



Creating a Collaborative Guide for Integrative Learning and Reflection

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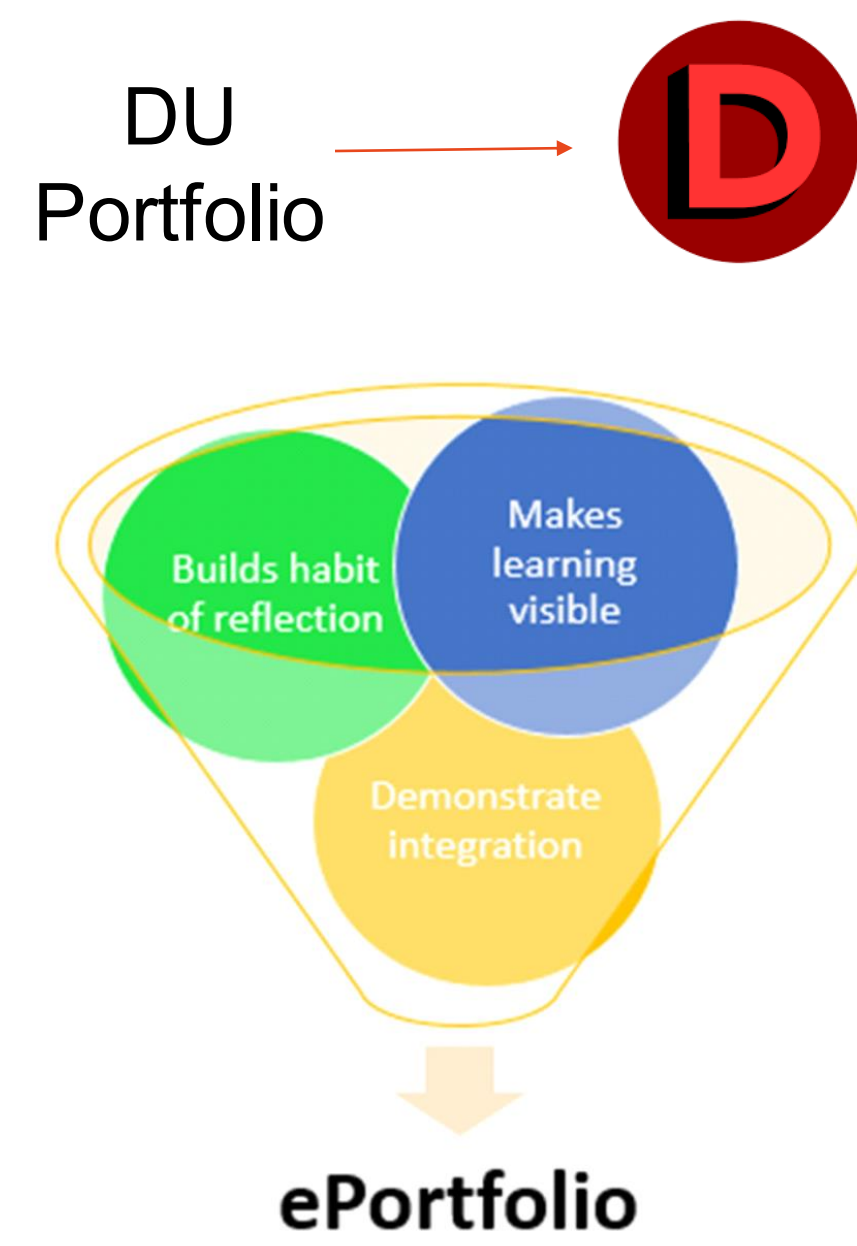
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Background

Reflection and Integrative Learning

- Reflection and integrative learning have been identified as central components to a meaningful education. Reflection enables students to analyze their experiences, make connections between different ideas, and find a deeper sense of meaning. This process, a core element of AAC&U's High-Impact Practices (HIPs), creates continuity in a student's learning journey, allowing them to build on previous knowledge while looking ahead. ePortfolios, recognized as one of the eleven HIPs by George Kuh and the AAC&U, are a powerful tool for facilitating this type of reflection. Through an ePortfolio, students curate artifacts of their learning and then engage in a reflective analysis to connect these artifacts to their personal experiences and demonstrate growth. This process can span individual courses, entire academic programs, and even co-curricular or professional activities, making ePortfolios an ideal medium for students to synthesize their diverse experiences into a coherent narrative of their educational journey.



Work at the University of Denver

- Following the transition from the DU Portfolio platform to Digication, the University of Denver (DU) sought a more integrated approach to ePortfolios. To support this goal, DU joined the AAC&U's 2024–2025 Institute on ePortfolios. This program helps universities with large-scale ePortfolio adoption by assisting with design and implementation. DU's goals for the Institute included advancing ePortfolios across disciplines, developing models for scaffolded reflection, and simplifying the process for faculty and staff.



- This work led to the formation of the ePortfolio Innovations Circle (ePIC), a collaborative, cross-campus group dedicated to deepening integrative learning and reflection for students. The ePIC group brought together key partners, including the 4D Experience (4D) and the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL), along with faculty and staff from across campus. Many of these faculty and staff had previously participated in working groups focused on ePortfolios, integrative learning, and reflection, so this new group provided an excellent opportunity to continue and build on that foundational work. 4D's involvement was directly tied to its emphasis on reflection as a core driver of the 4D Experience. Reflection helps students make sense of their learning, fosters clarity, and supports transformational growth. The OTL's investment in this work stemmed from its mission to support faculty in adopting HIPs like ePortfolios, which facilitate the 4D Experience. This collaboration within ePIC was a way for the OTL to support faculty in these important efforts.

Interactive Section

What's one thing you do to help students reflect on and integrate their learning?
Add your response using the post it notes!



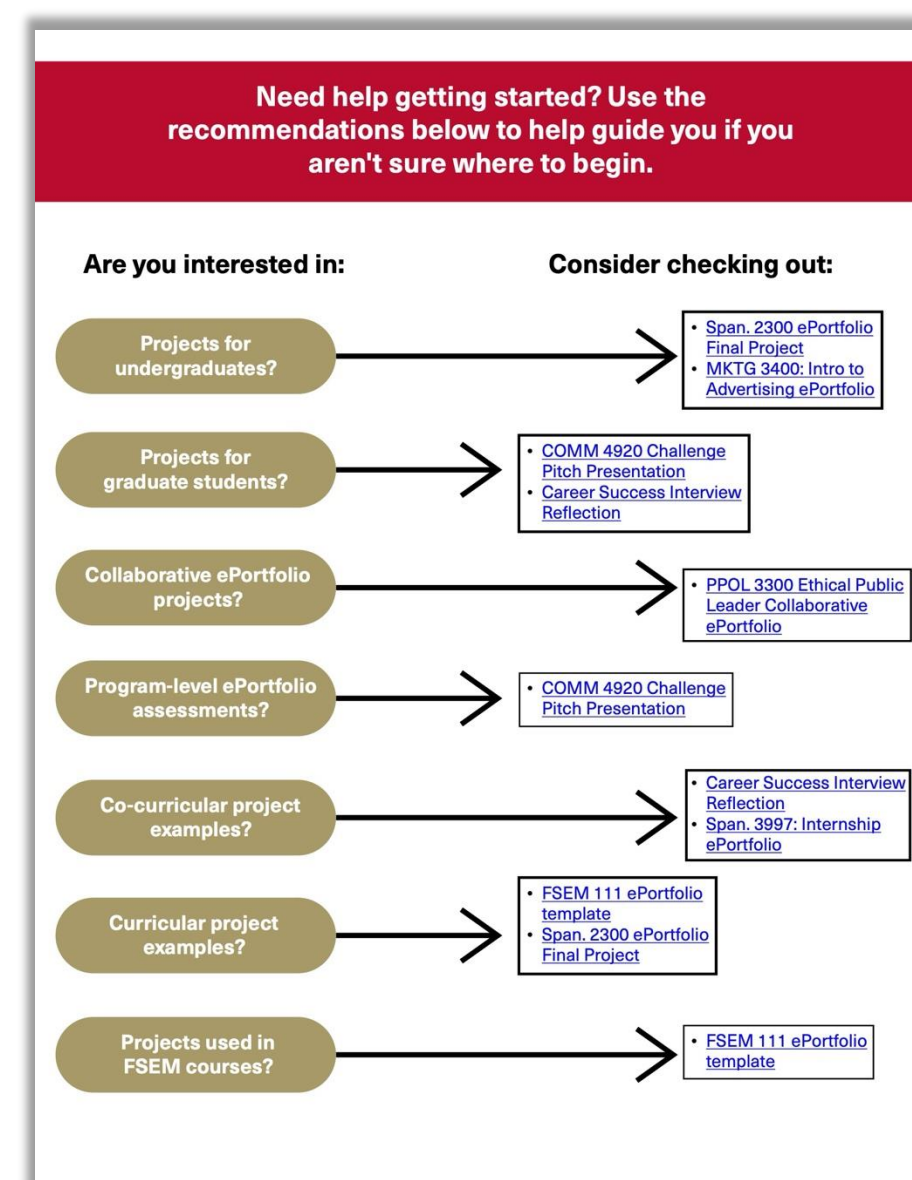
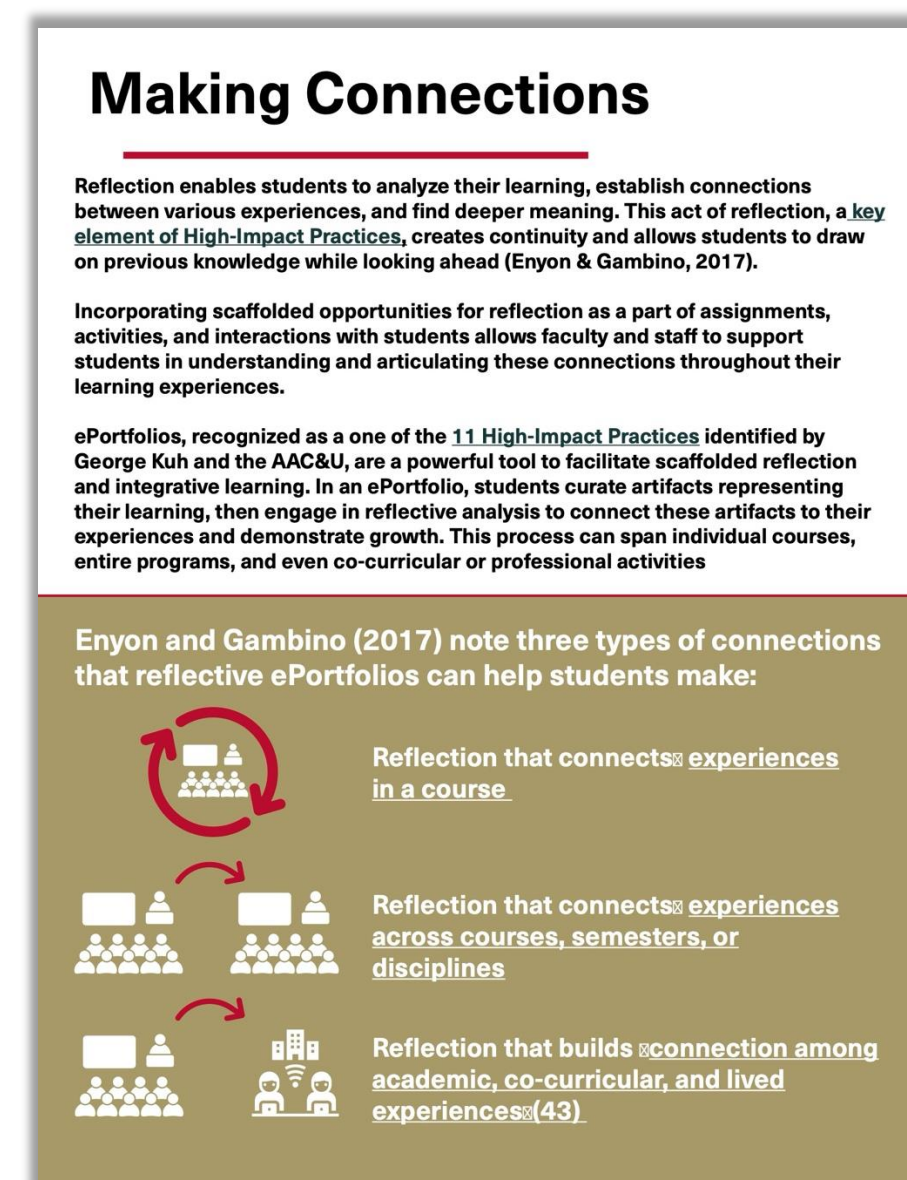
Scan the QR code to view
“The ePIC Guidebook”

Deliverable and Results

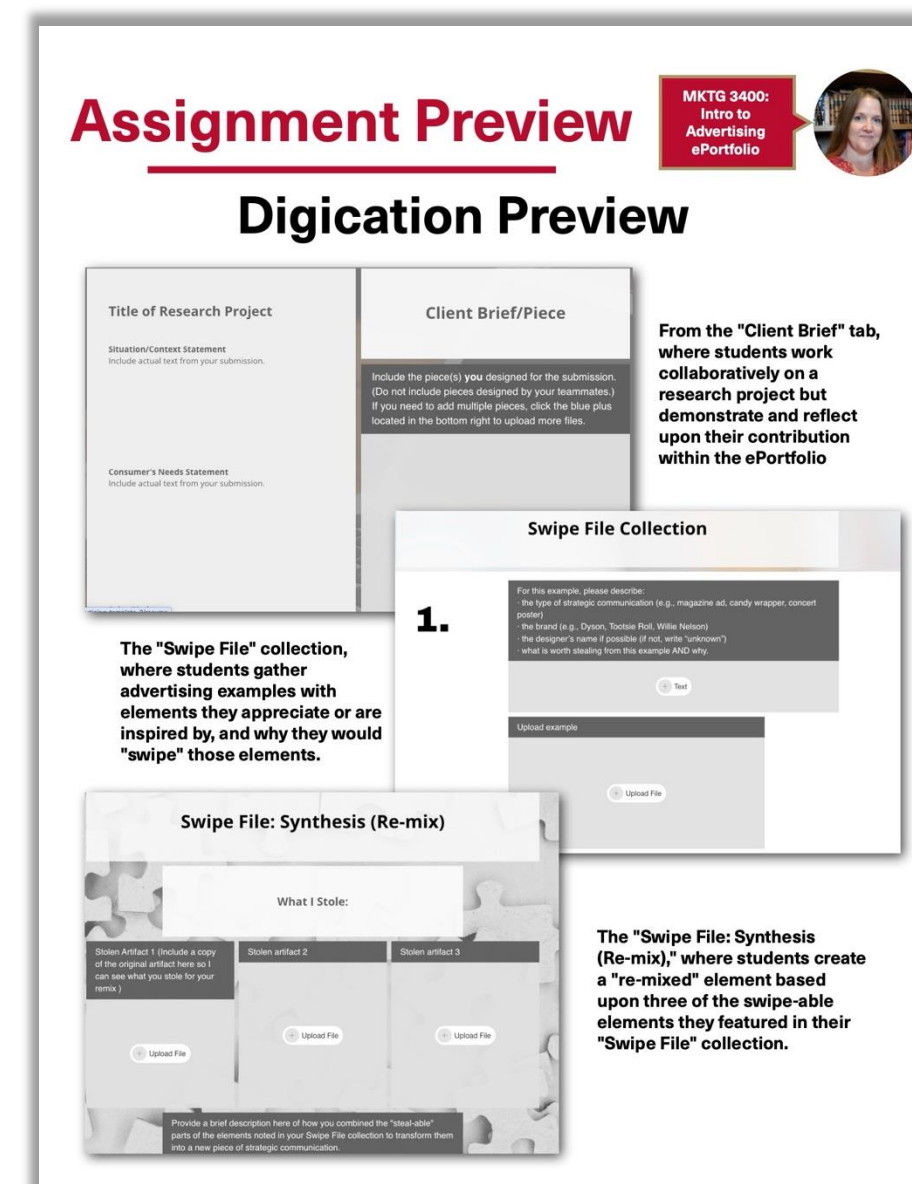
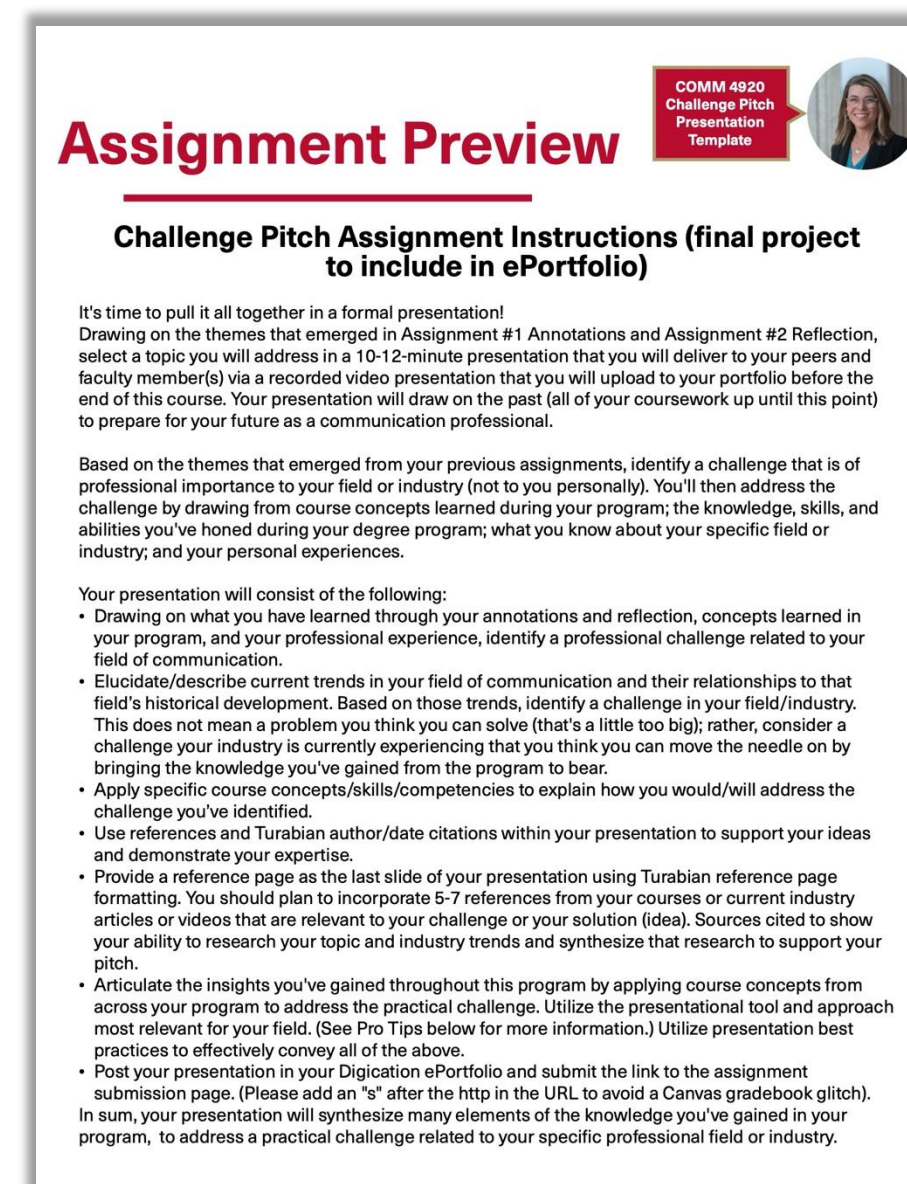
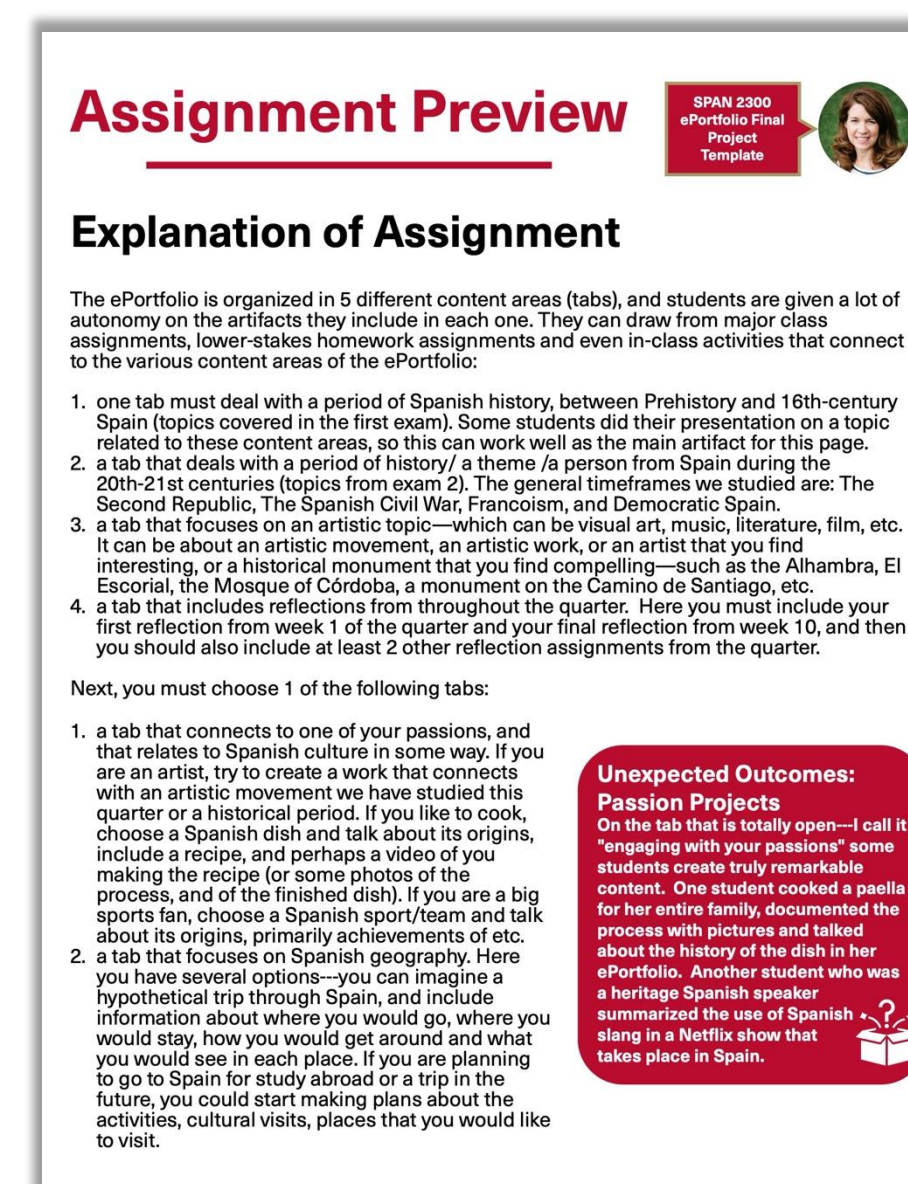
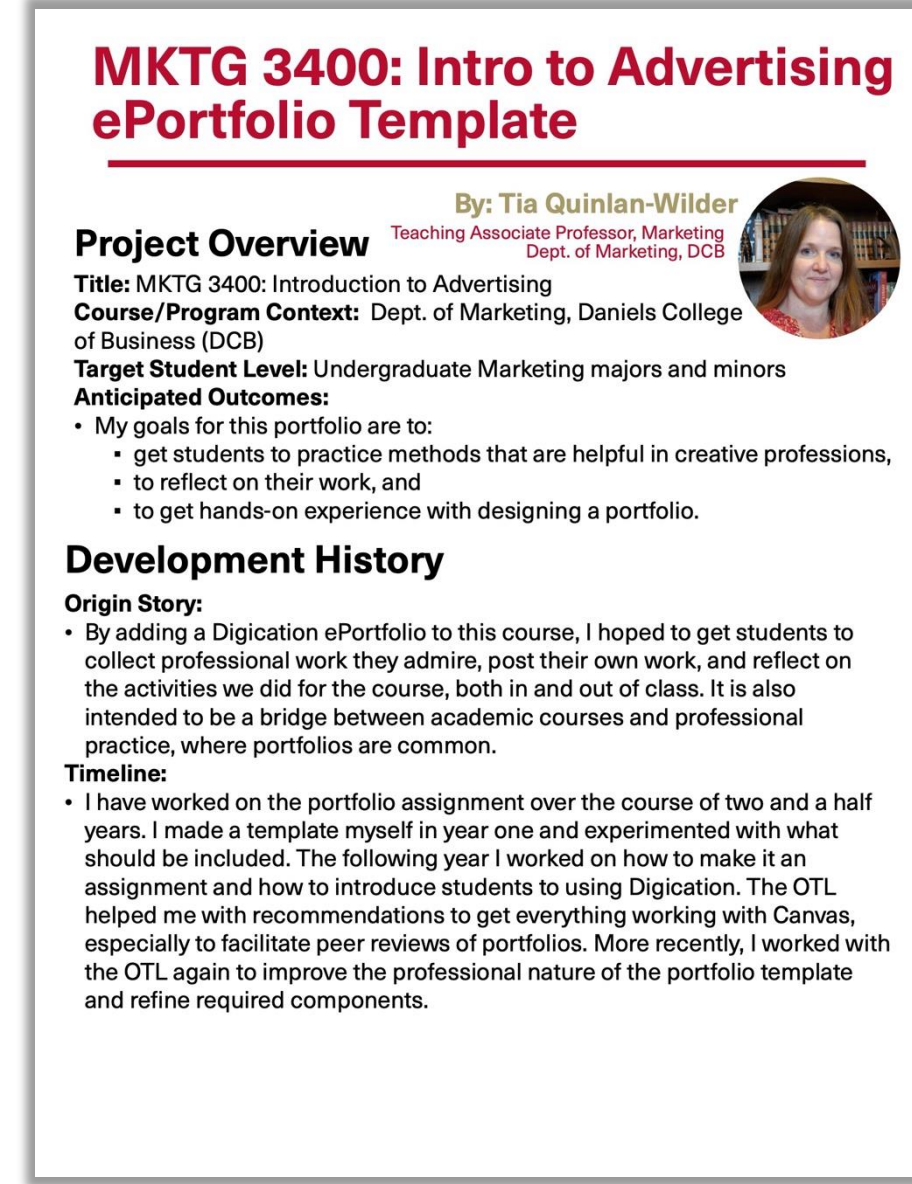
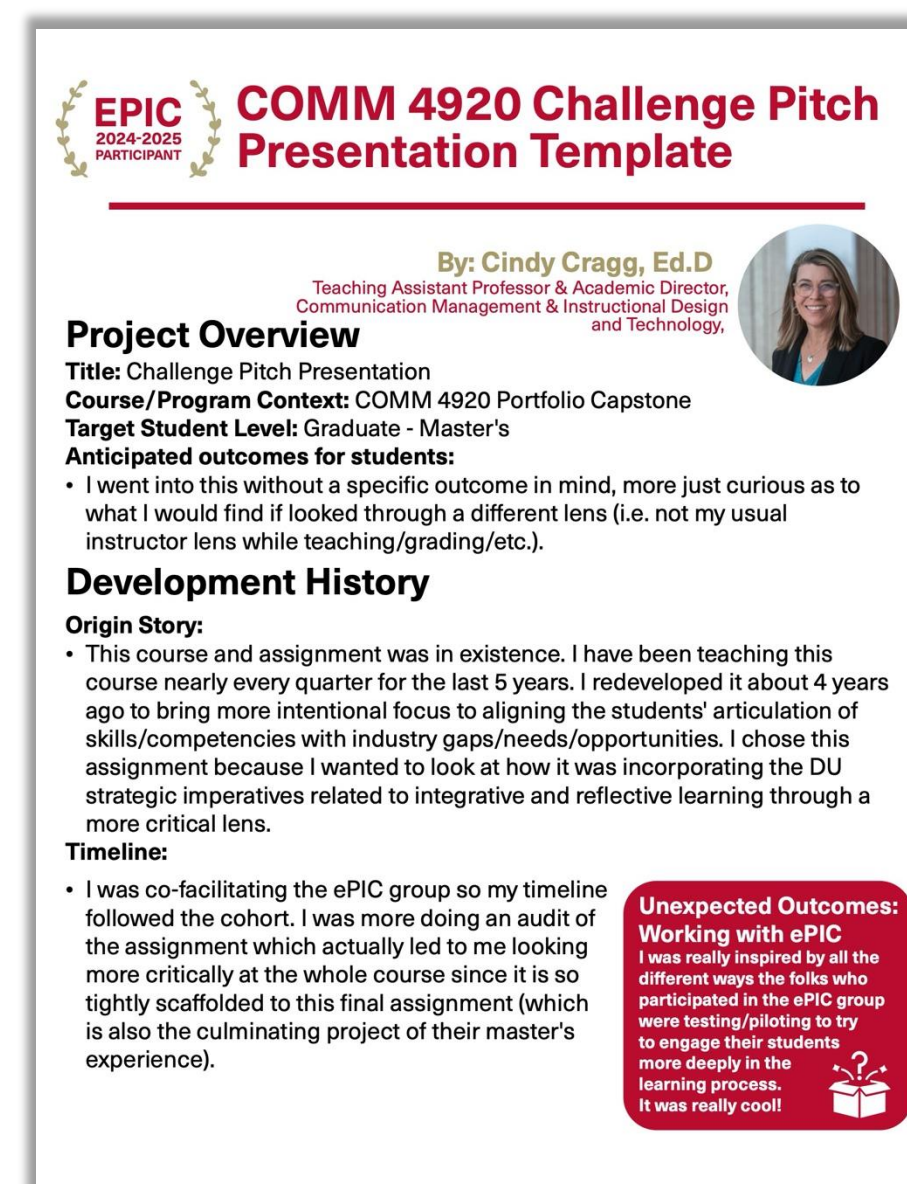
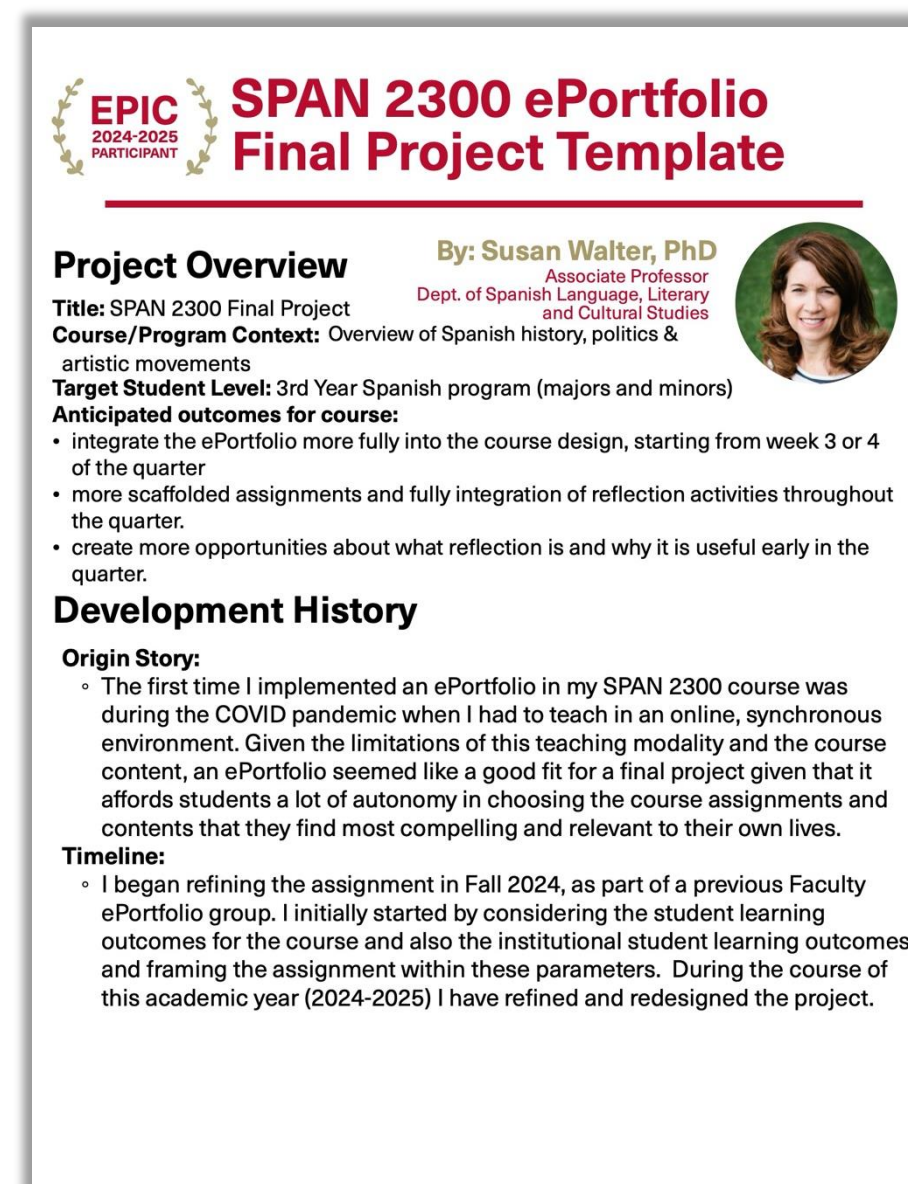
- The main deliverable for this project was "The ePIC Guidebook," a comprehensive resource featuring the work of DU faculty and staff around integrative learning and reflection. The guidebook features projects from seven faculty and staff contributors across various departments, including Career Success, Spanish, First Year Seminar (FSEM), Communications, Public Policy, and Marketing.
- Each submission highlights a unique project centered on integrative learning, with most utilizing the Digication ePortfolio platform. Entries are tailored to the contributor's context, but all include an assignment overview, examples of student work, reflections from both facilitators and students, and tips for implementation. The guidebook also provides foundational explanations of integrative learning and reflection, along with resources to help newcomers get started. Through this deliverable, our goal was to create a usable resource to help lower the barrier to entry and increase faculty and staff engagement with these concepts.

Check out some excerpts from the Guidebook below!

Resource Excerpts



Project Excerpts



Project Approach and Process

- This project involved the ePIC group, a cohort of nine DU faculty and staff who met for ten sessions during the 2024–2025 academic year (Fall 2024 to Spring 2025). The group was facilitated by the Faculty Fellow for ePortfolios, Cindy Cragg, EdD and the Faculty Developer for Integrative and Experiential Learning, Kellie Ferguson.
- The discussions centered on integrative learning and reflection, High-Impact Practices (AAC&U), assessment, and signature work. Although participants were encouraged to use Digication for their individual integrative learning projects, it was not a mandatory requirement. Continuous qualitative data and member reflections were collected throughout the project via an internal group ePortfolio page (on Digication), supplemented by a follow-up survey. The project's final deliverable was the ePIC Guidebook (above), which was authored in Adobe and compiled by Kellie Ferguson. The Guidebook's content integrated contributions from some ePIC group members and input from other invited DU faculty and staff who had experience with integrative learning, ePortfolios, and reflection.

Conclusions

The 4D experience champions integrative learning and reflection throughout the DU student journey, a core focus that aligns with the work of the AAC&U. The OTL supports these initiatives by providing teaching and pedagogical resources, aiming to establish reflective practice as an integral part of the student experience. However, through the work of the ePIC group and the creation of the ePIC Guidebook, there were some barriers that were brought to light. Both the successes and challenges of this work were further reinforced by comments gathered in a follow-up survey about these initiatives.

- For both students and faculty/staff, occasional technical hurdles arise, such as the learning curve associated with platforms like Digication. This can create a difficult duality around ePortfolio use: **“Students appreciate the chance to center themselves in their learning, while reflecting on the ways their different experiences intersect and combine to deepen growth/learning. The technology continues to be greatest barrier to student success with ePortfolios.”**
- Faculty sometimes face programmatic gaps, which may involve the absence of clearly defined learning outcomes or inconsistencies in the application of integrative learning and ePortfolios within a departmental program.
- For staff, a persistent challenge is securing student buy-in when engagement isn't mandatory and institutional changes upend some of the work. The key question is how to effectively communicate the developmental value of this reflective work to students: **“It unfortunately wasn't successful in gathering a lot of data and we had a big staff transition/change during that time, so I'm not sure if it will move forward...”**

Despite these implementation hurdles, collaborative efforts like the ePIC group are useful for continued faculty and staff development, particularly around facilitating the gathering and sharing of knowledge. Even initiatives that fall short of their initial goals offered important lessons, as one staff member noted after an unsuccessful pilot: **“I learned a lot about the experience and now do more reflection on learning outcomes when building programs and events.”**

Ultimately, these shared experiences actively widen professional perspectives, with another participant expressing that their experience in the ePIC group **“helped widen my sense of how I can use ePortfolios to support learning both in my class and at the programmatic level.”**

And, in terms of utilizing ePortfolios, the DU Community continues expand its use of Digication, although there is still room for growth. The following statistics give some evidence of increasing Digication use.

For example, in the past year (9/1/2024-9/1/202) there were:

253 new faculty portfolios created

3536 new student portfolios created

In terms of template creation and sharing, (which can indicate Digication use as a course assignment), since switching to Digication in April 2022, there have been:

82 templates created, of which

29 are currently being shared with specific courses in Canvas

Future Directions

To keep the momentum going and tackle some of the identified challenges, future efforts should concentrate on the following areas:

- Tracking the real impact of ePortfolio projects, integrative learning, and reflection *within* specific classes is needed. Gathering clear evidence will be helpful for continuing to demonstrate the value of this work to the whole community.
- New approaches to continue gathering and showcasing successful work across campus are necessary, mirroring the collaborative approach taken with “The ePIC Guidebook,” and finding ways to actively promote the guidebook to encourage use.
- Ongoing support and resources should be continued to be offered by the OTL and 4D to faculty and staff interested in this work. The goal is to lower the barriers instructors face when trying to help students engage in—and recognize the value of—integrative learning and reflection.
- Continued support, including for technologies like Digication, that lend themselves to this type of work. Continuing to train faculty so they can confidently teach students how to use the platform. The aim is to ensure the technology functions as a helpful tool, not a headache.

References

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resources