

STUDENT AFFAIRS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Colorado State University

PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

Residential Program

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 practitioner-scholar. 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 10 ACPA & NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). 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 practitioner-scholar (Bouck, 2011) 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 expected 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 practitioner-scholar (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 (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015; Chang, 2016; 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 AND ORDER

The following are components of the portfolio.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESUME: A current resume that includes skills, abilities, and accomplishments attained while completing the SAHE Program. You will write two versions of your resume, one for your preliminary presentation and one for your final portfolio presentation.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT: An aspirational statement explaining who you are and who you are becoming as a practitioner-scholar. 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. This statement serves as an introduction to your portfolio and should be clearly supported by what follows. You will write two versions of this statement, one for your preliminary presentation and one for your final portfolio presentation.

REFLECTIONS: Scholarly writing that analyzes personal experience using theoretical tools and research literature in order to demonstrate progress in the 10 ACPA and NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). 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. *The portfolio includes 10 Competency Area Reflections, followed by two SAHE Immersion/Emersion Reflections, and one Overall SAHE Immersion/Emersion. The 10 Competency Area Reflections can be arranged in the order that best tells the story of your development as a student affairs practitioner-scholar.*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A plan for continued growth and learning as a practitioner-scholar 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.

REFERENCE SECTION: Includes works cited throughout the entire portfolio.

APPENDICES SECTION: Includes at least one artifact for each Competency Area Reflection.

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 your two-year experience in the Student Affairs in Higher Education Master's program at Colorado State University.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching research question for your portfolio is: How does a graduate student in a preparatory master's program make meaning of their development towards competency as a practitioner-scholar in student affairs?

In addition to this overarching question, you will be guided to develop sub-questions for your portfolio that will allow you to explore your process in relationship to your lived experience.

DATA COLLECTION

Autoethnography requires collecting personal memory data, self-observational and self-reflective data, and external data (Chang, 2016).

Personal Memory Data

Personal memory data, what is recalled from the past, is the foundation for autoethnography (Chang, 2016). For the portfolio, your "recalling" focuses on chronicling past events and personal experiences that illustrate:

- How you came to understand who you are, including but not limited to:
 - stories of your own development
 - how you came to understand your identities and their impact
 - personal cultural artifacts
 - where your values come from
 - influence of mentors/family/teachers
 - epiphanies where you discovered strengths or challenges

- How you came to discover and understand the field of student affairs, including but not limited to:
 - experience with functional areas
 - your understanding of values and culture of the field (and gaps)
 - past roles or positions
 - influence of mentors
 - rituals or ceremonies of the field you've been a part of
 - how you came to see the "fit" (or lack of) between who you are and the field

Self-observational and Self-reflective Data

While self-observation and self-reflection are regular daily process, autoethnography requires a systematic and intentional approach (Chang, 2016).

Self-observational data

- Being aware of and recording what you experience, without immediate evaluation or analysis, including but not limited to:
 - daily or weekly routines
 - thoughts and cognitive processes
 - behaviors, personal action or inaction
 - physical sensations and body awareness

Self-reflective data

- Capturing “introspection, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of who you are and what you are” (Chang, 2016, p. 95) as a developing practitioner-scholar in student affairs, including but not limited to:
 - identity
 - values/preferences
 - relationships to other

External Data

External 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 your experience as a graduate student developing competency in student affairs. 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

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 using the 10 Competencies Areas (ACPA & NASPA, 2015) as a thematic framework
- 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

Analysis continues through the writing stage (Chang, 2016; Richardson & Pierre, 2005). The goal in writing your reflections is to tell the story of your ongoing development as a student affairs professional, weaving together memories and current experience in order to make meaning (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of your development as a practitioner-scholar. All reflections—competency areas, immersion/emersion, and feedback—must meet the standards of autoethnography (Chang, 2016):

- Foreground personal experience in research and writing
- Illustrate a sense-making process
- Use and show reflection/reflexivity
- Illustrate insider knowledge of a cultural phenomenon/experience
- Describe and critique cultural norms, experiences and practices
- Seek responses from audiences

The guidelines for **Competency Reflections** specifically include:

- Each Competency Reflection begins with an introduction framing your experience in the competency area prior to entering graduate school. While you have been asked to write introductions to each competency as a class assignment, these introductions may be rewritten as your portfolio develops
- Competency Reflections must:
 - Address your progress in the given competency area as indicated by the dimensions in each. Depending on your work/assistantship/practicum experience and coursework, addressing a dimension may include exploring and explaining gaps in competency.
 - Answer your research questions:

- The overarching portfolio research question: How does a graduate student in a preparatory master's program make meaning of their development towards competency as a practitioner-scholar in student affairs?
 - Your specific sub-questions.
 - Be supported by artifacts included in an Appendix section at the end of your portfolio
- You must support your claims of competency with data. In autoethnography, data is shared as narrative—as story—not just the conclusions you might draw. You must provide examples (stories) from your data (internal and/or external data—observation, conversations, artifacts, personal reflection, etc.) that allow the reader to reasonably come to the same conclusion of development towards competency that you do. Consider incorporating aspects of the following:
 - *Describing 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 observational data that support the Competency Area and the specific Dimension within you are demonstrating progress towards.
 - *Sharing personal feelings and thoughts.* What were you thinking and feeling in the moment?
 - *Providing context.* What is it important to know about you in order to understand the meaning you are making and the competency growth you are seeking to illustrate? What past experiences are influencing you? What aspects of your identity are salient?
- You must support your story of movement towards competency with a practice-to-theory or theory-to-practice approach that analyzes your experience and connects your story to the larger story of others in the field and the culture of student affairs.
 - This connection can be made through narratives and counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that evaluate and analyze practical experiences and tie them to classroom learning or take academic work and apply it to real world situations.
 - Literature and theory should be cited and is a primary way to connect your story to larger stories. Use of literature, theories and models also demonstrates your learning, growth and competency by illustrating what you know and, as a result, the impact of that knowledge on what you can do and how you show up in the world (who you can be).
 - *Evaluate your academic work/role and a situation(s).* What was good/went well? What was challenging/could be improved? What have you learned? Have your thoughts and feelings changed since the actual situation or ? Cite the literature/theory/research that supports these evaluations.
 - *Analyze your academic work/role in a 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.
 - You are expected to seek out literature on your own, both in and out of student affairs, to make meaning of your story and not depend solely on readings and texts from classes.
- Each Competency Reflection should include a thoughtful conclusion that focuses on making meaning

of the Competency Area as a whole through the lens of your research questions. Things that might be a part of your conclusion include but are not limited to: Why is this competency important in the field? What is the role of this Competency Area in your practice as a new practitioner and in the future based on your career/development goals? What insight, hindsight, and/or foresight have you gained about your own competency? About the culture of the field? About students, organizations, groups, the profession, theory/literature, your own identity and experience? What could you have done differently? What would you continue to do in the future? What insight and understanding have you gained as a result of your experiences and your reflection on them? What does all of this mean for you? How have you changed and developed as a result of the experiences you've shared? What gaps remain in your learning? (The future experiences you will want to seek out to fill those gaps then become a part of your Professional Development Plan.) 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?

- There is no single acceptable approach or page length to Competency Reflections. Much like a thesis or dissertation, you (in consultation with your advisor) decide when your Reflection is "finished."

TYPES OF REFLECTIONS

COMPETENCY REFLECTIONS

One reflection is written on each of the ACPA and NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators (ACPA & NASPA 2015):

- Advising and Support
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Research
- Law, Policy, and Governance
- Leadership
- Organizational and Human Resources
- Personal and Ethical Foundations
- Social Justice and Inclusion
- Student Learning and Development
- Technology
- Values, Philosophy, and History

Competency reflections use narratives of past and current experience to tell the story of your development—in and out of the classroom—in each competency areas over the course of your experience in the SAHE program. These reflections emphasize a theory-to-practice or practice-to-theory approach where literature and research are applied to both demonstrate professional knowledge/skills/attitudes and to make meaning of experience. Competency reflections are revisited until all the Dimensions under each Competency Area are addressed. Addressing a Dimension may include recognizing and reflecting on gaps in professional experience and competency.

SELF-REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Using formal supervisor feedback from a work/assistantship/practicum experience, you are asked to reflect on the process of receiving and incorporating feedback as a professional.

SAHE PROGRAM IMMERSION/EMERSION SELF-REFLECTIONS - SEMESTER 1, SEMESTER 2, AND OVERALL

While Competency Area Reflections provide information about your development in specifically defined areas, SAHE Program Immersion/Emersion Self-Reflections focus more holistically on your process of being immersed as a graduate student and emerging as a student affairs practitioner-scholar. Reflections written semester one and two are more focused on immersion, while the overall reflection looks at the graduate experience as a whole and is more focused on emersion as a professional.

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PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS

	RESEARCH METHODS Semester 1	RESEARCH METHODS Semester 2	PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN CONSULTATION W/ADVISOR	
			Semester 3	Semester 4
PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS				
Title Page				<i>finalized</i>
Table of Contents			<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>
Resume		<i>first version</i>	<i>final version</i>	
Personal and Professional Statement	<i>discussed</i>	<i>first version</i>	<i>final version</i>	
10 Competency Area Reflections	<i>1 written</i>	<i>3 written</i>	<i>work on 1-10</i>	<i>finalize 1-10</i>
Professional Development Plan		<i>drafted</i>	<i>revisit</i>	<i>finalized</i>
2 SAHE Immersion/Emersion Reflections	<i>1 written</i>	<i>1 written</i>		
Overall SAHE Immersion/Emersion Reflection		<i>discussed</i>	<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>
References List	<i>ongoing development</i>			<i>finalized</i>
Appendices:				
All Competency Reflection Artifacts	<i>ongoing collection</i>			<i>finalized</i>
Supervisor Evaluation (artifact)	<i>completed by supervisor</i>			
PORTFOLIO DECISIONS				
Portfolio Committee Members	<i>discussed</i>	<i>finalized</i>		
Preliminary Portfolio Meeting Date	<i>discussed</i>	<i>solidified</i>		
Portfolio FINAL Presentation Date		<i>discussed</i>	<i>finalized</i>	
PORTFOLIO DEADLINES				
GS 6 Form	<i>discussed</i>	<i>completed</i>		
GS 24 & GS 25 Forms	<i>discussed</i>	<i>discussed</i>		<i>completed</i>
<u>Student & Advisor use only</u>				
Competency Tracker	<i>discussed</i>	<i>updated</i>	<i>updated</i>	<i>updated</i>

(Rev: 2018)

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

ONLINE STUDENTS

Note: When online students take the three courses varies.

	RESEARCH METHODS Class 1	RESEARCH METHODS Class 2	RESEARCH METHODS Class 3	PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN CONSULTATION W/ADVISOR	
				Remainder of program	Final Semester
PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS					
Title Page					<i>finalized</i>
Table of Contents				<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>
Resume		<i>first version</i>		<i>final version</i>	
Personal and Professional Statement	<i>discussed</i>	<i>first version</i>		<i>final version</i>	
10 Competency Area Reflections	<i>1 written</i>	<i>3 written</i>		<i>work on 1-10</i>	<i>finalize 1-10</i>
Professional Development Plan			<i>drafted</i>	<i>revisit</i>	<i>finalized</i>
2 SAHE Immersion/Emersion Reflections	<i>1 written</i>	<i>1 written</i>			
Overall SAHE Immersion/Emersion Reflection			<i>discussed</i>	<i>drafted</i>	<i>finalized</i>
References List			<i>ongoing development</i>		<i>finalized</i>
Appendices: All Competency Reflection Artifacts			<i>ongoing collection</i>		<i>finalized</i>
Supervisor Evaluation (artifact)	<i>completed by supervisor</i>				
PORTFOLIO DECISIONS					
Portfolio Committee Members	<i>discussed</i>	<i>finalized</i>			
Preliminary Portfolio Meeting Date	<i>discussed</i>	<i>solidified</i>			
Portfolio FINAL Presentation Date		<i>discussed</i>		<i>finalized</i>	
PORTFOLIO DEADLINES					
GS 6 Form	<i>discussed</i>	<i>completed</i>			
GS 24 & GS 25 Forms	<i>discussed</i>	<i>discussed</i>			<i>completed</i>
<u>Student & Advisor use only</u>					
Competency Tracker	<i>discussed</i>	<i>updated</i>		<i>updated</i>	<i>updated</i>

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