

## A GUIDE TO YOUR PORTFOLIO EXPERIENCE AT PLAZA

The portfolio experience at Plaza is designed to support the College's mission by developing in students the critical competencies that will enable them to effectively compete for jobs and careers upon graduation.

By researching advertisements, you will most likely find that most employers value both behavioral characteristics and a skill set that demonstrates knowledge and expertise essential to building a career in a specific field.

In terms of behavioral characteristics, job advertisements frequently emphasize that the applicant should demonstrate:

- Responsibility
- Dependability
- Independence
- Professionalism
- Initiative
- Problem solving skills
- Team work skills

Today's college graduate must be able to assume a variety of roles and be prepared to grow professionally. That is why Plaza's education is committed to equipping students with essential competencies that include:

- **To think critically** to make informed decisions
- **Be information literate** to locate and cite research and understand the rules and regulations surrounding the use of other people's information
- **Write and speak effectively** with confidence so others understand your message
- **Possess technology skills** and computer savvy to produce and present information
- **Develop quantitative reasoning** and problem solving skills
- **Develop expertise** in your field of study
- **Develop a positive work ethic** to succeed in today's diverse work setting

### Why are these competencies or skills important?

Critical thinking is important in this complex world. One needs to retrieve information, analyze it, and use it to make decisions in both his or her professional and personal life. Since technology touches every aspect of daily life, we need to be proficient at using the computer and possess the research skills to retrieve information that is useful and reliable. Quantitative reasoning helps us interpret certain kinds of data to make informed decisions. In order to place information that we think about in its proper context, it is most important to have an understanding of business or allied health concepts and the laws governing the field. Finally, once we draw some conclusions, we often need to

tell someone either verbally or in writing or both. Making informed decisions can lead to positive changes and the development of a healthy attitude about yourself and your surrounding world.

### **How does the portfolio system develop these competencies or skills?**

The portfolio system helps you to understand that a person's best work is work produced over time. Whether it is a piece of writing or an entire project, it should be drafted, redrafted, edited, shared with different audiences, and reworked before deemed finished. The portfolio projects, which are embedded in core courses, teach a student that particular philosophy.

Your portfolio assignments were carefully designed by a team of instructors in each department relative to the course of study. Each assignment is designed to hone several competencies. Your instructor will provide you with a written explanation of the project assignment and a description of the competencies. There is a standardized scoring guide to assess individual progress on each project to ensure consistent measurement of competencies.

### **What is generally in a portfolio and how is it different from a regular assignment?**

A portfolio is a course project that is designed to reinforce critical competencies by asking students to complete specific activities such as to perform research about a topic or a scenario and to communicate their findings in writing. For example, students may be asked to plan a business meeting with a supporting budget that includes all the details and arrangements to deliver the meeting. The portfolio project will require the use of a word processing, spreadsheet, and/or software package to complete it. Aside from the main report, a letter of self-reflection or memorandum is written from the student that highlights what the student feels he or she has learned through the portfolio process. All drafts of the project must be included. The letter or memorandum, the project, and the drafts are all bound in a folder or binder.

The portfolio project is different from a traditional assignment for several reasons. First, it is worked on in stages during which time there is an opportunity for instructor feedback as well as peer critique. Second, it serves as a selling tool that can be used during a job interview. Third, the most portfolios are not evaluated by your instructor but by the College's Portfolio Committee to provide feedback from an audience that is totally objective. Finally, student portfolio performance informs the College how well the academic programs are integrating skills at each level so that improvements are possible.

## **Which courses require portfolios?**

The number of portfolios you are responsible to complete depends on your program of study. The following courses require portfolios:

IT115 Spreadsheet Applications  
IT142 Presentation Technology and Techniques  
IT227 Office Administration  
LL254 Composition and Research  
LL290 Literary Analysis  
LL353 Advanced Composition  
MG73 Business Organization  
MG230 Professional Development  
MGT1006 Business Strategies  
MGT1007 Business and Career Dynamics  
AH1000 Medical Law and Ethics  
AH1013 Laboratory Procedures  
HT103 Legal Aspects of Health Information

## **How do I know if I have reached the College's competencies?**

All courses have learning objectives that are assessed. Students are judged on quizzes, tests, assignments, and portfolio assignments, and these assessments will give you the feedback you need to improve. Each course syllabi will indicate the specific competencies to be developed in that course.

## **What happens if I need help with a portfolio or with the further development of a critical competency?**

Assistance is immediate upon entrance to the College. Because assessment and feedback are an on-going process throughout your stay at Plaza, you will be able to find help as soon as you encounter difficulty. You may seek help directly from your instructor during his or her office hours. Also, the College has an Academic Resources Center (ARC) that is staffed with faculty and peer tutors, who can provide assistance. Attending school on a regular basis, keeping up with homework and assignments, and seeking help from the Academic Resources Center or instructor when needed, all contribute to the benefits you will gain from a successful portfolio experience!

**Our best wishes for your success at Plaza,**

***The Portfolio Committee***