Pilgrim's Regress: Advances and retreats in our School of Education’s journey with the electronic portfolio.

The purpose of our roundtable proposal is to exchange ideas and experiences surrounding the development, implementation, and usage of an electronic portfolio system in pre-service teacher education.

Many teacher education institutions across the United States have implemented a digital teaching portfolio system into the infrastructure and curriculum of pre-service education. The reasoning behind adding the digital portfolio system was to fulfill new technology requirements for teacher certification by agencies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Additional reasons for transitioning to an electronic portfolio system include: the superiority of digitally storing student portfolios over previous hardcopy methods and another method for assessing the growth of teaching competency in pre-service teachers.

The perceived advantages of a digital electronic portfolio system include: growth in the use of technology, displaying the individuality of a student, ease of access to the portfolio by multiple faculty members simultaneously, scalability, portability, and multimedia capabilities. The purpose, content, and use of the digital portfolio is essentially the same as the traditional hardcopy portfolio but adds the enhanced features of multimedia capabilities. The enhanced multimedia capabilities allow students to display pictures, movies, Microsoft Powerpoint, and other interactive media used in their lessons online.

Considerable resources of time and money have been invested in the implementation of electronic portfolios as a cornerstone of educating future teachers at
our institution. Multiple technological and assessment related hurdles had to be overcome by faculty and staff to integrate a successful electronic portfolio system into the School of Education. There have been bold optimistic advances sometimes followed by tentative retreats when faced with situational reality. With persistence and compromise, however, we have cooperatively created and implemented a system that seems in its major components to be successful.

Topics for discussion include:

1. Resources for implementation: what did it take and was it worth it?
2. Teaching the technology: how much is enough and how little is too little?
3. Structure of the efolio: is it realistic, practical and of benefit to student and instructor?
4. Instructors and students: how do you sell them on the idea?
5. Evaluation instruments: are they reliable and valid?

The considerable investment of student and faculty time, effort, and money spent in developing and evaluating electronic teaching portfolios makes this topic of special interest to schools of education and others who train teachers. It is our desire that we learn from one another’s failures and successes and use the shared knowledge to improve use of electronic portfolios as a vital tool in training tomorrow’s teachers.