

Journey of the eWolf:

ePortfolios in Alaska

by DAVID DANNENBERG, HEATHER CALDWELL & PAUL WASKO

edited by CHRISTOPHER PISARIK

Evidence based learning is not a new concept but building an environment capable of capturing that evidence does not happen overnight. It evolves over months, maybe years, as the path is planned, achieved and, hopefully, marked for others to follow. ePortfolio use in Alaska is no exception. Six years ago, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) began examining eportfolios as a way to capture evidence that our high impact teaching practices were effective. Starting as a small faculty-led taskforce, UAA eportfolio efforts (branded eWolf) have moved through Request for Proposals (RFP) tool selection, wide-scale adoption, course and program implementation, and now community outreach. In the past two years, eWolf use has increased both on campus and within our community. We currently have multiple initiatives in progress that cover everything from program assessment to faculty promotion and tenure to student scholarships and Alaska Native identity. We are also partnering with local K12 schools to support evidence-based learning throughout a student's primary and secondary education. While each of these areas are worthy of their own article, our purpose is to provide a broad overview of the eportfolio activities occurring both at the university and in our community. By detailing

our experience at UAA we hope to provide a roadmap for others to ensure their eportfolio environments are equally strong, vibrant, and successful.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

UAA's eportfolio use began more than a decade ago, led by the individual efforts of faculty members and ePortfolio pioneers, Helen Barrett and Bruno Kappes. While technology and media might have changed over the years, UAA's desire to document learning never wavered. Building off these early efforts, in 2010 a faculty-led task force was formed and over the course of two years they examined eportfolios as an assessment tool. This task force consisted of over 20 faculty members from multiple disciplines. They documented the systems, processes, and support structures needed to implement and support a successful ePortfolio program. Their efforts ultimately led to a Faculty Senate motion calling on the administration to support ePortfolio use. In response, the Provost created and funded the Office of ePortfolio Initiatives, housed within the Academic Innovations & eLearning (AI&e) department.

From the beginning of our journey, it was immediately apparent that a dedicated and experienced resource was needed to work as chief evangelist, change catalyst, and program support officer. Fortunately, a nationwide search led us to hire [Paul Wasko](#) who brought over 20 years of eportfolio experience, to fill this role in 2014. One of Paul's first actions as the ePortfolio Program Manager was the creation of an advisory committee with representation from disciplines and services across campus, including student representation. Building off the Faculty Senate task force's work, this committee identified and defined administrative and functional requirements for a centralized eportfolio system. Using these requirements, the committee worked with our Procurement office to follow both a Request for Information (RFI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) process. We realize no one is excited by having to follow a very structured RFP process, but by utilizing this process we were able to clearly define and articulate our needs, and then quickly and fairly evaluate the submitted proposals against them. So while we did spend months defining and prioritizing our needs, once they were documented in the RFP we were quickly able to move through the evaluation stage, identify our top choices, and invite selected vendors to give in-person demonstrations. Ultimately, this led to selecting Digication, which we branded eWolf at UAA, as the best system and partner for us, and we have since developed a strong working relationship with them.

While technology and media might have changed over the years, UAA's desire to document learning never wavered.

SUSTAINING THE JOURNEY

Another essential element to the ePortfolio Initiative was determining a long-term sustainable funding stream to keep the program running. When the Provost created the program, he funded one position with the understanding that as the program grew AI&e would fund all other expenses. Initial student representation and involvement as part of the advisory committee proved essential in this

process. By working with our students from the beginning we were able to demonstrate how eportfolios could be of benefit to them well after graduation as part of their ongoing career and professional development. Moreover, by forming an early and strong collaboration we were able to propose and implement a new student eportfolio fee of \$16/year to fund other expenses of the program. Ultimately, this led to a cost-sharing structure with funding for the program provided by both administration and students that ensures sustainability for years to come.

OUR CURRENT LOCATION

VENDOR RELATIONSHIP: PRODUCT VERSUS PARTNER

Within our RFP process we carefully explained that UAA sought to build a strong partnership with our vendor. UAA viewed this partnership as critical to establish a distinction between a service provider that is only providing a "product" (or commodity) for the University versus engaging with the provider as a "partner" in project activities. Knowing the difference between these approaches helps define how we manage the relationship. Since fishing is such a passion here in Alaska, let's use a fishing analogy to explain the distinction between these two concepts:

- Goal: We are going halibut fishing in Whittier, Alaska.
- Challenges: We need to buy bait (herring) before we go.
- Product-based approach to buying bait: We stop by the local supercenter that has the cheapest bait around. We are in-and-out in five minutes and on our way.
- Partner-based approach to buying bait: We stop the local fishing store. At the checkout stand, the clerk says we should also buy a package of squid since the halibut were hitting on squid earlier this week. The clerk then asks us where we are going and suggests a couple of spots to try if we don't have success at our initial spots. The stop was almost thirty minutes, but we left with a great deal of additional information and a stronger chance of success.

For the University we expect and maintain a "partnership" with our portfolio vendor, Digication. As a result, we spend time and energy to share/inform Digication leadership on what is happening within our eWolf Program. It is not unusual to have multiple conversations with Digication

leadership and support each week. These conversations frequently run 30-60 minutes depending on the topics and project scopes. Conversation topics include: what’s working (or not), new projects, modifications needed, tasks and associated updates, recommendations based on best/promising practices, and project politics (small “p”). In many respects, we have treated Digication leadership (Jeffrey Yan - CEO and Kelly Driscoll - President) as an extension of our eWolf team.

The result of this partnership to date:

- Successful piloting (Spring 2015) and deployment (Fall 2015);
- New software development pilots;
- Community K-12/UAA/Digication pilot;
- Digication Innovation Award for our Native Student Service’s Office on exploring ePortfolios, cultural identity, and historical trauma among native students; and,
- Annual training events that brings together staff, faculty, and Digication leadership.

WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY: STUDENT AFFAIRS

Although UAA’s eportfolio effort was initiated by Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs leadership, Student Affairs participation has played a critical role in shaping the eWolf program. There are a number of Student Affairs services that either impact or take advantage of ePortfolio services such as orientation, advising, financial aid (scholarships), diversity, and placement services (see WCET’s Beyond the Administrative Core [Overview](#) for a working definition of student affair functions). Student Affairs staff associated with these services have helped shape eWolf use. Given the limitation of space we focus on two notable efforts within UAA’s Student Affairs: Native Student Services (NSS) and the Multicultural Center (MCC).

NATIVE STUDENT SERVICES:

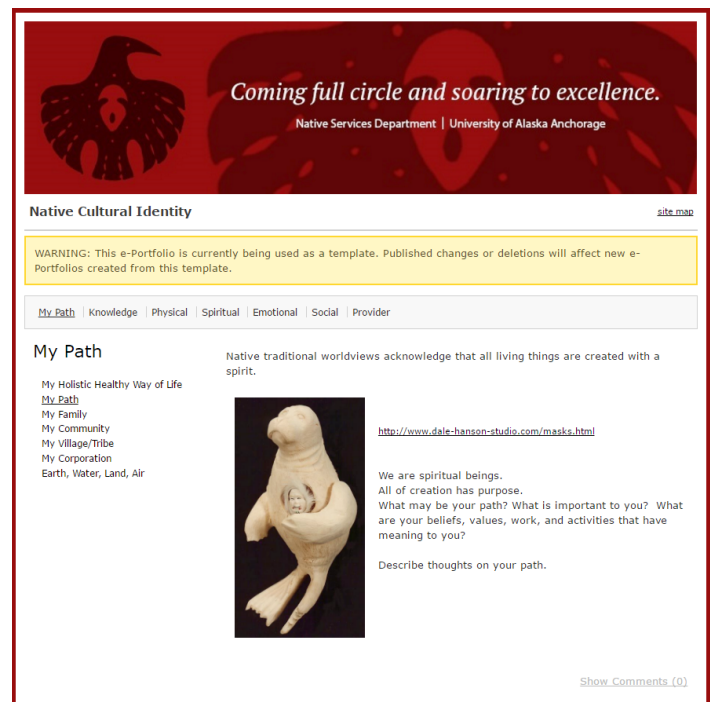
NSS is a small unit for Native and rural students that provides support services to increase their scholastic achievement, student retention, and personal success. In summer 2016 eWolf staff was invited by NSS staff to explore Digication’s service. It was during this initial discussion that Transition Advisor Sheila Randazzo asked a profoundly insightful and simple question: “How

could student engagement practices or portfolio services assist Native students in understanding and developing their cultural identity?” Our answer, “I don’t know but, wow, can we work with you to find out?”

That simple question led NSS to develop a project that has brought together Native elders, students, local experts, and national leaders to examine how eportfolios can support identity development with our Native students AND help address the challenges of historical trauma among the Native community. In addition to a rich set of conversations, the project to-date has: produced and successfully tested a portfolio template, identified community partner opportunities, identified curriculum needs/desires, and was recognized by Digication with an Innovation Award (the first of its kind for Digication).

MULTICULTURAL CENTER:

MCC’s mission is to provide programs and services designed to facilitate access, persistence, success, and graduation of underrepresented minority students. One of MCC’s showcase programs is the AHAINA (African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, International



Version 1 of NSS’s cultural identity template.

and Native American students) Men and Women of Excellence Scholarship; the scholarship provides a tuition waiver to support students' academic goals. In 2016, AHAINA incorporated eWolf into their application process with wonderful results. Instead of a traditional scholarship application students were instructed to complete and submit an application portfolio. The result, a deeper, richer application process that allowed the student's personal story(ies) to "come alive." In addition, MCC awarded digital badges to all successful applicants (a first at the University). The success of this effort has led to deeper integration into MCC services to find ways to engage an entire office and add value to their student-focused efforts.

subcommittee representative, began conversations to discuss the process and to evaluate the best course of action. ePortfolio templates based on the two faculty unions' Collective Bargaining Agreements and the Faculty Evaluation Guidelines were made and an electronic review process was built into eWolf making the entire process electronic, from submission to final review. During AY 2014/15, Pilot Phase I was released and faculty had the option to opt in. Summer drop-in and individual workshop sessions were offered to participants, peer review committees, and Deans. In September 2015, participants from across campus submitted 4th year review files, Tenure/Promotion files, Post-tenure files and Promotion files using eWolf.

Throughout the review process we solicited feedback from submitters and reviewers. Overall, it was a huge success but as with all new initiatives there was room for improvement. Feedback ranged from faculty's excitement to include a variety of materials, including rich text, multimodal, and video to demonstrate teaching and document research/creative activities, to their recognition that the front-end work, scanning and uploading non-digitalized materials, was time consuming. Reviewers expressed a strong desire for a standardized template to make the review process more efficient, but also noted the review workflow needed to be streamlined so documents could be easily harvest for long term retention and for reviewers' viewing ease.

For Phase II, we made a list of best practices and adjusted the review process. For example, items should be embedded into eWolf whenever possible and design elements should be taken into consideration for accessibility. Reviewer guidelines are being crafted to help reviewers better navigate files and submit reviews. Discussions at Faculty Senate still need to occur as converting the process to an electronic format unveiled the need to re-examine certain elements of the P&T process including questions such as who owns the templates; who is responsible for moving people in and out of the review process; and what are the standards for file contents housed in a third party site.

Outside of P&T files, we invited faculty to create their own public professional eportfolios. These portfolios allow faculty to showcase their research, courses they teach, and outside interests. Some faculty highlight work they do with within the community as well as student projects, internships, and more. Faculty buy-in is extremely important in the success of such an initiative, but it's



Chelsea Marrie T. Parrocha - 2016 AHAINA Woman of Excellence recipient.


WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

With the growing eportfolio interest on campus, Faculty Senate created a subcommittee to examine Promotion and Tenure e-files. Based on their conversations, Heather Caldwell, ePortfolio Strategist, and Arlene Schmuland,

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Examples of faculty's professional portfolios.




Dorn Van Dommelen [site map](#)

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Bio

[About Me](#)

Dorn Van Dommelen



My wife, Diane, and I live in Anchorage with our son, Puck (16), but our heart is at our off-grid cabin where we lived year-round for 13 years, raising our children. My personal and family life reflects very strongly my ideals. We try to live as close to the natural world as we can, given that we are well integrated into a modern economic system. We cook meals from scratch, garden, harvest local wild foods, and take many opportunities to enjoy our natural surroundings. Our cabin is heated by locally and sustainably harvested firewood and we haul water from a local well and the stream that runs by our home. My wife homeschooled our children using a pedagogy and curriculum inspired by the writings of Rudolph Steiner, and I am committed to doing the vast majority of the construction labor on our home by myself, using hand tools when feasible. We enjoy hiking and skiing.

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New Educator Award (NEA)

Terry A. Nelson OBTC New Educator [site map](#)

[Welcome](#) | [Teaching Philosophy](#) | [Curriculum Vitae](#) | [Syllabi](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Writing Samples](#) | [Professional & Service Activities](#)


Welcome



Welcome to my ePortfolio for the OBTC New Educator Award Nomination

Nominee: Dr. Terry A. Nelson
Title: Assistant Professor of Leadership
University: University of Alaska Anchorage
College: College of Business and Public Policy
Department: Management & Marketing

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KATIE WALKER
Instructional Designer

Katherine Walker ePortfolio [site map](#)

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Bio


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Katherine Walker

I am an innovative instructional designer with a wealth of experience designing high quality online courses and delivering engaging presentations. I have been in the field of education most of my career and have a Masters Degree in Education from the University of Virginia.

As an instructional designer for the College of Education (COE) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), I support approximately 50 faculty members in the design and delivery of face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses in teacher/principal preparation. My goal is to help the College of Education provide an effective and engaging learning environment for our future teachers.




Hiroko's ePortfolio [site map](#)

[About Me](#) | [Work](#) | [Teaching](#) | [Scholarships](#) | [Awards and Grants](#) | [Awards and Grants](#) | [Music](#) | [CV](#) | [Contact](#) | [NHK](#)

About Me

[Welcome](#)
[Future goals](#)



Born and raised in Japan, I am currently teaching Japanese Language and Culture at University of Alaska Anchorage. My husband is a native of Hong Kong and is a conductor who has led orchestras around the world including Japan, Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, and U.S.A. My two children were born in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, where my husband and I were graduate students. My son, 29, graduated from UAA with B.A. degrees in History and Japanese, taught English as a JET ALT in Hokkaido, Japan for two years, received an M.A. degree in East Asian Studies from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at University of Pittsburgh in Linguistics. My daughter, 24, graduated from University of Michigan School of Music in Violin Performance, and is currently pursuing a Master of Music degree at Hochschule für Musik Hannover, Germany.

Aside from my work at UAA, my life centers around my family and the musical world. Having studied the violin since the age of 5, I have kept music close to me my whole life and am currently a tenured first violinist in the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra. I also enjoy playing music with my family and friends in town.

Relating to work, I wear these hats for UAA and the community:

- Professor and Coordinator of Japanese Program
- Director of UAA Montgomery Dickson Center for Japanese Language & Culture
- Co-Founder and Executive Board Member of Alaska Association of Teachers of Japanese
- Anchorage Sister Cities Commissioner under Anchorage Mayor's Office.

I hold a Ph. D. degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

also a crucial element for student buy-in. Recognizing the need for buy-in, some departments, such as English and Education, are pushing for department-wide faculty portfolios.

As more faculty and departments integrate eWolf into the curriculum, more students are working within eWolf, too. To date, eportfolios are being used in every college. While some areas have integrated portfolios into their entire curriculum for programmatic and student assessment and/or accreditation, such as the College of Education, Legal Studies, Nursing, Dietetics, and English, other departments/colleges are slowly integrating eportfolios with either a signature class or assignment, or with individual faculty members incorporating portfolios into their courses.

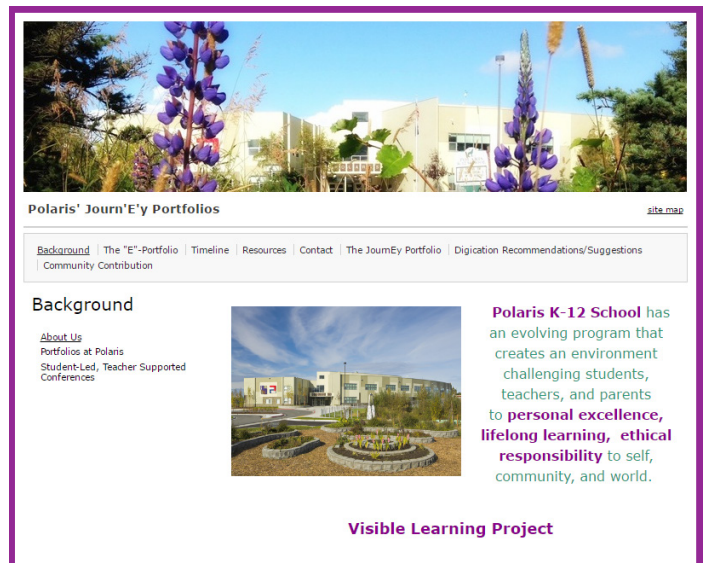
Another critical element in success, was to build a healthy eportfolio community and culture on campus. To start, we created an annual 2-day intensive filled with presentations from faculty early adopters, instructional designers, portfolio leaders, and more, that provides a range of topics including showcase sessions and makerspace time. We also added eWolf sessions to year-round professional development and collaborate with other campus projects to support their ongoing efforts. Finally, we offer monthly focus workshops on topics such as faculty portfolios, reflection, and more. From the beginning, our driving thought is that eportfolios are more than a tool, instead they support pedagogy that is already happening inside the classroom.

OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

UAA is a public institution and engages with and supports the broader southcentral Alaskan communities in their research, education, and workforce goals. Successful eWolf efforts within UAA has led us to explore how portfolio services could strengthen/enhance local partnerships. UAA's relationship with Digication is and has been a critical component of this work. Our community partnerships established the need for separate portfolio instances with Digication to address various privacy issues/concerns. Historically, Digication has shown a willingness to engage in entrepreneurial efforts that benefit the broader education community (see digication.com/googleapps). Our community pilots then inherit the following structure:

- University: Project champion, consulting, and training support.
- Digication: Licensing support.
- Local partner: Operational/local lead, local support, and communication.

We have several community partnerships in the works. We chose the Polaris K-12 School collaborative as it illustrates a dynamic relationship between vendor, university, community, and the Anchorage School District. Polaris is an alternative school within the ASD. Over the years the school actively engaged in internal conversations on how to incorporate portfolio thinking across their curriculum. Initial conversations with Polaris was facilitated by UAA College of Education leadership who saw an opportunity to bring together the various parties and explore an innovative partnership. The UAA/Polaris/Digication pilot was recently recognized at a statewide conference for its work, and as their works evolve, they are documenting their portfolio journey (see asdk12.digication.com/polaris_journey_portfolios/About_Me/published). In addition to their work with students, teachers, and staff, Polaris will be using the portfolio to support their AdvancED (advanc-ed.org/) accreditation work.



Polaris is documenting their portfolio implementation efforts.

THE PATH AHEAD

During the early days of the project, our goal was to establish a strong eportfolio culture on campus, to provide faculty and student support, and to strategize with ongoing campus initiatives and departments to develop innovative eportfolio usage. To date, eWolf has achieved a solid level of success within the University and despite an uncertain state budget, we are confident in eWolf's continued integration with campus culture and community partnerships.

As we wrap up our first year of full rollout, we have roughly 3,000 student portfolios and 620 faculty portfolios. Student portfolio numbers are still rather low, around 1% of our entire student body. But change comes slowly, especially with curriculum (re)design. The shining star, however, is faculty numbers; faculty use is about 25%. This is a great sign, illuminating we are successfully building an eportfolio culture on campus. Faculty are mentoring each other and sharing their professional, research, and classroom eportfolios with colleagues; through workshops, intensives, and departmental meetings, faculty who have not yet drunk the proverbial kool-aid can see how their colleagues utilize portfolios to support pedagogy as well as initiatives across campus. As mentioned earlier, the first step for successful campus-wide adoption is faculty buy-in. We will continue to foster the eportfolio community through the 2-day intensive, professional development and promotion and tenure. Additionally, we are working on other ways to bring together and showcase faculty and student work.

Through training and implementation, faculty and administration are starting to recognize that an eportfolio is more than a simple tool. Rather, it is a pedagogy that focuses on process and product, assists with metacognition, and increases student involvement in their own education. As the eportfolio community continues to build, we expect to see more departments coming on board to explore how eportfolios can impact their classroom practices. In the coming year, we are excited to continue our efforts with programs such as the College of Education and College of Business and Public Policy, the Department of English, School of Nursing, GER courses, and more.

But as our article highlights, eportfolios also live outside of Academic Affairs. In the coming year, we are

continuing our work with Student Services departments, such as Orientation, Career Services, and Native Student Services to see how eWolf can support their programs and assist students in reaching their goals. Additionally, we are expanding the scholarship application work and are in conversation with several programs to see if eWolf is a good fit for their scholarship applications.

Our core belief is that the more we integrate eportfolio use into key areas - both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs - the more beneficial the program becomes. We have allowed this belief to shape the development of eWolf here at UAA. However, we also recognize the fact that no two programs are the same and will have both positive and negative events that shape its development and future success. By detailing our journey and experience we hope to provide a "roadmap" that others find useful and use our journey to make their eportfolio more successful moving forward.

David R. Dannenberg (Anchorage, AK), Director of Academic Innovations & eLearning at the University of Alaska Anchorage, leads UAA's efforts to innovate teaching through the use of instructional technology. He currently serves as Co-Executive Editor of The AAEEBL ePortfolio Review and the Public Four-Year Institution Representative to the WCET Steering Committee.

Heather Caldwell (Anchorage, AK) earned her MA in English Literature, Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Alaska Anchorage. She taught first and second year composition for over 5 years before jumping to the other side of the house where she's now an ePortfolio Strategist. Her most recent projects include campus-wide eportfolio Promotion and Tenure files, Undergraduate Research Scholarship eportfolio files and evaluation, and supporting faculty members in their sabbatical and SoTL eportfolio projects.

Paul Wasko (Anchorage, AK) is the ePortfolio (eWolf) Initiative Coordinator at University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). Prior to joining UAA in January 2014, Mr. Wasko was the Director of eStudent Services for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) where he directed eFolioMinnesota, the largest ePortfolio project of its type in North America. Prior to joining MnSCU in 2001, he held a number of leadership positions in various state agencies, including heading education technology initiatives for the State of Minnesota.