

A Professional Portfolio:
DSES Student Version Description
September 2006 Revision

A recommended practice for architects, engineers, writers, artists, sculptors, photographers, designers, and others who use creativity and inventiveness to solve problems or create a design or artifact is maintaining a portfolio of their work. In this context, a portfolio is defined as a collection of papers or works that are examples of the work and accomplishments of a person. A portfolio is maintained by the person themselves. New material is added and older material is purged. The portfolio is used by the author to show others the work that they have done. It is often used in job recruitment and is used by practicing professionals to recruit new customers. A person who writes greeting cards would build a portfolio of material they have written for use in job hunting. In engineer licensing, the portfolio is used to demonstrate design experiences to qualify the person for Professional Engineering licensure. Airplane pilots maintain flight logbooks that list each flight, flight duration, number of landings, type of aircraft, and flight conditions.

Building and Maintaining the Portfolio

To promote the practice of building a professional portfolio in your professional career, every DSES student is required to maintain a student portfolio beginning in the sophomore year that highlights important undergraduate work completed while a student at Rensselaer. The portfolio starts as a file folder. As graded work is returned, review and decide whether the work should become part of the portfolio. The best items to include are ones that clearly exhibit your problem solving, design, and communication skills. A quiz from Dynamic Systems is not good material for a portfolio. A design report from IED is good material as is a paper from your Psychology course that required you to research a topic and prepare a position paper on it.

While the student portfolio is typically dominated by course driven assignments, material from the full college years should be included. Add to the portfolio file published articles and completed project assignments from summer employment and COOP that show your skill and capabilities in problem solving, design and communication. Full copies of the assignment should be included. For work experiences external to Rensselaer, obtain permission of the employer or remove employer identification before including project reports. If the report was the product of a team effort, precede the report with a description of your role and contribution to the project. The general guideline for this part of building the portfolio in real time is add it in if you think it shows something about your capabilities as a problem solver or designer. There will be time later to prune material before someone else actually sees it. Between the sophomore and senior year, the portfolio file should grow from just one folder to several. You are urged to place actual paper documents in the file and not rely solely on electronic storage media.

Organizing the Portfolio

Several times during your undergraduate experience at Rensselaer, you will find having a portfolio useful. Interviewing for a COOP position or for summer professional employment is one of those times. Before using the portfolio, it is important that it be organized. The first step in organization is deciding what of the material placed in the

file should be made available for someone else to see. You want the portfolio to show both breadth and depth of your work so don't just keep the newest material and discard the oldest. Retain those items that best exhibit your problem solving, design, and communication skills. Things to keep include final papers for a course work, a design report for IED, or a project in another course. Do not include exams or homework. Remember, you want to keep materials that give an impression of your professional capabilities to the reader who is often a job recruiter.

A general guideline for packaging the portfolio that you are showing to another is to place the material in a "holed binder" so material stays intact. Separate the material into three sections.

- The first section should include:
 - An updated one page statement of career objectives and plans following graduation.
 - An up-to-date resume.
 - A current transcript (or transcripts if a transfer student). An unofficial transcript is acceptable.
- The second section consists of a summary of unique accomplishments organized chronologically. In this section, include information and documentation on awards received, participation in undergraduate research programs, special training received, descriptions and documentation of extracurricular activities and COOP and/or summer work experiences that reflect on your experience in engineering.
- The third section of the portfolio is for the things you have collected during your college years to exhibit your design, problem solving, and communication skills. These include published articles and completed project assignments in course work, summer employment, and COOP that show your skill and capabilities in engineering. Full copies of the assignment should be included. This section should be organized chronologically from the freshman year through the senior year. For work experiences outside of Rensselaer, obtain permission of the employer or remove employer identification before including project reports. If the report was the product of a team effort, precede the report with a description of your role and contribution to the project.

Your portfolio should reflect your professionalism in both content and presentation. The portfolio is your property so keep track of it. If a recruiter wants to show it to someone else, go along with them if possible. If recruiter wants to take it, ask them to identify which items they want and copy those items for them. Losing the information the portfolio contains will set you back.

DSES Portfolio Review

In your senior year in DSES, you will be required to submit your portfolio to the department in the course Industrial and Management Engineering Design. The portfolio is part of the graded submissions of the class. The portfolio is due two to three weeks prior to semester end. This requirement cannot be waived and the grade in the course reflects portfolio style, content, and presentation.