

## THE EFFECTS OF EPORTFOLIOS ON AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING COURSES

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*Note: This document functions as an executive summary of a longer report, which is available from the co-Principal Investigators, Chris Gallagher ([c\\_gallagher@neu.edu](mailto:c_gallagher@neu.edu)) and Laurie Poklop ([l\\_poklop@neu.edu](mailto:l_poklop@neu.edu)).*

### Research Question

This study examines the effects of electronic portfolios on teachers' and students' learning about audience in a first-year writing (FYW) program that was undergoing a curricular shift in focus from traditional academic discourse to a broader, rhetoric-based approach in which students write for multiple purposes and audiences in various media. Through interviews, we examined how eportfolios influenced how teachers and students conceptualized audience. Through analysis of student-generated eportfolios, we examined how and to what extent audience awareness manifested in student writing.

### Existing Literature

Our literature review revealed that a surprisingly small amount of the vast and growing literature on eportfolios focuses explicitly on audience. Advice to students and teachers regarding audience tends to be general and commonsensical: essentially, to keep one's audience in mind. Often, audience takes a back seat to purpose in discussions of student, teacher, and institutional eportfolios. In this sense, it might be said that audience is a ubiquitous absent presence in the eportfolio literature. The literature on eportfolios in FYW tends to focus on reflection, revision, identity, and—increasingly—assessment. This relative lack of explicit attention to audience in eportfolios is curious in light of the finding, in the limited work that has been done in this area, that composing for identifiable audiences, including those outside of institutional contexts, has strong, positive impacts on eportfolio composers (Cambridge, 2008, 2010; Niguidula, 2006; Wall and Peltier, 1996).

### Theoretical Framework

Our conceptualization of "audience" is drawn principally from the work of Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford. Drawing on a series of their articles (Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Lunsford & Ede, 1996; Ede & Lunsford, 2009), we examine how teachers and students understand audiences as "addressed," "invoked," and "involved" (the last is our term; Ede and Lunsford prefer "interacting"). Ede and Lunsford's work is important for us not only because it provides a useful taxonomy, but also because it directs us to writers' audience *negotiations*, including the difficulties and conflicts they face in this process (Lunsford & Ede, 1996). The authors also remind us that audiences often shift and blend in new media environments, where collaboration between composers and audiences is often the norm (Ede & Lunsford, 2009).

The concept of "genre" also emerged as significant to our study. Here we draw on genre theory in the field of rhetoric and composition. This theory frames genre not as a set of formal conventions but rather as a type of social action that addresses recurring situations.

### Methodology

We employed a qualitative design to develop a case study approach. Our goal was to capture the complex and contextual nature of the practices we explored. We took the writing program to be our unit of analysis. By identifying themes in each of three data sources—teacher

interviews, student interviews, and student eportfolios—we have woven a narrative explanation of the case that will enable readers to identify transferable lessons.

The *context* for the research is a writing program at a mid-sized research university in the Northeast U.S. We focused on FYW and specifically on Introductory Writing courses in the university's General Studies Program (GSP), a one-year support program designed to help students who benefit from support as they transition to the university. We collected data in the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012.

The *participants* in the research included six writing program instructors and 18 students in FYW courses. The instructors, diverse in rank and longevity in the program, were part of a cohort of teachers who had begun experimenting with electronic portfolios in spring 2010. They were all teaching in the GSP program at the time of our data collection. The student participants were recruited from the classes of five of the six instructor participants. We visited class sessions and asked for volunteers.

We conducted, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed semi-structured *interviews* with instructors (45 minutes-1 hour) and students (15 minutes) in fall 2011. We independently analyzed transcriptions of the instructor interviews, one of us reducing the data by individual instructor and the other by responses to each question. We reached consensus on a set of themes, reported in **main findings**. We also conducted, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed a member-checking focus-group interview with instructors. We analyzed transcripts of the student interviews independently. We first reduced the data by organizing each student's responses into topics related to our primary questions, and then synthesized the responses according to topic. From these synthesized data, we identified the themes described in **main findings**.

We reviewed 43 student *eportfolios* voluntarily submitted to a program repository in fall 2011 and categorized them into three types: process portfolios, project portfolios and reflective/showcase portfolios. (The reflective and showcase were later split into two separate types. See **main findings**.) We then randomly selected 6 portfolios of each type to analyze for evidence of audience awareness using a reading protocol we had designed based on Lunsford and Ede's work (see **theoretical framework**). We analyzed 6 eportfolios together and the others independently, after which we compared our results. We analyzed the data by type of portfolio (process, project, reflective, showcase); location of evidence (home page, imagery-media, structure/navigation, etc.); kind of audience (addressed, invoked, involved); and audience role (self, teacher, peer, mass etc.) Based on our independent analyses, we reached consensus on four themes, described in **main findings**.

### Main Findings

**Finding 1: Though audience traditionally has played a limited role in the program's first-year writing courses, eportfolios have prompted significant shifts in the teaching of audience.**

All instructors reported that traditionally, audience had played a limited role in their teaching of first-year writing. Some of the instructors asked students to consider their classmates an audience for their writing, but then added that students may not always take to this understanding of audience. Perhaps because students bring to their college writing classes the expectation that they write for teachers in school, they often assume, even when instructed otherwise, that the teacher/grader is the primary or even sole audience for their writing. All of the teachers talked about their challenges in trying to teach audience to first-year writers. Some

mentioned that they discuss “the general reader” with students, but these instructors were quick to identify this as an “artificial” construction.

Instructors reported that the use of eportfolios brought about specific changes in their teaching of audience. They reported spending more time in class discussing audience choices and the need for students to contextualize their ideas for their chosen audiences. A few instructors have used eportfolios as an opportunity to retool their entire pedagogical approach, including the kinds of writing they ask students to do. These instructors are moving away from teaching “essays” with clearly separated “drafts” and “revisions” and toward “projects” on which students are continuously working, providing the instructors with progress reports as they design and redesign their eportfolios.

**Finding 2: Four distinct types of eportfolios have emerged in first-year writing classes: process, project, showcase, and reflective.**

Our analysis of eportfolios confirmed our initial observation that students were producing different types of eportfolio in response to different types of assignments. We identified four types of eportfolio, distinguishable by their purpose:

- *Process portfolios.* Process portfolios document the process of completing a single project in a writing course, the product of which is most commonly an alphabetic essay. Process portfolios include the final polished assignment as well as a selection or comprehensive collection of supporting works created in the process of developing the polished assignment and a final reflection on the project.
- *Showcase portfolios.* Showcase portfolios are similar to a traditional, end-of-semester portfolio. The purpose of these portfolios is to showcase the student’s work produced over the semester and, usually, to present an argument about the student’s achievement. These portfolios also include polished pieces of writing, selected artifacts demonstrating the writing process, and reflective writing considering the student’s learning.
- *Reflective portfolios.* Reflective portfolios also considered the student’s work over the course of the semester, but had a distinctly self-evaluative purpose. The portfolios analyzed in this category were produced in response to a particular assignment that asked students to define the standards by which they wanted their work to be analyzed, and then evaluate their work according to those standards. Some of these portfolios used work samples or excerpts as evidence of claims, but not all.
- *Project portfolios.* Project portfolios were a new format in these writing courses that evolved out of the use of eportfolios. In a project portfolio, the eportfolio itself became the platform for the writing project. In other words, students were asked to develop a type of web site rather than a print essay in response to a writing project assignment. These portfolios also typically included elements of process work (drafts, work plans, peer reviews, reflections).

**Finding 3: Eportfolios are shifting instructors’ and students’ attention to audiences other than the instructor.**

The instructors reported increased audience awareness among students in the courses in which they used eportfolios, and in particular, more attention to the ways in which multimodal/multimedia texts are constructed to appeal to audiences both within and beyond the classroom. For these instructors, eportfolios are a tool for displacing the teachers as the sole or even necessarily prime audience for student writing. As one instructor put it, “There’s a very

intentional move to ‘what is somebody else going to do with this?’” This question is a focus of instruction and of peer review. A couple instructors who reported only mixed success with getting students to write in meaningful ways for audiences outside the classroom suggested that the very presence of eportfolios spurs audience awareness: “It almost forces those conversations about interacting with texts in ways that wouldn’t be there.” In particular, they believed multimodal composing facilitates questions about audience because students must think about how they are combining images and words in ways that audiences will understand and appreciate. In short, instructors report that eportfolios have at least shifted the conceptual focus of their first-year writing courses from writing to be analyzed by a teacher to writing to be read (potentially) by other audiences.

Most students, however, identified their teacher and perhaps classmates as the audience for their work, with some specifically identifying the teacher’s role as grader. When students did conceptualize an audience beyond the classroom, that audience was most often broadly defined: for example, as a “general audience” or “anyone interested in the topic.” When students did identify specific audiences, those audiences remained close to the classroom—e.g., students, young people, or teachers. Few students identified multiple audiences for their eportfolios. One student articulated the challenge of writing for both the teacher and an external audience: “It is harder, because you have to make it... professional enough for the teacher to get a good grade, but if it’s going to be a web site, it also has to be accessible enough to most people.” This quote foreshadows the “audience interference” phenomenon we discuss in Finding 8.

**Finding 4: While instructors perceived that students were having mixed success writing for audiences with eportfolios, both instructors and students identified a wealth of examples of choices students made with audience in mind.**

Despite their enthusiasm for eportfolios and the ways they sponsor the teaching of audience, instructors noted that only some of their students were successfully incorporating audience awareness into their writing processes and writing effectively for audiences other than the instructors/grader. They described students mostly uploading print texts; pasting and uploading the *same* texts; posting images with no apparent connection to the context of pages; linking various media objects but not discussing them; and generally not thinking about what a reader/viewer will need to interact in productive ways with the eportfolio.

Nonetheless, in our analysis of instructor interviews, we identified eight categories of evidence of audience awareness that teachers found in their students’ portfolios. When the students were asked about the choices they had made while constructing their portfolios in order to meet the needs of their audience, they were able to identify a large number of examples that aligned, in large part, with the instructors’ perceptions. The following table compares the categories and examples of evidence we identified in the two data sources.

<i>Instructors reported finding evidence of audience awareness in these locations:</i>	<i>Students reported making choices about the following with audience in mind:</i>
<b>Use of visuals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice of visuals</li> <li>• Consideration of composition</li> <li>• Intersection of visual and written</li> </ul>	<b>Media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visuals make work more accessible to</li> <li>• Included a music clip to listen to while viewing slideshow of images</li> </ul>
<b>Contextualizing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualizing work</li> </ul>	<b>Explanation and contextualizing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing to make work understandable if reader</li> </ul>

<b>Instructors reported finding evidence of audience awareness in these locations:</b>	<b>Students reported making choices about the following with audience in mind:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefaces/intros to bring reader into portfolio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hadn't read original text</li> <li>Added a lot of quotes so reader could relate to original text</li> </ul>
<b>Design/structure/arrangement</b>	<b>Structure / Design</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking about use of the page, design</li> <li>Expectation of links</li> <li>Discussion of design and arrangement in terms of being able to navigate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designing for non-linear reading</li> <li>Defining main idea on home page</li> <li>Including section to define terms</li> <li>Using quotations to introduce sections</li> </ul>
<b>Relations between and among artifacts</b>	<b>Theme / Metaphor</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds each project around a theme</li> <li>Used metaphor for structure (i.e., running a race, using remote control)</li> <li>Imagery of diverging/converging paths</li> </ul>
<b>Tone/voice</b>	<b>Tone / voice, language /vocabulary</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How intimate or formal the language is</li> <li>Using second person</li> <li>Use of multiple languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trying to be fun, entertaining</li> <li>Using "we", using accessible language</li> <li>Using quirky titles, plays on words</li> </ul>
<b>Direct address of reader/viewer:</b>	<b>Involving/connecting to audience</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Exhortation to participate"</li> <li>Asks questions without answering them</li> <li>Giving reader "a turn"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviewing people</li> <li>Using popular culture references</li> <li>Exhorting audience to formulate own ideas</li> </ul>

**Finding 5: Audiences beyond the classroom largely remained, as few students took the step of publishing their work beyond the classroom.**

The eportfolio system offered students several levels of permissions and privacy for their work. Most instructors required students to submit their work for evaluation through a feature that kept the work private to the teacher as well as a feature through which students requested informal feedback from specific classmates and from the teacher. The system also allowed students to publish their work on the Internet, with or without password protection. Many students were unaware of this feature or unsure whether or not they had published their work. A third of the students stated clearly that they would not share the work beyond the class, some citing a lack of confidence in their writing and others stating that they didn't think anyone beyond the class would find the work interesting. Some said they might publish a portfolio if their confidence increased or they improved the work. Those who said they had or would share their work beyond the class most commonly said they would do so with friend and/or family – not the identified audiences of the work.

**Finding 6: Students invoke audiences in their portfolios much more often than they address or involve audiences and two audience roles – the teacher and a mass audience – are invoked with much greater frequency than other roles.**

Across all types of portfolio, we identified an *invoked audience* far more often than either addressed or involved audience. Ede and Lunsford (1984) describe an invoked audience as a “construction of the writer” (p. 160). Students who invoke audiences “provide cues for the reader – cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text” (p. 160).



reader.

In many eportfolios, we observed students utilizing the conventions of academic writing to invoke the response of a teacher or an external audience approaching an academic text. In less successful attempts to invoke an academic audience, we saw students cut-and-paste the typical heading (their name, instructor, date) of an academic essay onto multiple pages of a portfolio.

Ede and Lunsford (1984) suggest that students imagine an addressed audience as “real,” analyze its needs, and adapt writing to suit those needs. We identified an *addressed audience* most often in Project portfolios. Students who are addressing an audience often spoke directly to them, using the second person, “you,” or the plural “we.” For example, one student addresses readers directly in an introductory section, explaining the purpose of her portfolio:

In the introduction of a book a reader is usually revealed to a table of contents. In my E-portfolio introduction you’re going to be revealed to a series of ideas that construct my table of contents. In this E-portfolio you will be introduced to several forms of texts ... I want to reveal, “you” the reader to not just different literatures that are focused around the idea of education, but also different types of media that support it as well.

When audience was addressed in reflective writing, that audience was most often the teacher. Particularly in project portfolios, we observed students addressing an external audience in project artifacts, then addressing the teacher directly in reflective writing, sometimes even by name.

Though we found little evidence of an *Involved audience*, when we did, it took the form of invitations to participate or calls to action. For example, one student attempts to frame her readers’ experience with the following invitation on the home page: “Before you begin please keep in mind: What you believe is education? Also the quote written by Miller, ‘The only way out is Through.’ I hope you enjoy my eportfolio, get a better understanding about education and join my English class !!!”

Across all types of portfolios, we identified the *teacher* and a *mass audience* as by far the most common audience roles. (One exception to this is *Reflective* portfolios, where a *mass audience* was much less evident than in the other types.) A comparison of the navigation menus of three process portfolios illustrates students’ thinking about the teacher vs. a mass audience. Example A is very course-centric; the teacher would understand the titles of the sections and

For example, one student invokes audience interest on her home page with an uncited quote: “*When you read, you hear an author’s voice as you move along: you believe a person with something to say is talking to you.*” This quote is illustrated by a series of hand-drawn images (presumably created by the student) showing a young woman reading a book that begins to speak back to her, then comes to life as a young man who enters into a conversation with the

why they appear together, but an outside reader would not necessarily know the names on the titles or understand the relationships among them. Example C shows an effort to communicate with a mass audience. The section titles follow a consistent metaphor that indicates a process theme, but there is no indication that this portfolio is presenting an academic essay. Example B lies somewhere between the other two. Again, some titles are course-centric and understandable only to someone with inside knowledge. Others refer to the process of developing an assignment, and since they are not metaphorical, an outside reader might understand that this portfolio presents a writing project. Overall, though, the navigation lacks coherence.

<a href="#">Home</a> <a href="#">Preface</a> <a href="#">Doyle</a> <a href="#">Rios</a> <a href="#">A Confusing Piece..</a> <a href="#">MFA</a> <a href="#">R.I.P Steve Jobs</a> <a href="#">Reflection</a>	<a href="#">Home</a> ▶ <a href="#">What's This All About?</a> ▾ <a href="#">"Joyeras Voladoras"</a> ▶ <a href="#">Steve Jobs' Honorary Speech</a> <a href="#">Adventuring Through the Fantastic Museum</a> <a href="#">Ideas For My Imitative Piece...</a> <a href="#">The Beginning Stages Of My Piece</a> <a href="#">Reflection On My Thoughts</a> <a href="#">How Are My Fellow Peers Writing?</a> <a href="#">My Final Masterpiece!</a> <a href="#">What Are My Final Thoughts....</a>	<a href="#">Home</a> ▾ <a href="#">Preface</a> ▾ <a href="#">Training</a> ▾ <a href="#">Stretching</a> ▾ <a href="#">The Starting Line</a> ▾ <a href="#">Catching My Second Wind</a> <a href="#">The Final Stretch</a> ▾ <a href="#">The Finish Line</a> ▾ <a href="#">Closing</a> ▾
Example A	Example B	Example C

Many portfolios addressed both the teacher and a mass audience. Two portfolio home pages, shown below, illustrate. The home page was often a location where students introduced a project, attempted to invoke a reader's interest, and/or explained the purpose of the project. In both examples, the meaning of the page would be evident to the teacher, who had constructed the assignment. In example A (below), the meaning would not be evident to a mass audience, but humor is used to invoke interest. Example B is likely more understandable to a mass audience, as the student has illustrated the core of the assignment in a constructed image.

<p><b>On an imitative piece</b></p> <p><b>Imitation</b> (noun): A thing intended to simulate or copy something else. The action of using someone or something as a model.</p> 	<p><b>My Reflective Folio</b></p>   <p>Which =</p>  <p>Which =</p>  <p>Which one is your criteria?</p>
<p>A: Home page of a process portfolio</p>	<p>B: Home page of a reflective portfolio</p>

The degree to which a student contextualized the portfolio or project was often an indication of intended audience. For example, one student contextualized his work for a mass audience on the home page by introducing himself, explaining the purpose of his portfolio, and inviting readers to explore: “My name is [student name]. While attending The University I made this site with some of my best English projects. I have taken the liberty to transform my essays or analysis of literature into this website for the express purpose of better illustrating what I have learned.” In contrast, in another introduction, a student seems to be describing the project to the teacher, referring to “readers” in the third person and not providing any explanation of the authors he names: “The idea of this whole project is that the readers get an understanding of what Doyle, Carson, and Rios have to say, not only their point of views, but their own ideas and stand points on life, dealing with how certain things operate.” It is not surprising that we would identify the teacher as a primary audience, given that in our interviews, both instructors and students identified the teacher as a primary audience. In most cases, the teacher (and perhaps classmates) was the only actual reader of the work. Our frequent identification of a generalized mass audience also did not surprise us, given the vague terms in which students discussed potential external audiences for their work.

#### Finding 7: Students’ attempts to invoke/address/involve multiple audiences in their work frequently results in audience “interference.”

As we analyzed student’s portfolios, we identified many examples of what we came to call “interference” as students’ attempts to communicate with multiple audiences resulted in conflicting signals. For example, in a project portfolio titled “Why Bother With Miller?” a student responds to Richard Miller’s essay, “The Dark Night of the Soul,” while comparing Miller’s views with those of two other authors, Paulo Freire and David Abram. The project includes what might be considered “product” – a web site that presents the project content – and “process” – documentation of process used to produce the project. The student borrows from a key quote in the text to develop the “bother” theme, which he uses with some consistency in the navigation of the portfolio.

The content of this project is presented through a series a sections called “Why Bother?”, “Who to Bother?”, “How to Bother?”, and “Bothered Yet?,” and beneath each of these sections is a substructure with pages titled, “What would Freire say?” and “What would Abram say?” The consistency of the structure and the play on the word “bother” invite reading by an external audience and show that the student considered how a reader might experience the work. At the

same time, there is little explanation of who these authors are and why their works are being considered together. Through much of the project, the student uses a plural first person to directly address an audience and to relate directly to that audience – “How do we do it? How do we bother these huge problems we have regarding reading and writing?” However, neither this orientation to the audience nor the navigation of the portfolio is consistent. Sandwiched between two of the portfolio’s “Bother” sections is a section called “Directed Questions.” This section seems to relate to the “process” sections of the portfolio, but is grouped with the content sections, an inconsistency in the navigation. The introduction for the section states:

At the beginning of class on the chalk board there will be directed questions to the students in this class. We are to answer them to help Ellen, as well as the audience get a feel for where exactly we are at in our project as well as how we are feeling about our work up to date.

One might ask, “Who is Ellen?” (we know she is the teacher, but an external audience does not), who is the audience if not the current reader, and who is included in “we”? The student seems to be attempting to negotiate addressing an external audience, his teacher, and a third group (perhaps his classmates?), but is unable to vary his approach effectively.

This example illustrates what we saw as a pattern of mixed signals within eportfolios as students attempted to navigate considering multiple audiences for their work.

### Discussion

It is clear that for the teachers and students involved in this study, eportfolios prompted thinking and discussion about potential audiences for student writing. It is equally clear that for many students, and some of the teachers as well, “audience” remained a largely theoretical, general, and sometimes confusing construct. Some of this confusion is owing to the shifts in curricular emphasis; those teachers whose individual writing assignments hewed most closely to the “old” curriculum--i.e., called for academic essays--had a particularly difficult time helping their students think about potential audiences for their work other than the teacher and perhaps peers. Even though they talked in interviews and in the inquiry groups about wanting *not* to be students’ primary or certainly sole audience, these instructors continued to assign writing that seemed, to students and to them, designed only for classroom consumption.

Of course, teachers and peers (and self) *are* viable audiences for student writing, and for some teachers and students, the eportfolios were valuable tools for shaping their work for these audiences. Reflective portfolios, for instance, are clearly designed for teachers (and perhaps peers and self) for evaluative purposes.

This proliferation of eportfolio types is the result of pedagogical experimentation. During the inquiry group discussions, instructors found it important, for the sake of their and their students’ continued inquiry, to keep the question open. Most of the instructors explicitly invited their students to wrestle with the genre question. They asked students to think with them about what the electronic portfolios could do and be. They challenged students to consider who would want to read their work and to shape it for those audiences.

Student responses to this challenge ranged from resistance to perplexity to excitement. In many cases, students experienced particular difficulty writing for multiple audiences, and this led to what we have called “audience interference” (see **main findings**). Audience interference results when students are unable to successfully negotiate competing audience needs. The most common manifestation of this phenomenon is a confused and confusing eportfolio design.

Students may be attempting to satisfy teachers' expectations and those of an external audience simultaneously, but the effect is mystifying for both audiences.

We speculate that audience interference, and students' difficulties negotiating audience in general, may have several causes, including:

- an undifferentiated concept of "audience"
- the power of prior knowledge about portfolios as strictly classroom texts
- a misapprehension that online writing is for "anyone and everyone"
- confusion about who could access their eportfolios and how to control access
- perceived conflicts between purposes and audiences (e.g., "who would want to read this essay I wrote for class?")

Each of these explanations points to possible work teachers might do with students. We suspect that students would benefit from concrete discussions about "audience" (perhaps in terms of specific individuals and groups of readers); explicit attention to prior knowledge, including genre knowledge they bring to the classroom; a deep understanding of how online writing circulates and to whom; a strong understanding of their options for publishing their eportfolios; and appropriate alignment between the purposes and audiences for their writing.

We see these as important areas of emphasis for the teachers in this study as their work with eportfolios continues. At the same time, we see compelling evidence that the use of eportfolios has had significant benefits for teachers and students alike in the writing program. They have provided instructors with tools for bridging to a rhetoric-based curriculum and a focal point for their professional development. They have also expanded, and sometimes complicated, students' awareness of the audiences and purposes for their writing.

### **Value of the Research for Practice**

This research project grew out of pedagogical practice in the program; it was designed to address questions instructors raised as they experimented with eportfolios and in some cases shifted the emphasis of their pedagogies to align with changes in the curriculum. We are now sharing the results both with participating instructors and with other instructors in the program in order to provide perspective on the issues the instructors raised about audience and first-year writing. The results will also feed our emerging assessment process. The reading protocol we designed already has been used as a prototype for assessment instruments. In addition, the program will now be assessing students' audience awareness, and we are hopeful that these results will be useful for teaching and assessing this rhetorical competency.

### **Value of Being in the I/NCEPR Coalition**

I/NCEPR provided structure, deadlines, and intellectual resources for our project. We are especially grateful for the emphasis on creating—and sticking to—timelines, as well as the encouragement we received from the project leaders and our cohort colleagues. Each cohort meeting and discussion with the project leaders allowed us to refine our research question and further develop our methodology. Finally, we found it validating to participate in an active, engaged research community. This gave us, our instructor colleagues, and (not least!) our institutional sponsors confidence in our work.

### **Plans to Disseminate/Apply Findings**

We have already shared our findings with the participating teachers. We also intend to post them on our writing program electronic portfolio website and to invite comments and

questions from all instructors in the program. In addition, we have submitted a proposal for AAEEBL's national conference and we intend to draft an article for publication, perhaps targeted the *International Journal of Eportfolio*. Finally, we are happy to have our work disseminated through I/NCEPR channels.

### Next Questions

Our immediate questions are pedagogical: How can we best help teachers and students think about audience and negotiate multiple audiences in eportfolios? How can we help *create* audiences, within and beyond the institution, for students' eportfolios? We would like to identify readers to provide feedback to students, and perhaps incorporate a portfolio presentation process, so that students have options for audiences for their eportfolios and so that audience negotiation becomes more than a theoretical exercise. If we are able to do this, we would like to research the effects of this feedback on students' experience of eportfolios. We believe this could dovetail nicely with the emerging writing program assessment process, which rests on descriptive, interactive, situated, distributed evaluation (Whithaus, 2005).

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