

## Teaching Tip

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### The Teaching Portfolio

Many faculty and future faculty are familiar with the concept of the tenure and promotion portfolio for assessing the scholarship of teaching. In the best-case scenario, such teaching portfolios are formative. Faculty, through their articulation of teaching and student learning, learn and grow as a result of developing the portfolio, and reviewers of the portfolios give helpful feedback to faculty about how to grow and improve in their teaching. Too often, however, teaching portfolios are thought of in a more summative way by both outside readers who evaluate our scholarship and ourselves. For example, we assess what we have done in quantitative ways without assessing the deeper issues of learning. It is not difficult to see the connection here in how we assess our students--in ways that are summative and that limit what students and teachers can learn from one another. So the real issues are should we create and how do we create a teaching portfolio that truly transforms the way we teach. Where do we start?

Many researchers suggest that we start by focusing on one course rather than our overall teaching. This, in general, is a good place to start any kind of reflective practice about our teaching. I think this kind of course focus is doable and will help guide us to develop more comprehensive portfolios in the future. Milt Cox (2004) argues that a mini teaching portfolio has the potential for enhancing our learning about how we teach and how our students learn. He has developed a worksheet that we can use to develop this mini portfolio that is very practical (**See Attachment Worksheet**). He starts by asking us to list our learning objectives, then we progress to recognizing teaching strategies, evidence of student learning, etc. When the worksheet is completed we should have a much better understanding our teaching effectiveness, especially in regards to student learning.

William Cerbin (1994), in his paper *The Course Portfolio as a Tool for Continuous Improvement of Teaching and Learning*, argues that we should develop teaching course portfolios that focus more on the interplay between teaching and student learning. He says, "Because teaching and learning are intricately related, they ought to be examined together rather than each in isolation. This leads us to a learning-centered assessment..." Cerbin makes a cogent argument that the portfolio should not be done as a separate activity—as an add on to what we already do as teachers. Instead, he argues that developing a portfolio should become part of our practice of assessing our teaching, our courses and our student's learning. T

Both Cox and Cerbin suggest that the process of developing a teaching portfolio helps us become better teachers by making explicit how our students are learning, how we recognize that learning, and how we need to continually change in an effort to become a better teacher. Portfolios are not the only way to reflect on our teaching...but they certainly have the potential to transform us as teachers in meaningful ways.

*Teaching Tips is brought to you by the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology at BGSU. Contact Dan Madigan [dmadiga@bgnet.bgsu.edu](mailto:dmadiga@bgnet.bgsu.edu) if you have an idea for a tip or suggestions for this service.*