



Overview

INSTITUTION:

NORTHEASTERN OHIO UNIVERSITIES
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE (NEOUCOM)

PROFILE:

NEOUCOM, located in Rootstown, Ohio, is a public institution that has a unique partnership with The University of Akron, Kent State University, Youngstown State University and seventeen hospitals to offer a combined B.S./M.D. program.

CHALLENGE:

Assist medical students in the development of a clear understanding of goals, talents, values and interests related to career choices and decision making through personal reflection and the integration of their medical education and personal experiences.

SOLUTION:

iWebfolio provides a powerful, creative solution to collect, manage and present self-reflection, educational and personal experiences and evidence of learning and competency.

BENEFITS:

- ✓ Students can demonstrate evidence of progressive learning and competency by building and managing a structured repository of artifacts
- ✓ Students share activities and achievements; educational, professional and personal goals; and reflections on the learning experience
- ✓ Staff and faculty can retrieve student artifacts and other relevant evidence to document achievement of stated learning and performance outcomes
- ✓ Staff and faculty can develop comprehensive templates and guidelines to enable a consistent portfolio structure

Medical Students at Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine Use iWebfolio to Facilitate Professional Development

"I am amazed at the quality of students' reflections, their ability to self-assess and to connect their self-assessments with concrete goals and objectives."

-Anita Pokorny, Director of Career Development and Advising

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine (NEOUCOM) is a community-based, public institution that provides interdisciplinary training of health professionals, offering both a doctor of medicine and a doctor of pharmacy degree. The College of Medicine also offers a combined B.S./M.D. program with a consortium of three other universities and seventeen hospitals.

The mission of the College of Medicine is to graduate qualified physicians oriented to the practice of medicine at the community level, with an emphasis on primary care: family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics/gynecology.

NEOUCOM recognizes the critical value of actively engaging students in managing their learning processes on a real-time basis.

Understanding the Role of Portfolios for Students

In 2002, what is now the Office of Career Development and Advising implemented a pilot portfolio project to encourage student reflection and a clear articulation of professional identity through the integration of medical education and personal experiences. The portfolio starter kit included: a printed portfolio workbook with an overview of the goals of the project, suggested contents, goal setting sheets, and time lines; a legal pad, pen, and a computer diskette; and a folder for keeping portfolio information. This pilot project was an optional part of NEOUCOM's advising program and was unsuccessful in part because it was a cumbersome manual process to manage and it was difficult for advisors to access the hard-copy portfolios.

In the spring of 2003, the office received a grant to pilot an electronic version of the professional development portfolio. NEOUCOM licensed iWebfolio from SunGard Higher Education because it already had a successful relationship through the institution's use of SunGard Higher Education's Banner and Luminis applications. Key considerations in the decision to choose iWebfolio were: the application's ability to collect, organize and share activities and achievements; educational, professional and personal goals; and reflections on the learning experience.

During the same time period that the electronic portfolio pilot was underway, the College also embarked on a major curriculum transformation process which included a re-evaluation of the College's educational objec-

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*-Anita Pokorny,
Director of Career Development and Advising*

tives. During this exploration and planning process, many of the curriculum design teams expressed an interest in exploring the use of portfolios in the curriculum. As a result of this feedback, NEOUCOM began implementation of iWebfolio into teaching in 2004. A reflective learning portfolio was included as a required element in the elective course, “Gender, Media and Medicine”. Feedback from both students and instructors who used the portfolio during the course was very positive.

The faculty found that a valuable dialogue was created within iWebfolio through the use of faculty feedback and student reflection. This exchange revealed a level and depth of engagement by the students that was not always manifested in the classroom environment. It also helped to identify course elements that students found especially interesting and highlighted areas that required additional discussion. The curriculum design teams will use this feedback in the evaluation of electronic portfolios as a component in the new medical school curriculum.

Goals, Interests, Career Objectives

NEOUCOM implemented the portfolio requirement for the first time in 2005-2006 as part of its longitudinal doctoring course. “The goal of the portfolio is to assist students in developing a clear and stable picture of their goals, talents, values and interests related to career choices and decision making,” said Anita Pokorny, Director of Career Development and Advising. Students collect evidence for their portfolios throughout their four years of undergraduate medical education. Evidence is defined as any feedback that tells about their growth as a physician and may be gleaned from curricular and co-curricular activities. At the end of each curricular step, students are required to answer guided reflection questions designed to help them better understand the meaning of the evidence they have collected. The initial template is based on the five themes of the doctoring course: Physician Identity, Patient Care, Professionalism, Population Health and Service. Each student is assigned a Portfolio Advisor who is responsible for reviewing their portfolio and helping them to identify developmental goals and objectives based on the answers to the questions. “I am amazed at the quality of students’ reflections, their ability to self-assess and to connect their self-assessments with concrete goals and objectives,” stated Ms. Pokorny.

Third-year students at NEOUCOM undertake clerkships in which they rotate through medical specialties in the hospital setting and interact with physicians, residents, and other students. “Plans are under way to incorporate the portfolio into the third-year clerkships. Portfolios will be used to gather and present evidence to show that students have achieved the required competencies in each of their core clerkships, and to set goals for each rotation, which will be reviewed and shared with their clerkship directors,” Pokorny explained.

Through the implementation of iWebfolio, NEOUCOM provides a creative venue to facilitate the exchange of information and feedback among students, faculty and mentors. In addition, it offers a longitudinal approach for students to manage their own professional development and document progress toward required outcomes. iWebfolio’s strong reflection component enables students to thoughtfully consider coursework and field experiences, and also provides considerable insight for faculty about the student’s connection to, and understanding of, the curriculum content.

Nuventive
3996 Mt. Royal Blvd.
Allison Park, PA 15101

Phone: +1 412 487 8700
Toll Free: 1 877 366 8700
Fax: +1 412 487 3355
Email: info@nuventive.com

