practicum experience related to the educational process and professional development.
  - personal development and transitions related to academic work, assistantship/employment or cohort dynamics.
  - assistantship/employment supervisor and colleague interactions.
  - organizational dynamics
- Being aware of and recording:
  - personal action or inaction
  - internal thoughts and feelings

#### *Artifact/Document Collection*

The terms artifacts and documents refer to a wide array of visual, written, and physical materials already present in the research setting and relevant to a particular study (Merriam, 1998). Artifacts/documents include public records, personal documents, and physical materials from the research site (Yin, 2014). Artifact and document data for your portfolio could include:

- Academic papers from coursework
- Assistantship/employment performance assessments
- Work product generated in assistantship/employment, practicum, and internship experiences

- Organization materials such as mission/vision statements, policies, marketing, training schedules, meeting agendas etc.

### *Collaborative/Interactive Interviews*

Collaborative or interactive interviewing rejects the tradition view of interviewing as a transactional question and answer process. Instead, the role of the researcher is acknowledged as an active participant in the meaning making process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) and that dialogue is an important tool for bridging experience and knowledge (Espino et al., 2012). With this framework much of the SAHE experience becomes an opportunity to engage in collaborative/interactive interviews through intentionally entering into active dialogue focused on creating meaning together. Data from interviews are captured in your autoethnographic notebook. Collaborative/interactive interviewing can take place as:

- classroom dialogue,
- one-to-one conversation with students,
- meetings with supervisors,
- formal and informal group meetings or gatherings
- peer conversations outside the classroom
- other interactions with colleagues, faculty, students, or staff

### **Data Analysis**

- Look for patterns and learning moments related to the competencies
- Make meaning of experiences through the application of theory and research literature
  - From coursework and academic papers
  - From lectures and course dialogues
  - Search for additional literature and research as needed

### **Writing**

Reflections are scholarly works that use APA formatting and citations to tell the story of your ongoing development as a Student Affairs Professional in order to make meaning of the experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Reflections cover the following components:

#### **Description and Feelings/Thoughts (WHAT?):**

Using data and a rich, descriptive narrative writing style, students describe the situation or process (e.g., an advising interaction with a student, a one-to-one meeting with their supervisor, a short exchange with a student, an organizational norm, a training session, a procedure or policy, etc.) which prompted the opportunity for reflection.

- **Describe what happened.** The “what” may be a single event/process or a pattern of events that emerge from the data. Set the stage, provide context. Include data (conversations and observations) that support the competency you are demonstrating progress towards.
- **Share personal feelings and thoughts.** What were you thinking and feeling in the moment?

**Evaluation and Analysis (SO WHAT?):**

Continuing in a narrative writing style, make meaning of the experiences and share what you learned. Ground your meaning making in your understanding of the profession by evaluating and analyzing what happened through the lens of professional literature/theory/research and use citations to demonstrate your connections.

- **Evaluate your role and the situation.** What was good/went well? What was challenging/could be improved? What have you learned? Cite the literature/theory/research that supports these evaluations.
- **Analyze your role and the situation.** How does literature/theory/research account for what could be happening? How might literature/theory/research fail to account for what could be happening? Who is centered in the literature? Does that matter? What have you learned? Cite the literature/theory/research that supports this analysis.

**Application and Conclusion (NOW WHAT?):**

Continue to make meaning and apply your learning about what this experience and progress towards the competency means for you.

- **Apply what you learned.** What insight, hindsight, and/or foresight have you gained about students, organizations, groups, the profession, theory/literature, your own identity and experience? What could you have done differently? What would continue to do in the future? What insight and understanding have you gained as a result of this experience and your reflection?
- **Conclude the reflection.** What does all of this mean for you? How have you changed as a result of this experience? What gaps remain in your learning? What future experiences do you want to seek out to fill those gaps? What gaps exist in the literature/research? What does that mean for Student Affairs professionals? For you as a Student Affairs professional? About the professional you want to be? How will you continue “becoming” in this area or competency as you grow in the profession?

## Types of Reflections

### **Student Self-Assessment and Assistantship Supervisor/Employer Assessment**

**Reflections:** Assessment reflections are based on professional growth and development documented in your self-assessment of the knowledge and professional competencies, and from the assistantship supervisor/employer assessments that occur during the SAHE Program:

- ❑ *Student Self-Assessment Reflection:* Reflect on the progress made across the three self-assessments taken during the program of study. Include connections to academic experiences and content to illustrate how specific skills or thinking were developed. Cite literature or theory that support your thoughts.
- ❑ *Supervisor Assessment Reflection:* Reflect on the assistantship supervisor or employer supervisor feedback assessments, addressing work performance, leadership, professional development, and managing change in an organization. Include connections to academic experiences and content to illustrate how specific skills or thinking were developed. Cite literature or theory that support your thoughts.

**Knowledge Based Reflections** originate from in-the-classroom data such as observations, artifacts and interview experiences from:

- coursework,
- group projects,
- papers and literature reviews,
- lectures,
- presentations,
- field trips, and
- other course activities.

Knowledge Based Reflections demonstrate your ability to engage in systematic inquiry, research, analysis and interpretation and may encompass work towards any of the 34 SAHE Professional Competencies. You must have at least two Knowledge Based Reflections for your Preliminary Portfolio Review and at least six for your Final Portfolio Presentation.

**Professional Based Reflections** originate from out-of-the-classroom data that are a part of assistantships, employment, and practicum and may include but are not limited to observations and experiences from:

- supervising students,
- advising a student group
- developing and/or facilitating a training session,
- organizational culture and norms within student groups or work settings
  
- sitting on a committee or work group

- other leadership and work related experiences or role responsibilities

Professional Based Reflections demonstrate your ability to comprehend and develop professional and administrative skills and abilities. Professional reflections demonstrate acquisition and enhancement of leadership, managerial, and administrative skills and abilities and may encompass work towards any of the 34 SAHE Professional Competencies. You must have at least two Professional Based Reflections for your Preliminary Portfolio Review and at least six for your Final Portfolio Presentation.

**SAHE Program Reflection** is the culmination of experiences that reflect upon personal growth and development throughout the SAHE Program of study related to 1) academic coursework, 2) assistantship/work experiences and 3) cohort dynamics. This overall reflection of personal experiences is based on the reflections written at the conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters. *The final SAHE Program Reflection includes your experiences during the semester in which the portfolio is finalized and the Final Portfolio Presentation occurs.*

## PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT BY SEMESTER

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS	RESEARCH METHODS	RESEARCH METHODS	PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT	
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
Self-Assessments	1	2	3	reflection
SAHE Semester Reflection	1	2	3	
Knowledge Reflection	1	2	3-5	6
Professional Reflection	1	2	3-5	6
Personal Statement	discussed	<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>	
Resume		<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>	
Portfolio Format	discussed	finalized		
Portfolio Committee Members	discussed	solidified		
Preliminary Portfolio Meeting Date	discussed	solidified		
Portfolio Presentation Date		discussed		finalized
Professional Development Plan		discussed/drafted	finalized	
SAHE Program Reflection (includes final semester)	discussed	discussed		completed
GS 6 Form	discussed	completed		
GS 24 & GS 25 Forms	discussed	discussed		completed
<b>Student use only</b>				
Competency Matrix	discussed	<i>updated</i>	<i>updated</i>	<i>updated</i>

**Semester 1:**

*Reflections submitted in  
Research Methods Class*

Student Self-Assessment  
SAHE Semester Reflection  
Knowledge Reflection  
Professional Reflection

**Semester 2:**

*Reflections submitted in  
Research Methods Class*

Student Self-Assessment  
SAHE Semester Reflection  
Knowledge Reflection  
Professional Reflection  
Personal Statement - Draft  
Professional Development Plan – Draft  
Resume  
Portfolio Format (hard copy or electronic)  
Portfolio Committee Members  
GS6 form  
***Preliminary Portfolio Review Committee Meeting***

**Portfolio Development (Semester 3 & 4)**

*Portfolio components reviewed by Advisor*

Student Self-Assessment  
SAHE Semester Reflection  
3 Knowledge Reflections  
3-4 Professional Reflections  
Personal Statement - Final Version  
Resume - Updated Version  
Professional Development Plan – Final Version

**Final Semester:**

*Final Portfolio verified with Advisor.  
See Portfolio Checklist at the end of this  
document*

GS24 & GS25 forms  
1 Knowledge Reflection  
Overall Program Reflection  
Self-Assessment/Evaluation Reflection  
***Final Portfolio Presentation***



# PORTFOLIO PRESENTATIONS

## PRELIMINARY PORTFOLIO REVIEW

The Preliminary Portfolio Review occurs prior to the third semester or after completion of eighteen credit hours.

***The Preliminary Review must be successfully completed prior to the start of the third semester or after 18 credits in order to continue in the SAHE Program.***

The Preliminary Portfolio review serves two purposes:

1. **Data Assessment:** The preliminary review provides benchmarks and opportunities for feedback about data collection and written progress toward the knowledge and professional competencies via reflections submitted to the committee.
2. **Personal scholarly and professional development:** The advisor and committee members jointly assess your ability to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge competencies and professional skills to successfully complete the SAHE graduate degree program based on review of portfolio materials (see list below). The committee provides expectations to guide your selection of portfolio data artifacts and associated reflections, and give direction in demonstrating both breadth and depth of the competencies identified with each reflection. Your summer and 2nd year professional development plans are discussed.

Students are responsible for the following steps in the Preliminary Portfolio review:

1. Select two faculty members to serve on your committee. In addition to the Advisor, a CSU faculty member within the School of Education and a CSU faculty member outside the School of Education are selected to serve on the portfolio committee. The selection of faculty members on the portfolio committee is based on expertise and compatibility with your individual educational needs and interests.
2. Set and convey the Preliminary Portfolio Review date and location to Advisor and committee members.
3. Provide the portfolio components listed to the Advisor for review/approval prior to distributing to committee members.

The Preliminary Portfolio includes:

- Personal Statement draft
- Competency Matrix draft (for personal tracking)
- Current Resume
- 2 Student Self-Assessments
- Assessment of development during first year as part of agenda for review
- 2 Knowledge based reflections with data/artifact
- 2 Professional based reflections with data/artifact
- Fall Semester SAHE Reflection (optional)
- Plan for completing portfolio for committee members

## PRELIMINARY PORTFOLIO REVIEW CHECKLIST

***The Preliminary Review must be successfully completed prior to the start of the third semester or after 18 credits in order to continue in the SAHE Program.***

Refer to “Portfolio Guidelines” for descriptors of required portfolio components listed below:

- Personal Statement draft
  
- Competency Matrix draft (for personal tracking)
  
- Current Resume
  
- 1st Year Student Self-Assessments and overall reflection (integrated into presentation of portfolio verbally)
  - Fall Semester Student Self-Assessment
  - Spring Semester Student Self-Assessment
  
- 2 Knowledge Competency artifacts and reflections
  - Fall Semester Knowledge Artifact + Reflection
  - Spring Semester Knowledge Artifact+ Reflection
  
- 2 Professional Competency artifacts and reflections
  - Fall Semester Professional Artifact+ Reflection
  - Spring Semester Professional Artifact+ Reflection
  
- Fall Semester SAHE Reflection (optional)
  
- Plan for completing portfolio for committee members (including discussion of summer and 2nd year professional development plans)

## FINAL PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION

The Final Portfolio Presentation occurs during a two-week time period after Spring Break in the final semester of the SAHE program.

The Faculty Advisor reviews and approves the portfolio based on the criteria discussed in these guidelines prior to distribution of the final portfolio to committee members. Portfolio committee members review the portfolio contents in relation to the Knowledge and Professional Competencies, the Portfolio Rubric (posted on the SAHE website), and the integration/organization of data, relevant theoretical knowledge and analysis of experience and data collection within the reflections in the portfolio.

Students are responsible for setting and conveying the Portfolio Presentation date and location with the Faculty Advisor and committee members. The final Portfolio is distributed to Faculty Advisor and committee members a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the Portfolio Presentation date.

**Final Portfolio is comprised of the following** (refer to “Portfolio Presentation Checklist” for details):

- Personal Statement, Resume and Professional Development Plan
- 6-12 Knowledge based reflections with data/artifact
- 6-12 Professional based reflections with data/artifact
- 3 student self-assessments with an overall reflection
- 2 assistantship/employer supervisor assessments with an overall reflection
- Overall SAHE Program reflection (inclusive of the 3 SAHE program reflections)

# FINAL PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

The Portfolio Presentation occurs during a 2 week time period after Spring Break in the final semester of the SAHE program. The student works with their committee to set a specific date.

Refer to “Portfolio Guidelines” for descriptors of required portfolio components listed below:

- Table of Contents**
- Resume**
- Personal/Professional Statement**
- Professional Development Plan**
- Reflections + Assessments + Artifacts**
  - 3 Student Self-Assessments**  
Student self-assessments are completed at the beginning of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd semesters to fulfill Research Methods class assignments for residency program students, and at designated intervals for part-time and non-resident students.
  - 2 Assistantship or Employer Assessments**  
An Assistantship Supervisor or Employer assessment is completed during the 1st year and prior to the completion of the portfolio.
  - 1 Overall Assessment Reflection** is written about the Self-Assessments & Supervisor evaluations by the student.

## **Knowledge-based reflections and associated artifacts** (6 minimum-up to 12)

- Artifact + Reflection #1
- Artifact + Reflection #2
- Artifact + Reflection #3
- Artifact + Reflection #4
- Artifact + Reflection #5
- Artifact + Reflection #6
- Artifact + Reflection #7
- Artifact + Reflection #8
- Artifact + Reflection #9
- Artifact + Reflection #10
- Artifact + Reflection #11
- Artifact + Reflection #12

## **Professional-based reflections and associated artifacts** (6 minimum-up to 12)

- Artifact + Reflection #1
- Artifact + Reflection #2
- Artifact + Reflection #3
- Artifact + Reflection #4
- Artifact + Reflection #5
- Artifact + Reflection #6
- Artifact + Reflection #7
- Artifact + Reflection #8
- Artifact + Reflection #9
- Artifact + Reflection #10
- Artifact + Reflection #11
- Artifact + Reflection #12

- SAHE Program Reflection**  
An overall SAHE Program reflection is based on the semester reflections written at the conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters for residency program students, and at designated intervals for part-time and non-residency students. *The final SAHE Program Reflection also includes the student’s experiences during the semester in which the portfolio is finalized and the portfolio presentation occurs.*

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