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Reimagining Boundaries: How ePortfolios Enhance Learning for Adult Students

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This article examines the importance of co-curricular activities for student success, reviews literature about narrative identity as it relates to adult students, and describes an ePortfolio project that captures contributions that nontraditional students bring to the classroom. The implications reinforce curriculum design practices and explore possibilities for enhancing the culture of nontraditional programs through improved assessment and a stronger student community.

Many students experience school as their world, and the institutions around them reinforce that paradigm through activities that can encompass many elements of their identity. This often begins in elementary school and, for traditionally-aged students, continues through college through busy class schedules, sports, clubs, and other activities. While they are working toward an undergraduate degree, co-curricular activities enhance student academic success by increasing the richness of that world (Astin, 1993), and for many, by defining the college experience. However, a growing percentage of undergraduates enrolled in universities throughout the United States are not of traditional age (Hess, 2011). For them, academics are important, but school is not the totality of their world in the way that it often is for traditional students, because they are not preparing for an adult world of responsibilities but participating in it. While some claim that colleges are "failing their biggest group of students" (Selim, 2014, p. 1) or ignoring this new majority (Lobertini, 2014), this dynamic and the increasing number of people who are encompassed by it creates an opportunity for universities to adapt both classroom and co-curricular experiences to integrate various types of experiences so that the totality of students' learning can be better understood, assessed, and celebrated.

ePortfolios can facilitate the achievement of this goal. For the nontraditional undergraduate, the world of the learner is not defined by the boundaries of the school's influence; rather, the world itself is recognized as the student's primary learning environment because nontraditional students have lives that are already rich in diverse ways that can intentionally resonate with academic goals. A difference that distinguishes nontraditional from traditionally-aged undergraduate students is that academic goals are commonly not their only priority, for many have full-time jobs, responsibilities to spouses and children, community commitments, military obligations, or a combination of these duties (Peck & Varney, 2009). The process of creating an ePortfolio embraces the concept that such students will bring their whole selves to their university experience, engage in holistic reflection about learning as defined by both classroom and external influences, and share those reflections in ways that build community, thus reinforcing and revealing applied learning outcomes. With this approach, lifelong learning can be nourished, reinforced, and celebrated.

The ePortfolio project that is presented below demonstrates the ways in which creating and sharing ePortfolios in a course setting also enables adult students to build a narrative identity that "refers to an individual's internalized, evolving, and integrative story of the self" (McAdams, 2008, p. 1). Doing so engages the important process of understanding, creating, and articulating individual stories, bridging academic, career, community, and personal journeys into a cohesive whole that gives meaning and integration to the events of their lives. The project also reveals how ePortfolios allow students to share those reflections in ways that build community and thus reinforce applied learning outcomes.

Defining Non-Traditional Students

Often called evening, accelerated, intensive, adult, or non-traditional students, the over-24-year-old student now represents a majority among college students in the United States (Hess, 2011). Of the 17.6 million undergraduates enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States, just 15% of them fit the image of a traditional college student who attends a 4-year college and lives on campus (Hess, 2011). Hess (2011) identified this "significant shift . . . [as a] massive growth in the adult student population in higher education" (p. 1) because "38% of those enrolled in higher education are over the age of 25 and one-fourth are over the age of 30." Hess (2011) added that "the share of all students who are over age 25 is projected to increase another 23%" (p. 1) in the next 5 years, projecting a future in which meeting the needs of adult students will have increasing importance.

This population defies definition in ways beyond age, for they represent diversity from every perspective. According to university officials at the campus that

introduced the portfolio project that is the subject of this article (J. Murray, personal communication, June 11, 2014), the approximately 300 students who compose the undergraduate adult population are as young as 25, the oldest graduate to date is 81, and the average age is about 40. They are an ethnically and racially diverse group in which women slightly outnumber men. They are first-generation students, entrepreneurs, mid-career adults hoping to bolster promotional choices, former teen mothers, retirees finishing a long-held goal, working adults aiming for a career change, and community college attendees who were late in navigating the transfer process. Very often, they are a combination of many of the above, and that dynamic brings them to the classroom eager, motivated, and informed by a wealth of experiences that strengthen the learning environment.

"Nontraditional" is an increasingly inept way to describe this population, given their status as a new majority on campus. It is, however, the term most commonly understood for this population and will accordingly be used throughout this text.

Importance of the Co-Curricular

Supporting all students requires a multi-faceted approach to ensure that the learning environment is challenging, rich in diverse experiences, capable of resonating with different types of learners, and relevant to learning goals (Elias & Drea, 2012). For traditional students, this is accomplished through a combination of curriculum and campus-sponsored co-curricular activities. Classroom learning is enhanced by activities that may include music, art, sports, student government, civic involvement, service learning, and hobbies. Often, these include leadership opportunities and expose students to practical learning applications so that they are prepared for an adult world of family, career, and community responsibilities (Tenhouse, 2014).

The value of activities that go beyond the classroom was revealed in a 2011 study at one university, which indicated that, even factoring in various controls, students engaged in co-curricular activities earned higher grade point averages than students overall (Zehner, 2011), which affirms that academic success is linked to relevant activity outside of the classroom. An example of this is a study by Eyler and Giles (1999) defining service learning as one type of co-curricular activity, which revealed that (a) students remember learning better through experience and through applying the material that they learn to actual situations, and (b) such learning provides a deeper understanding of the subject matter, including the complexity of social issues. This supports research that affirms that co-curricular involvement has a positive effect on student learning and development (e.g., Astin, 1993).

Elias and Drea (2013) referenced the "decades of research [that] have highlighted the intrinsic value in co-curricular engagement" (p. 2) and pointed out that "rather than being an means to an end, education can be the journey that will help define that end . . . [because] the reality of today's economy is that many people will have multiple careers" (p. 2), which suggests that the focus on undergraduate education should be on the development of the self and not simply job preparation. Astin (1999) summed up his own conclusions about the value of the co-curricular, defining student involvement as

> the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. According to the theory, the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development. (pp. 528-529)

As a result of research supporting its value, many universities invest much time and resources in co-curricular activities, acknowledging that in order to assess learning adequately, "every aspect of student life must be examined, and a new configuration of learning processes and outcomes created" (Keeling, 2004, p. 10). However, campus co-curricular activities are less commonly available to or accessed by nontraditional students, according to Peck and Varney (2009), who noted that university-sponsored co-curricular activities tend to be oriented toward younger students in scope and schedule. Elias and Drea (2013) affirmed the difficulty of including nontraditional students in activities typically understood as co-curricular, noting that "a bulk of the co-curricular programming [is] offered at times when nonresident students have more challenges becoming involved, which leaves them often unable to participate in these opportunities" (p. 2).

However, the key challenge goes beyond scheduling. Often, nontraditional undergraduates hesitate to take on even the obligations associated with academic commitments because they know that completing class time and homework obligations constitutes a challenge in lives already busy with work, family, and community responsibilities (Viana, 2011, p. 1). Adding campus co-curricular activities would add an untenable burden and an unnecessary one, given the motivation that nontraditional students have and the circumstances in which they engage with their learning experiences.

Thus, strong research supports the conclusion that learning opportunities occur outside of the classroom and that a variety of these are essential for a rich learning experience. However, nontraditional students find themselves mostly unable to participate in institutional opportunities for co-curricular learning. Given this construct, it becomes increasingly important to reimagine the boundaries of what is defined as co-curricular and therefore captured, assessed, and celebrated as part of the undergraduate college experience. As presented below, ePortfolios have the capacity to bridge the gulf between the value of a traditional college experience and the totality of the learning experienced by nontraditional students; doing so requires a capacity for reflection about narrative identity and storytelling, which are essential for creating the shared community of experience that is essential to reinforcing learning outcomes.

Narrative Identity and Storytelling

This look at some of the literature related to storytelling and narrative identity reinforces the philosophical foundation of the narrative that students create about their academic and co-curricular activities through their ePortfolios. The process of reflection, of creating narrative identity, and of sharing the stories of who they are in a social context contains immense value in terms of capturing, celebrating, assessing, and enhancing learning. Nontraditional students often draw from a rich repertoire of experiences that provide meaning to their stories and relevance to their learning outcomes. Storytelling through the construction of an ePortfolio can aid reflection by looking holistically at the various elements that compose learning, helping both to enhance meaning and to better imagine future possibilities.

There is a depth of literature related to storytelling, both contemporary and ancient. Turner (1996) suggested that stories are "our chief way of looking into the future, of predicting, or planning, and of explaining" (p. 5). This is both explained and emphasized through philosophic tradition, for, as Anselm Ramelow explained (personal communication, November 23, 2006), Aristotle and Aquinas together looked at language as a tripartite structure (word, mind, and object), showing that "experiences cannot be separated from language." This is further affirmed through a biological consideration of human understanding, for "every reflection . . . invariably takes place in language, which is our distinctive way of being and being humanly active" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 26).

Stories are designed to communicate and entertain, to provide meaning and incite the imagination about future possibilities, and to "provide symbolic solutions to contradictions" (Kearney, 2002, p. 6):

> From the word go, stories were invented to fill the gaping hope within us, to assuage our fear and dread, to try to give answers to the great unanswerable questions of existence . . . Great tales and legends gave not only relief from everyday darkness but also pleasure and enchantment: the power to bring a hush to a room, a catch to the breath, a leap to the curious heart, with the simple words, "Once upon a time." (Kearney, 2002, pp. 6-7)

Even when they begin them less dramatically, nontraditional students often have complex, intriguing, and poignant stories of career and personal development that explain the choices that led them away from what is considered a traditional college and career track. Their family, community, and career choices create a rich co-curricular experience that helps to inform these stories while bringing meaning to the students' experiences. Lewin and Birute (2001) echoed Kearney (2002) in a way that particularly resonates with the use of ePortfolios for nontraditional students, stating that "narratives can contain the complexity of people's experience, can provide a vehicle for readers to connect with their passion, to their struggles" (p. 13).

The concept of narrative identity is further relevant to andragogy in practice. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012) defined "core adult learning principles" (p. 4) as (a) the learners' need to know the why, what, and how; (b) the self-concept of the learner as autonomous and self-directing; (c) the prior experience of the learning, which provides a resource and mental models; d) the learner's readiness to learn, which is both life-related and developmental; e) the learner's orientation to learning as problem-centered and contextual; and f) the learner's motivation to learn as something having intrinsic value or providing a personal payoff.

This connection is particularly important in the creation of an ePortfolio, which aims to create a text that represents a student's identity in way that allows others to connect with their passion and struggles. So often when students present their portfolios, the stories that they tell of the many co-curricular activities that have contributed to their learning offer cohesion to the fragmented reflections offered anecdotally in class discussions. Their stories include reflection about the relevance of their learning to their experiences, which is particularly important in the context of Knowles et al.'s (2012) definition of learning as "a process by which behavior is changed, shaped, or controlled, which includes personal involvement, self-initiation, pervasiveness, evaluation by the learner, and an

essential essence of meaning" (pp. 13-14). Through reflection about learning that occurs both in class and in external environments, the community of instructors and fellow students come to new understandings about the shared world that they inhabit, both within the classroom and in broader community networks. McAdams (2008) said that

> the stories we construct to make sense of our lives are fundamentally about our struggle to reconcile who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and bodies with who we were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, the workplace, ethnicity, gender, social class, and culture writ large. The self comes to terms with society through narrative identity. (p. 1)

In the case of adult learners and ePortfolios, society is revealed in multiple dimensions that include faculty relationships, the university's mission, organizational goals, and community opportunities.

Effective storytellers understand these relationships, "the connections between diverse and seemingly separate disciplines. They must knowhow to link apparently unconnected elements to create something new. And they must become adept at analogy—at seeing one thing in terms of another" (Pink, 2005, p. 130). Students creating ePortfolios reflect on these relationships, creating the story of their identity in the process of creating and sharing the events and evidence that comprise their individual stories. Through this process of connecting relationships, "culture and personality interact in their most intricate and profound ways in the fashioning of narrative identity" (McAdams, 2008, p. 249). Clifford Geertz (1995) spoke earlier in a similar vein, noting that in stories "what we can construct . . . are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the act" (p. 2), and in this way, we use the storytelling process to inform meaning. "Narratives draw together disparate and somehow discordant elements to the concordant unity of a plot" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 142), which allows meaning to evolve and be understood, for "the process of storytelling is one of making connections and therefore of infusing meaning" (Turner 1996, p. 136). The andragogical model of adult learning is based on the following precepts from Knowles et al. (2012) and relate to this process of storytelling within the ePortfolios created by nontraditional students:

> Adults need to know why they need to learn something; adults maintain the concept of responsibility for their own decisions, their own lives; adults enter the educational activity with a greater volume and more varied experiences than do children; adults have a readiness to learn those things that they need to know in order to cope effectively with real-life situations; adults are life-centered in their orientation to learning; and adults are more responsible to internal motivators than external motivators. (p. 70)

Thus, for adult students who invariably have a wealth of interesting experiences that help define them as nontraditional, reflecting, creating, and sharing the meaning that they derive from these experiences is often poignant for both the student presenting and for the others present.

Narrative also calls doe the student who presents the ePortfolio to resonate with authenticity within the story, for "by means of the plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. ix). Knowles (2012) spoke of designing "a path of learning experiences" (p. 129), and ePortfolios allow students to use the narrative process to reflect on this pattern. While Knowles (2012) discussed the difficulty of evaluation, the ePortfolio creates a canvas for the nontraditional student to contribute his or her own assessment of this necessary evaluation. This evaluation provides "a new congruence in the organization of events" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. ix) that contains relevance for sense-making. The events that inform the rich experiences that constitute the co-curricular world of the nontraditional student often occur in the midst of the chaos of everyday living, and it is only with time and reflection that relevance and meaning can be drawn.

A poignant example of this in the program in which this author works occurs with students who are former teen mothers. The stories told by others about their experiences are often negative, but through reflection about challenging experiences, these now older mothers draw strength from their resilience and capacity to overcome the expectations of others. In many ways, this is a counter-narrative, in which students express resistance to "dominant cultural narratives and give voice to suppressed discourses" (McAdams, 2008, p. 247) and in doing so, begin to reframe the story in a social context that influences others. This has special power not only for former teen mothers but also for other ethnic or racial minority groups, those who are economically disadvantaged, or other marginalized groups of people (McA,dams, 2008).

Stories are also referred to as frames of reference (Keeling, 2004) from which people "compose their own stories about who they are, what life is about, what is going to happen to them and how they should respond to the various challenges life presents" (p. 9). This process of self-authorship is a way to make meaning in

which students reflect on their lives and decide how to appropriate previous choices or behavior in the ongoing narrative of who they are (Keeling, 2004).

Narrative Imagination

Reflection on narrative identity can create a new congruence, which in turn ignites the imagination about new possible futures. The value of the ePortfolio creation thus goes beyond creating meaning out of past events to using that reflection to project future possibilities, which can be relevant in various ways to nontraditional students. Narrative imagination is essential to constructing a story of self in which time, authenticity, and meaning are engaged in discourse about both past and current learning and future possibilities of being. For example, teen moms who had been told that they were ruining their lives through their choices are able to recreate their identities in relation to others as they emerge as college graduates with a repertoire of impressive accomplishments.

This future orientation has deep value for all adult students creating ePortfolios. Knowles (2012) posited that there are four means by which adult experiences affect learning: (a) by creating a wider range of individual differences; (b) by providing a rich resource for learning; (c) by creating biases that can inhibit or shape new learning; and (d) by providing grounding for self-identity. This dynamic of future, past, and present integration of experiences within one story is consistent with the philosophy behind storytelling, which requires "(1) the *prefiguring* of our life-world as it seeks to be told; (2) the *configuring* of the text in the act of telling; and (3) the *refiguring* of our existence as we return from narrative text to action" (Kearney, 2002, p. 133; emphasis in original). This process helps to address Knowles et al.'s (2012) third point about the limitations of existing biases by requiring that students reflect on what can inhibit or shape new learning. Schön (1983) referred to this as a process of reflection-in-action and posited that it is "central to the 'art' by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p. 50). In the construction of an ePortfolio, the present is experienced within both the context of future expectations and the context of memories, combining to link memory and imagination to ethical action in the present and future and to the relevance of shared understandings. Ricoeur (1976) linked narrative identity with public meaning, explaining that

> My experience cannot directly become your experience . . . Yet, nevertheless, something passes from me to you . . . This something is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. Here is the miracle. The experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public. (p. 16)

The public meaning that students share when they present their ePortfolios informs classroom learning, making relevant both the individual students' co-curricular experiences and the meaning that is shared with other class participants. The University of Maryland's Center for Campus Life (n.d.) cited the "practices of reflection and reciprocity" (para. 9) that tie co-curricular activities to learning, which reinforces the relevance of social reflection about the stories that students tell, and Reed (2001) asserted that reflection has "a profound impact" (p. iii) on students' reflections, especially with regard to whether they perceive their own behavior as leadership. For those nontraditional students who have been long infected by a narrative that defines them in deficit-related terms because they did not finish a degree at a traditional age, this reflection and emergent identity are especially poignant.

By sharing stories with each other, students build community and ignite imagination about the future for themselves and for their classmates. Knowles et al. (2012) referred to this as "making things happen by releasing the energy of others" (p. 261). Storytelling requires "imagination, joyfulness, and social dexterity" (Pink, 2005, p. 58) because effective stories "almost always pack an emotional punch . . . a fact is 'the queen died and the king died.' A story is 'the queen died and the king died of a broken heart'" (p. 101). Indeed, when hearing about co-curricular community, family, and career experiences, students often share emotions that resonate with their classmates. In one class, a student's courage in revealing his identity as a gay man inspired another to share her story of poverty and violence; when she listed the first student alongside world leaders whom she revered as a role model for ethical living, the class gasped in in a shared moment of appreciation that those present will long remember. Schön (1983) stated that one of the most important functions of a leader is the education of others, and this example of his principle of reflection-in-action demonstrates the value of the community in sharing ePortfolios.

In summary, the process of creating a narrative identity has important ethical dimensions, for as Ricoeur (1992) said, "the narrative unity of a life is made up of the moments of its responsiveness or failure to respond to others" (pp. 165-168). This ethical dimension is especially relevant in tying the narrative identities revealed to future plans that are grounded in social justice, an element with key importance for the mission and vision of the university, as presented below. Success is enhanced when students are fully integrated into the university (Astin, 1999), which the ePortfolio enables. Furthermore, adults who have a

strong commitment to "promoting the well-being of future generations and improving the world in which they live . . . tend to see their own lives as narratives of redemption" (McAdams, 2008, p. 255). This has implications for reinforcing the use of ePortfolios to aid reflection about narrative identity, so that action grounded in social justice will flourish.

Reimagining Boundaries Through ePortfolio Use

In their seminal text about adult learners, Knowles et al. (2012) cited as a "fact of human nature" the idea that people "feel a commitment to a decision in proportion to the extent that they have participated in making it" (p. 264). It follows that nontraditional learners demonstrate academic motivation. The challenge lies in integrating the premise of co-curricular value in ways that capture the out-of-classroom learning of nontraditional learners. Doing so intentionally through ePortfolios can help to connect experience to learning by encouraging self-reflection and growth (Elias & Drea, 2013, p. 3). Within this perspective, the competing priorities of nontraditional learners can be viewed not as distractions but as opportunities for curriculum and academic goals to deeply resonate with immediate application and relevance.

An ePortfolio provides a platform for defining co-curricular activities broadly and inclusively. It does not incentivize involvement, but nontraditional students do not require incentives to choose civic, community, career, or other activity; they begin their academic careers already so engaged (Peck & Varney, 2009). Instead, by redefining the co-curricular, the ePortfolio can connect the rich world of the adult student to the curriculum of the student's program and the learning outcomes of the institution. Furthermore, it reinforces the importance of individual and social reflection about narrative identity, which bears enormous relevance for identifying, celebrating, assessing, and enhancing the various avenues of learning that contribute to the adult student's college experience. Finally, it creates a forum through which the institution can know its students better, capturing community and career-related accomplishments that otherwise might remain compartmentalized within the other elements of students' lives. In the construction and presentation of an ePortfolio, student accomplishments that otherwise might have gone unknown emerge with their revealed stories. This bears relevance both for purposes of thorough assessment of learning outcomes and for building and celebrating a culture that truly reflects the student population.

Defining an ePortfolio Project for Nontraditional Learners

The ePortfolio project in this narrative occurs within the Human Services program at Notre Dame de Namur University in the San Francisco Bay Area in California. The students are all over the age of 25, have been employed for at least three years in a professional position, and are working to complete their undergraduate degrees. They will each earn a Bachelor of Science degree from the School of Business and Management. These students complete an ePortfolio as part of their capstone class, and their assignment includes both required elements related to assessment of program and institutional learning outcomes and suggested elements that arise from a construction of their own unique narratives about the co-curricular activities that inform their learning experiences. These include community, family, and career accomplishments, some spanning many decades. The evidence and reflections gathered from this project come through the author's role as instructor to the capstone course and Program Director for the program in question.

The following provides examples of ways in which these students have demonstrated the value of external co-curricular activities to learning goals by juxtaposing accomplishments that have been profiled through the ePortfolio process to a list of the activities "most commonly found on college campuses" (Tenhouse, 2014, p. 2): student government, athletics, academic and professional organizations, volunteer and service-related activities, multicultural activities, and the arts. It represents a sample intended to demonstrate the relevance of learning experiences within the broader community, but does not represent an exhaustive analysis of the learning experiences that contribute to and enhance the learning of nontraditional students. Furthermore, while parallels are drawn between traditional co-curricular activities and those experienced outside of institutional design in order to ground the nontraditional students' activities in an accepted model, they are not meant to confer relative value on either experience, which in many ways are inherently incomparable.

Student Government

For traditional students, this takes the form of involvement in a number of on-campus channels to represent the voice of the student to the university's administration. For adult students, this often takes other forms. In one example, a student who is also an

organizer in a nearby community led a group of youth from a teen home on whose board she serves to a political action event in Washington, DC. Doing so, she demonstrated both civic involvement and leadership, developing an understanding of political processes, putting these to work in ways that reflect both her own values and the social justice mission of the university, and then teaching and leading representatives a new generation.

Athletics

Most universities offer athletic opportunities, though often participation is limited to full-time and therefore traditional students. However, adult students are often engaged in a variety of athletic activities outside of school. Furthermore, many adult students also organize athletic opportunities; examples in just this one program include a capstone project that raised money for a medical nonprofit through a walk-a-thon and several projects with measurable goals that incentivize athletic involvement for elementary school-aged children. One student, who worked through a local athletic organization to raise money for student scholarships, now serves as Board President of that organization. His ePortfolio helps to demonstrate how the positive attributes associated with involvement in athletics have relevant parallels for adult learners, for whom participation may look different, but remains extremely important in terms of reinforcing leadership qualities, teamwork, and commitment.

Academic and Professional Organizations

These exist in traditional undergraduate settings to introduce students to occupations and to aid in job searches. Adult students are often already engaged in a career and may be seeking education for the purpose of personal fulfillment or potential promotion. The ePortfolio process encourages them to reflect upon and present evidence of their career accomplishments, which are often many. This can help enhance their resumes, and the ePortfolio itself has been used to showcase students in ways that distinguish them from other applicants. Recent graduates include several who received promotion opportunities by offering future employers the opportunity to review their ePortfolios, thus showcasing accomplishments and other personal qualities through their narrative presentation of self in ways that would not be possible with a simple resume.

Volunteer and Service-Related Activities

The list of activities in this category for traditional students includes a variety of opportunities; often, adult students have rich volunteer experiences that are enhanced through their academic experiences. A student who had volunteered for many years with the local humane society used her capstone project to create a training program for their wildlife volunteers; one who had worked a helpline organized a support group for helpline volunteers; many who participated in their children's classrooms hosted efforts that showed leadership and measurable results for those elementary learning environments. Each of these examples, captured in ePortfolios, enhances and captures student achievements in ways that are not otherwise linked to the university and yet inform its classrooms immeasurably.

Art and Diversity

Multicultural activities, as defined for traditional college students, "focus on increasing awareness and understanding of various cultures and ethnic and racial backgrounds" (Tenhouse, 2014, p. 2), and art activities include "a plethora of extracurricular opportunities" (p. 2). ePortfolios that require students to reflect specifically on the value of art and diversity as related to their learning reveal profound involvement in such activities, as well as increased knowledge about those who come from cultures different from their own. In one impressive example, a student, already active in supporting Latina artists, envisioned a scholarship program to support these individuals. Others use the ePortfolio's required reflection about diversity-related learning outcomes to share reflections on the experience of visiting a place of worship outside of their own faith traditions. As with other experiences, the practice of reflection is nourished as an important habit, one that informs the creation of a narrative identity.

Concluding Implications

The students mentioned in this narrative chose their university and program for purposes of convenience and reputation and because they are drawn to the mission of helping others. By sharing their ePortfolios and drawing connections between class work and other relevant experiences, students gain a better understanding of themselves as learners and as contributors to the broader community.

Additionally, the university is able to gain from the ePortfolio process a more accurate sense of the influence that their students have within the external organizations that comprise the community. A key strength of the ePortfolio process is that it creates a forum to reveal and celebrate accomplishments that might otherwise be seen as separate from the institution. The newspaper headline celebrating the success of a traditionally aged student often leads with

the student's university affiliation; with an adult student, the affiliation is a smaller part of his or her identity and thus not as likely to be celebrated or perhaps even mentioned. This is a lost opportunity that the ePortfolio creation process can change, for through ePortfolios the institution is better able to capture these external co-curricular accomplishments. This creative effort creates a better understanding of who adult students are, which has relevance for accurately marketing programs to potential students, for representing the university in and to the community, and for creating a stronger culture to understand and support this diverse and accomplished student population.

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