

# Professional Development Story

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## Our Professional Development Story

At the beginning, our faculty development program consisted of Consortial Faculty members who served as lead faculty mentors; helping adjunct faculty become more acclimated to teaching online. Previous faculty development practices focused on general principles and best practices for teaching online, but not ePortfolios specifically.

Initially faculty development was not a big part of our C2L project. The proposal focused on the use of student ePortfolio mentors, who would guide and encourage students to develop career-focused ePortfolios, sort of bypassing faculty. As the SPS team has participated in the first two jams (and reviewed the participation rates for students working only with ePortfolio mentors), the faculty role in ePortfolio became clearer and our focus has shifted toward faculty development and community building accordingly.

To that end, on April 4, 2011 we hosted our first [ePortfolio webinar](#) for faculty via GoToWebinar. Since ePortfolios had only implemented in small pockets at SPS, many of our adjunct faculty members had little-to-no knowledge about ePortfolios. We recorded our informational webinar and have created [a wiki page on the CUNY Academic Commons](#) to house the video in addition to other ePortfolio resources for SPS faculty. Twenty-five faculty members from both undergraduate and graduate degree programs attended the webinar and provided some great feedback via the survey that was presented at the end of the webinar. When answering the question, “What did you like best about the webinar?” roughly half of the participants wrote, “learning about a new approach to student learning” and “examples of eportfolios.” Many have since participated in our ePortfolio workshops.

The webinar served as a jumping off point and since that time we’ve focused our efforts on a series of workshop sessions, designed to assist faculty in creating their own ePortfolios and an ePortfolio assignment that is tied to course learning outcomes and includes a reflective piece. In the beginning we offered up to ten faculty members \$300 for their participation, but this past semester we’ve moved to a model of non-payment because of the financial barriers put in place by our adjunct/consortial faculty model.

As an overview of our three-part workshop series, the first session is a hands-on workshop where we present different ePortfolio course examples throughout CUNY and walk faculty through the process of creating their own course ePortfolio. By the end of this session faculty will have created a “sandbox” ePortfolio and be more familiar with the technical aspects of creating an ePortfolio. The second session happens asynchronously via a discussion board and focuses on the importance of reflection. After using Blackboard for our first two cohorts, we moved the discussion board activity to Digication; allowing faculty to experience with the platform that their students will be using. After reading a couple of articles on reflection, faculty will be prompted to post their feedback and comment on each other’s posting. During this time, faculty also create their course ePortfolio template and revise their syllabus. Participants also peer review each other’s ePortfolios and make revisions based on feedback from the ePortfolio team. During the last session, faculty present their assignment ePortfolio for peer review and continue the offline conversation on the importance of reflection. Faculty from previous cohorts are also invited to this session to offer their feedback and advice. The assignments that are created will be integrated into the next semester’s courses. Faculty who successfully participate in the workshop series are awarded a letter of recognition from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. We use surveys at the end of the last session to measure the effectiveness of this faculty development series.

We are currently in our 4th cohort, having trained over 30 faculty members in previous cohorts. This fall, we also started to offer a completely asynchronous version of our workshop series and have recorded a [new webinar](#), [Digication overview video](#), and set of ePortfolio activities to replace the first in-person session.

## **Our Professional Development Philosophy and Conceptual Framework**

Our thinking in relation to the ePortfolio Professional Development has been largely shaped by our participation in Connect to Learning and we grateful that C2L has afforded us the opportunity to focus on how we can incorporate ePortfolios into ongoing faculty development.

We’ve tried to set up our workshops in such a way that it encourages instructors to model the skills their students need to master. Moving from reading about something (inquiry into the literature) to experiencing it as a participant and utilizing it as teacher (inquiry into practice) is a process designed to build understanding or integration.

Since most of our students use ePortfolio in fully online courses, it has been extremely important for us to find a way to mirror that experience in our faculty development practices.

## **Professional Development for Scaling Up**

Professional development has been critical to our ability to scale up. With a mostly adjunct faculty teaching fully online courses, faculty development has been an important community-building activity. Each semester we invite veterans back to meet and offer advice to workshop participants. Feedback from participants indicate that they find the workshops valuable and that they would recommend them to colleagues. We have created a vibrant community of practice around ePortfolio and this semester we created a Digication Community for SPS ePortfolio Faculty that allow them to view each other’s templates and we hope this will positively contribute to sustaining community of practice. Through informal assessment of our project in pre- and post-faculty surveys, faculty state that their enthusiasm for the project is reinforced by the support of the ePortfolio advisors and continued faculty development opportunities. These include gatherings of new and seasoned ePortfolio faculty at the close of each workshop. Indeed, ePortfolio has helped our faculty to “connect.” In addition to our introductory workshops, we plan to offer a second level workshop, focused on reflection and purposefully using new technology in the classroom.