An ePortfolio is a personal academic website that provides a holistic record of students’ learning and best work. In Fall 2014, Appalachian State launched a two-year pilot project, called APortfolio, to study the use of electronic portfolios by faculty, students and programs. APortfolio provides participating students a place to collect, reflect, and connect their learning across courses and co-curricular activities.

http://aportfolio.appstate.edu

Characteristics of ePortfolios

- Students use ePortfolios to collect and reflect on samples of work that document their attainment of core proficiencies and learning outcomes over their entire academic careers. This reflection advances success and deeper learning (Eynon, Gambino, & Torok, 2014).

- ePortfolios provide visible, contextually-rich opportunities for assessing students’ academic attainment and growth in a way that complements other forms of evaluation.

- Students can maintain a positive digital presence by selecting and showcasing their best work as their portfolios transition from academic tools for reflection and assessment to online professional portfolios.

Rationale for Use of ePortfolios

- Over 57% of colleges and universities are currently using ePortfolios as pedagogical tools, as recruitment tools, and/or as a way for students to showcase their work for potential employers or grad schools (AAC&U Peer Review, Winter 2014).

- More than 80% of employers say that ePortfolios would be useful to them in determining whether job applicants have the knowledge and skills to succeed in their organization (AAC&U, It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success, 2014).

- On campuses with sustained commitment to ePortfolios, student usage of ePortfolios has been linked to higher pass rates, retention, and grade attainment. ePortfolios can provide a more comprehensive view of student learning, which contributes to program and institutional improvement efforts (Catalyst for Learning, 2014).

- The APortfolio effort aligns with a UNC system-wide project on use of ePortfolios for assessment, allowing Appalachian State to be in the forefront of investigation and adoption of ePortfolios.
Summary of the 2014-2016 APortfolio Pilot

Samples of Student Aportfolios – http://appstate.digication.com

• The APortfolio project has adopted the Digication platform, which will be piloted for a diverse selection of programs and General Education courses beginning with 800 students in Fall 2014, and an additional 400 students in Spring 2015. Throughout the two-year pilot, a total of 3600 students will use Digication to create ePortfolios.

• Programs well situated to assess and support their students’ engagement with ePortfolios will be encouraged to participate in the pilot as it expands in Spring and Fall, 2015 and Spring 2016.

• Orientation and First-Year Seminar courses will introduce students to the purpose and concept of keeping an ePortfolio. Other campus units such as the Career Development Center, the Writing Center, Belk Library, the IT Help Desk, and other areas of Student Development will be engaged in support, review, and assessment roles. Writing Across the Curriculum staff members will provide additional support for faculty and students.

• The APortfolio Advisory Committee will assess the student, faculty, and support staff ePortfolio experience each semester for three semesters to identify challenges and best practices, and in order to make recommendations regarding a campus-wide rollout beyond Spring 2016.

Assessment of the APortfolio Pilot Project

Assessment of the APortfolio pilot project will focus on the benefits/outcomes of using ePortfolios as a student and program evaluation tool, and on the procedural considerations for using ePortfolios and the Digication platform. Assessment questions include:

1. What are the perceived benefits to students, faculty, and programs from implementing ePortfolios? What are the perceived drawbacks?
2. What technical problems, if any, emerge as students, faculty, and staff members use the ePortfolio platform? How are these problems resolved? What type and amount of training do the most proficient users require?
3. What are the characteristics of the “best-case” users of the ePortfolio platform for purposes of documenting and assessing student work?
4. Does the Digication ePortfolio system provide the quality of reports and customization necessary to reliably perform various levels of programmatic assessment?
5. Does the Digication ePortfolio system offer the best product and support for the price?

If Digication is deemed to be a reliable vendor and if evaluation of the APortfolio pilot provides convincing and positive results, the University will strive to make ePortfolios available to all incoming freshmen in Fall 2016.
Tentative Time Line

Fall 2014

August
• Launch APortfolios for 850 +- Students in 48 sections (22 faculty)

September
• Announce Aportfolio pilot and establish campus wide communication processes with Web, Campus email, Faculty Senate, Deans Council, Council of Chairs
• Initiate 2016 Coordination Timelines: Orientation and Advising

October
• Recommend 3-4 well situated programs (assessment readiness and willing faculty) equaling approximately 400 additional licenses for Spring 2015
• Prepare assessment surveys

November
• Train faculty for spring 2015 pilot (WAC/FYS/All Programs)
• Develop an Aportfolio workshop for students and locate funding for an incentive to encourage undergraduate students to build out their Aportfolio

Spring 2015

January
• Continue the 800 +- licenses for students in the pilot from fall 2014 and launch the 400+-additional selected programs ---

• Assess the APortfolio Pilot with surveys to faculty, students and implementation staff from fall participation

• Assess student learning outcomes with pilot programs

• Review the Digication assessment reporting function

• Contact undergraduate student participants who have re-enrolled and offer Aportfolio workshop along with incentives that will assist them in self directed development of the Aportfolio

February
• Report on assessment of fall 2015 pilot to determine whether we purchase additional licenses in June 2015.
DECISION POINT --- if the pilot continues, request another 3600 licenses for the June 30th 2015 Digication contract - 1200 rolling over and an additional 2400 for 2015-2016 and request additional resources to support the pilot. Research / conference funds/faculty development/assessment reviewers/Aportfolio support staff for spring, summer and fall.

March
- Develop training materials for UCO and ENG faculty development

April
- Select programs for fall 2015 participation

May
- Assess Spring pilot - Students, Faculty, and Implementation Staff

Summer 2015
- Initiate coordination time lines with Recruitment and Admissions (for fall 2016)
- Train faculty in ENG 1000, UCO 1200 (600 licenses) & train faculty in 3-5 well situated programs (600 licenses)
- Negotiate contract for additional Digication licenses.

Fall 2015

September
- Continue the original 1200 licensees and add 1200 more
- Prepare materials to communicate 2016 fall launch to UCO 1200 & ENG 1000

October
- Select new programs for Spring 2016 and plan the distributions of 1200 more licenses (600) UCO, ENG and (600) well situated programs

November
- Train faculty for spring 2016 pilot