

Senior Portfolio Instructions

2009

The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate to a jury of department faculty in your professional option what you have learned to do well during your time here, and whether or not you are ready to graduate. But portfolios also have another valuable and practical purpose for you: When you graduate, you cannot expect to be hired as a professional communicator (especially in this competitive job market) *if you can't prove that you can do the work -- and do it better than all those other schools' mass communications graduates who are competing for the same jobs.* As this department's faculty has stressed throughout your time here, the well-laid-out contents of a Mass Communications Department graduate's published clips or photos, Ad/P.R. portfolio, multimedia CD or resume/audition tape/disc plus writing and other samples could be that extra bit of evidence that will make a potential employer choose you over other applicants.

Besides successfully completing the actual internship and the senior portfolio, MC 481 requires you to turn in two reports, which are not a part of your portfolio. Deliver these reports, the Internship Paper and the Learning Assessment Letter, via e-mail attachment to the internship coordinator toward the end of the semester. Consult your MC 481 Syllabus for instructions on how to write each.

The portfolio:

Your current resume should be the very first document in your portfolio. No cover letter, of course. That letter will vary, depending on what kind of job you're seeking, and where you're applying. Look on-line at the department website (<http://www.siue.edu/MASSCOMM/internship.html>) for a handout explaining in detail how to write good resumes and cover letters.

Next should be an index page: Headings on the index should correspond to labeled tab dividers that you will place at the beginnings of the different segments of your portfolio.

Below are examples of some of the items you can include in your portfolio that demonstrate your skills and knowledge. *Please note that these are not inclusive lists, just examples to get you thinking.*

Note: *Always* remove instructor comments, grades, errors noted, etc., from anything you plan to put in your portfolio. Any copy, paper, project, video or audio production worthy of inclusion in your portfolio should be re-printed *after you re-edit, sharpen and otherwise fix it.* Now that you're ready to graduate, you should be a much better mass communications practitioner than you were when you wrote/produced these pieces. So redo them! Never show off your mistakes to potential employers or to the faculty jury that will review your portfolio: always put your best foot forward.

Also Note: Most kinds of class project materials require introductory explanations. Sometimes it's because the item or the project/campaign materials won't make complete sense to a potential employer unless you provide some *context* for them. Also, if you contributed to a part of a group project, include in your portfolio only the part of the project that you produced. When you're displaying your portion of any group project, *communicate!* Put the whole project in context by preceding it with a tabbed section divider, plus an introductory page for every section. In this introduction, describe the entire project, explain how the team divided up the different parts of the project, and then state clearly what you individually contributed to the project. Then the pages that follow will make sense to a potential employer. Make the tabs look professional: make sure that all tabs are *printed, never hand-lettered*. Hand-lettering on any tabs or labels is unprofessional.

Guidelines for each sequence

In discussing minimum numbers of examples of your work in the paragraphs below, please note: If you don't supply the minimum number, your portfolio will automatically fall below the grade of 70, and thus not pass. So consider the minimum number of examples just that: the bare minimum. To avoid the minimum grade, provide more than the minimum number of pieces. Extend this advice to your professional life, and you'll have a much better chance to make a living in this profession.

Print and Electronic Journalism Option:

- **Print Journalism:** Your selection of original, byline stories (*Aestle*, other campus publications, professional newspapers and magazines, including your internship venue) should demonstrate your skill and diversity. Ten stories are the minimum. These stories should be grouped by publication and/or area (hard news, feature). If you have done layouts, either for publications or in class, those additional proofs of your competence should be displayed in a separate, tabbed section as well. The same applies to broadcast news copy or newscast scripts. Multimedia examples can be shown by printing the opening page in color and referring the reader to your disc for the entire work. Including the Web addresses of work currently on the Internet is helpful, too. Photocopies of byline stories should be neatly formatted on 8 1/2 by 11 paper and should include the publication's folio on that page. If it's page one, include the newspaper's masthead, if it's not too large. If it is, reduce it to a reasonable size. Originals yellow quickly, so present your work via clean photocopies of all your originals on white paper. Stories of byline stories published in the paper but taken from a publication's Web site and reformatted are discouraged, because they can so easily be falsified. Employers know this, and give little credit to this method of presentation. If your story only appears on the paper's website, you of course may use it. Get in the habit of clipping and cleanly photocopying your good work as you go, and then saving them in a safe place. Published photographs should also be formatted as cleanly as your stories. You may consider submitting

examples of originals of published news photos or video news packages to demonstrate quality, perhaps on an attached CD or DVD. If you did substantial work in electronic journalism, put news story and newscast scripts in a separate section. Provide a tape or DVD for your packages. If you're a broadcast news student, you should provide a radio or TV news resume tape. See formatting instructions below. In addition to the ten published byline stories mentioned earlier, you may also choose to include in your portfolio a separate, tabbed section featuring the best stories you wrote for class assignments. Unlike your ten byline stories, these can be unpublished, including those written for Feature Writing, Public Affairs Reporting, rewrites from fact sheets, wire rewrites, and other class assignments. Identify rewrites clearly, and don't use too many of them.

- **Electronic Journalism** students must present no fewer than ten separate examples of copy from radio or television news stories that have actually aired. They can be from WSIE-FM, *SIUE Global Village* or from work at other broadcast stations, including part-time jobs and from your internship venue. Copy style for work done on your internship should be the style of that broadcast program or station news department, and should be separated by tabs in the portfolio from your work done in courses here at SIUE. Work done here in courses must be in department broadcast style. See below for details. These copy examples should include the dates the stories aired and the name/s of the station/s or show/s. All of this copy inserted in your portfolio must be your *original* reporting, not rewrites of AP wire service, web page, newspaper or other news sources. As noted above for your print journalism colleagues, you may also include a tabbed section of your portfolio with copy you have written for class assignments in MC 330, 331, 332, 333 or other courses. All copy for this section should be formatted in departmental style, as found on the Mass Comm. Dept. website at <http://www.siue.edu/MASSCOMM/departmenthandbook.html>. Electronic journalism students must also submit either a TV or radio resume tape/DVD. See below for instructions on how to format and present resume tapes/DVDs. You *may* turn in both radio and TV resume tapes, but you *must* submit one or the other. It is strongly recommended that both radio and TV news students spend no less than one year working for News Director Tom Dehner downstairs at WSIE-FM. Virtually all students who have been successful finding jobs in television and radio news/sports after graduation have worked for WSIE News. Conversely, we can't remember anyone now working in broadcast news who hasn't learned their skills at WSIE News.
- **TV-Radio Professional Option** students must present no fewer than ten separate examples of broadcast news, commercial or PSA copy and/or other scripts and continuity, written in the department-approved broadcast style. (Examples of short radio copy such as radio liners, short news stories, promos, etc., must fill up *one complete page* to equal *one* of your required minimum number of stories.) All of these ten pieces of

copy must be your original work, *not* rewrites of wire service, newspaper or anyone else's copy. Among these examples, you must submit *at least one commercial or PSA*. As noted above for your print and broadcast journalism colleagues, you may additionally include a tabbed section of your portfolio with copy you have written for class assignments in MC 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 431 or other courses. All copy for this section should be formatted in departmental style. See above for style examples on the department's website. Additionally, all TV-R students must submit either a TV or a radio resume tape or DVD disc. See below for instructions and approximate length. You *may* turn in both radio and TV resume tapes/discs, but you *must* submit one or the other.

- **Media Advertising Professional Option** portfolios must contain at least ten different ads. Your ten ads must include both print ads and broadcast commercial scripts. You must also present at least one TV commercial storyboard. Also, you must include at least one ad campaign proposal. As stated above, any group project in your portfolio should be preceded in your narrative by a description of the entire project, an explanation of the different parts of the project, and then a clear statement of what you personally contributed to the project. Consider including media plans and any other creative work. Keeping in mind that your objective is to show the variety of skills/experience you possess, here's how you should organize your portfolio:
- After resume and table of contents, group your material into the following segments. Order them according to the golden rule for portfolios: your best and most job-appropriate stuff first. Remembering what you must include (the paragraph above), other examples can include:
 - Campaigns
 - Individual Ads
 - Proposals
 - Media Plans
 - Commercial Scripts – radio/TV (must be in format as shown on MC Dept. web site)
 - TV Storyboards
 - Layout and Design – Some material may focus more on design so a segment labeled Layout and Design may be suitable.
 - Newsletters
 - Brochures
 - Feature/News Stories
 - Press Releases
 - Products produced on your internship
 - Team projects should include only the portion(s) you were responsible for: writing, editing, production, etc. Carefully precede campaigns and other team projects with a brief description of what you contributed to the project.

- **Corporate and Institutional Media Professional Option** students must include no fewer than ten examples of corporate or institutional media products. These examples of your work *could* include layouts and multimedia products, video and audio productions, feature stories, newsletters, media kits, news releases, speeches and any writing projects you created for MC 422. In addition, other kinds of media products listed in the other professional options above can certainly be presented. Also, students must submit one of the following:
 - a. A video and/or audio resume tape/disc;
 - B. An interactive multimedia resume CD (simple PowerPoint presentations are not interactive, so they're not acceptable);
 - C. A section of your portfolio devoted to a significant amount of your print publication layouts.

Video resume tape examples could include projects produced in such courses as MC 431, packages and other productions from *SIUE Global Village*, or portions of longer-length corporate projects produced for external or internal clients. In the portfolio, corporate video examples must include all the attending paperwork involved, including scripts, contracts, shot sheets, treatments, and letters of agreement. All of this demonstrates your professional competency. See the Media Advertising Professional Option standards above for how to properly identify your work done in a group project. Such group project work should also be preceded by an executive summary (a short summary of the content to be presented). Video in your resume tape should display self-contained, completed projects, rather than randomly edited video montages set to music. These montages are not acceptable in resume tapes/discs for this professional option. However, you should follow tape labeling and packaging standards described under the heading below, "More Important Instructions." Projects such as campaign proposals should be placed in a separate section of your portfolio, or preceding the media you produced for the campaign.

More Important Instructions

Borrowing tips from the pros and from former students' portfolios, be sure to do the following:

- How do you set up the order for the elements in your portfolio? Here's an example: A print journalism student might put all the stories, photos, etc., published on internship into the first section of his/her portfolio. These should be the most impressive to a potential employer. Next he/she might put their published stories from the *Alestle*, the *Mass Communicator* and other campus publications, followed by a section that includes examples of their page layouts. Finally they might include a section or more containing other media products produced for department courses. Talk to your adviser about the proper layout

order for your professional sequence.

- Present your work in a *very classy-looking* three-ring, loose leaf binder, something that at least looks like leather. They can be purchased from places like Target, Wal-Mart or Office Max. Remember again: *put your best foot forward*. Pop for the price of a nice package to sell yourself. If not now, when your first real media job is on the line, when?
- Present no “bare (unplasticized) pages”: insert each individual page into a plastic, see-through sheet. This way, after it’s been handled by faculty and perhaps a potential employer or two, these examples of your hard work will still look clean. If you want to include a large, multi-page publication in your portfolio, you could tuck it into a pocket in the back of your portfolio. Another way – perhaps a better way -- to present a large publication is to just include a few sample pages and a neatly-done note saying something like, “The remainder of this publication is available upon request.” Never jam multiple pages into one plastic sheet. It’s hard to get back into the sheet, and you don’t want a potential employer cursing under his/her breath while they’re reading your portfolio!
- CDs and DVDs fit nicely into a zippered, see-through, three-ring-punched “pencil holder” type of container that you can place anywhere in your portfolio. Make it a special, tabbed section and include it in your index. Be sure that your CD is formatted to be recognized by *both* Windows and Macintosh platforms. This means you will need to burn a “hybrid” CD. To accomplish this cross-platform readability, it is suggested that you format the CD for HTML pages, Macromedia Flash movies, Macromedia Director movies, and/or Adobe Acrobat PDF (portable document files). These are usually readable on any Mac or PC. *Make sure* before you print to CD that your presentation is completely *de-bugged*. It is *your* responsibility to verify that your CD accurately showcases your work. And any CD and CD box should be professionally labeled with the same care that you would give a resume tape. It all reflects on you, and first impressions last.
- Insert your portfolio copy into either the fronts and backs of the plastic pages, or just the fronts. The main thing is to be consistent in your style of presentation. Some only insert them into the fronts, so they can use the backs as facing (left) pages containing explanations of what will be seen on the right-hand page. However, some, who have many dozens of pages to present, find that their portfolios are less cumbersome to open and handle if they insert copy into both the fronts and backs of the plastic pages. Also, be as consistent as possible in presenting copy in either a horizontal or vertical format. Whenever practical, bunch horizontal and vertical pages together. That way a potential employer won’t have to constantly flip your port back and forth to read it. Remember the strategy: to make it *as convenient and pleasant as possible* for them to examine your work.
- As mentioned earlier, be sure to label each section with neatly-*printed* tabs and with title pages explaining the *kind* of work the prospective employer will be looking at next (e.g., for an electronic news student, labels might separate news

stories and scripts written while on internship from those written for MC 332, stories published in the *Aestle* (yes, newspaper stories are OK to put in a broadcast journalism graduate's portfolio and vice-versa), or stories aired elsewhere.

- If your portfolio includes tapes, the preferred formats should be CDs for radio and DVDs (carefully debugged) for video. You can submit analog cassettes and VHS tapes, but working pros tell us that many employers don't have this equipment in their offices anymore. Also, the quality of analog cassettes and especially VHS tape is greatly inferior to CDs and DVDs. And for Heaven's sake, *get new, high quality tapes for use as resume tapes!* Put these tapes in high quality plastic boxes, not in the cardboard or cheap plastic sleeves they often come in. You can find this kind of VHS tape box for less than a dollar at some local stores or on line. Nice plastic CD/DVD boxes are easier to find. Tape boxes may fit inside pockets in the front or back covers of your portfolios, but not too handily. CDs and DVDs can be made to fit easily, as described in an earlier section. A hint: outstanding students in recent years have put their resume reels entirely on-line on their personal websites, eliminating the inclusion of tapes or DVDs at all. Just make sure that such a website works perfectly with Macs and PCs, and doesn't require a very sophisticated amount of plug-ins.

Label the tapes, tape boxes, and DVD containers neatly and professionally (no handwriting -- include your name, address and phone on both the tape/disc and the box), and later, be sure that any tapes are re-cued after each new submission to an employer. Also make sure there is a "rundown list" of items to be found on your resume tape on/inside the box -- not on the CD/DVD or cassette. Include your rundown on the inside reverse of the box's cover. Put your contact information and title on the outside. Include total running time as well as the individual times for each item. Remember: video production resume tapes/DVDs begin with a slate with your contact information, and then go directly to your program audio and video (no bars, tone or leader on a resume tape, since they're not for air). Then, one second after final fadeout, repeat your slate at the tail. You can certainly get creative with your slate, and incorporate it into your resume tape video. When you're doing your TV resume tape (presumably on one of our Avids), don't forget to print yourself one copy of your resume tape on Mini-DV or DVC Pro for high-quality storage purposes. It will soon be erased from the Avid server in the editing room, VHS dubs are awful, and you may want to make more copies or edit your resume tape once your job hunt begins in earnest. The rule is to save everything important on Mini-DV or DVC Pro, since dubs from these digital tapes don't deteriorate very much at all, if stored properly. Using a DVD to copy and archive your footage yields a tiny bit more inferior result.

- Since portfolios of all but some advertising folks generally contain 8 1/2 x 11-sized documents, larger newspaper page layouts and other printed materials you have produced may not fit. Since the purpose is to show the layouts, not read the copy, it's often OK to do reductions using a copy shop's high-quality photocopy machine, shrinking these layouts to 8 1/2 x 11 size. It should be noted that many advertising professionals carry around a larger-sized

portfolio, so you might not have a size problem to begin with. On the other hand, an 8 1/2 x 11 portfolio is easy to store and carry, and very handy for a potential employer to hold and examine. So in many cases, reductions are the way to go. If you're still unsure, discuss it with your faculty adviser. Regardless, the bottom line is this: *Invest* in the best quality for your portfolio contents: This is not the time to "cheap out" just to get an assignment completed.

- Of course, all your copy should be impeccably neat and tidy and free from any errors. Any copy not published (and thus not in clipping form) should be re-printed *with a laser-quality machine*. Professional employers look for evidence of quality in *every aspect* of the work you show them. These few samples of your work tell employers what level of excellence you are capable of delivering on the job for them. And the reverse is true: When they see signs of sloppy or careless work, it alerts them that perhaps your potential work quality will be sloppy and careless. In other words, if you can't do professional work when your getting hired is on the line, why would they expect a higher level of quality from you every day? *So put your best foot forward!*

Additional Standards for Resume Tapes/Discs

- Resume tapes for TV production and R-TV journalism students should be no longer than 10 minutes, probably closer to 5-6 min. And don't think about showing *entire* productions, other than very good commercials, on your tape. The best resume tape displays the finest *portions* of all your productions, edited together in an attractive, entertaining, skillful way. You should "tease" viewers, just giving them a "taste" of what you can produce. However, this doesn't mean that you should cut together a simple montage of otherwise disconnected images set to music. This doesn't tell a potential employer anything about whether or not you can tell a story. Instead, for example, if you're showing a news or feature package or a marketing video, give the audience a minute or so, and then fade/wipe it out and go on to something else. This is what we mean by a taste. Of course, if you have good 30-second commercials or PSAs, there's nothing wrong with showing the entire spot. For a student just graduating, your tape doesn't have to run the full 10 minutes, either: Leave them longing for more.
- Resume tapes for TV news students should carefully adhere to the following instructions, courtesy of www.newsblues.com:

TV News Audition Tape Basics

- Unless otherwise noted, use VHS tape or a DVD that plays back easily on both a Mac or a PC.

- Attach a rundown to the tape box...not the tape or DVD, as mentioned earlier. (The News Director can't see it when the tape is in the machine.) Besides the rundown, include your name, address, home and work telephone numbers, and e-mail or web address.
- Label the tape with your name and the kind of position you're applying for. "Mary Smith, reporter."
- Begin (and end) the tape with a slate, showing your name and address. Don't use black, color bars or countdowns. Leave the slate on long enough for you to read it twice, then begin with your program audio and video. Ditch the fancy station news opening. The first thing the News Director should see is YOU.
- Start with a 30-45 second montage of great studio anchor moments and brilliant stand-ups, compelling live shots, whatever you have to grab a News Director's attention. Keep the montage short and punchy. If you don't hook the viewer immediately, he'll pop and "86" the tape or use your DVD for his coffee cup coaster.
- Follow with short segments of your very best work. Try to avoid re-using standups you used in the section that precedes this one. If you do, it shows how little experience you have. Some news directors say to include a few complete packages, but if you do, they'd better hold the News Director's attention through to the end. No pieces longer than 1:30. Better to start a package, give the viewer a feeling for what story you're telling and how well you can write the V.O., and move on to the next clip. Limit the total run time of your tape to no more than 10 minutes. If a News Director is interested, he or she may request an additional tape of your most current work. But the initial tape should be a "Best of..." reel.
- For those of you intent on a TV news career, you should probably buy the *Vault/TVSpy Career Guide to Agents & Auditions*, by Don Fitzpatrick, \$29.95. Besides more detailed instructions on resume tapes for both reporters and producers, it also explains how to get started in your first job, and, later on, how to get an agent. You can order this book directly from the Fitzpatrick and Associates web site, <http://www.tvspy.com>
- Resume tapes for radio news should feature you reading copy *you have written* in a short, local newscast (2 min. or less), plus selected short clips from a few radio documentaries you produced and clips from one or more interviews you've conducted. Be sure to liberally pepper your news stories with actualities (sound bites). Usually these resume tapes are five minutes in length or less, and absolutely no longer than eight minutes. Any material on your tape after five minutes should be particularly outstanding: News directors are very impatient people.
- Resume tapes for radio production students should have *perfect levels throughout, outstanding editing* and consist of three parts:

Part I: Four to five breaks:

- *Should be a mix of weather, artist information, etc.
- *At least one should show some of your personality
- *Best break first, then next-best one, and so on
- *There should only be a second or two of music before and after your voice ends

Part II: One or two PSAs or commercials

- *Must be something you wrote, voiced and produced
- *Dry spots are unacceptable
- *Must be very well-produced
- *Should show your creativity

Part III: A short newscast

- *Two minutes maximum length
- *Follow the WSIE newscast format
- *Be sure to rewrite and improve any wire service copy
- *Make sure stories are strong (no fluff unless you add a kicker at end)
- *Start with the station I.D. and news sounder, if available, but make this brief.

It's essential that you check out any resume tape with one of the TV-Radio faculty before submission! After all, they're your judges. Why not use this to your advantage?

- **A caveat:** Some students lose many points because of the poor technical quality of their resume tapes. Major problem areas for video include upcut video and audio, glitchy edits and flash frames, poor choices regarding where to cut, and a lack of creativity. Audio tape problems often appear as poor levels, unedited air checks, poor announcing skills and a lack of any skillful, creative editing. Remember that faculty and potential employers are interested in *both* the content *and* the quality and creativity that went into putting the tape together. Just remember the weak points you displayed in assignments for your production courses and fix them. And remember, the same professors who showed you how to improve your productions will be the people grading your portfolio now. *They expect to see -- and hear -- improvement.* And finally, after going to all this work, after you print your reel to tape, sit there and check it to make sure the dub went according to plan. "But honestly: It looked and sounded good on the Avid" is not an excuse.