

Next Steps for Sophomores 2017-18 Year End Report

Summary and Overview:

During the 2017-2018 academic year, a group of faculty and staff continued work focused on embedding opportunities for vocational reflection for students, particularly in the sophomore year. This work emerged both from learning communities of faculty and staff that met during the 2016-2017 academic year and were funded by a CiC NetVUE grant focused on vocation and reflection in the sophomore year, as well as from faculty and staff working on a HLC Quality Initiative focused on enhancing reflective opportunities for sophomores.

At the end of the 2016-2017 academic year, co-facilitators of the CiCNetVUE learning communities met and collectively prioritized five pilots and programs to carry out during the 2017-2018 academic year. The group selected these initiatives based upon momentum building around specific ideas, as well as a strategic goal of meeting students at common points in their life at Luther and embedding programming in existing curricular and co-curricular activities. The projects selected were: 1) the selection and piloting of an ePortfolio tool for reflection, 2) a pilot of reflective “labs” for first years during the J-term 185 experience, 3) planning for a sophomore orientation event, 4) a pilot to embed reflection alongside work study experiences, and 5) exploring opportunities for reflection in the major and the curriculum more broadly. The rest of this report serves as a summary of those groups’ activities during the 2017-2018 academic year, as well as visions for their “next steps” as this work continues more formally as a part of a year one activity under the college’s strategic plan (Activity 1.4.1).

Additionally, we formed a steering committee to serve as a coordinating body for communication across pilot/planning groups, as well as to provide feedback to groups as they moved through their pilots. While this was not a formal decision-making body, this group was important for maintaining a collective identity and purpose to the work. The steering committee developed and adopted a common purpose statement in the fall of 2017, which was:

To cultivate student reflection - especially in the sophomore year - that strengthens self-understanding and enhances vocational discovery. This work will help students understand and articulate the value of the liberal arts and envision their own contributions to the common good.

2017-2018 Steering Committee:

Andrew Bailey (co-facilitator)	Jeff Dintaman	Brenda Ranum
Rachel Brummel (co-facilitator)	Anne Edison-Albright	Kristin Swanson
Sean Burke	Erin Flater	Sarah Wilder
Destiny Crider	Emily Neal	Jeff Wilkerson

Working Group #1: e-Portfolio Tool

Members

- Jon Christy - Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
- Erin Flater - Associate Professor of Physics
- Carol Johnston - Assistant Director of the Career Center
- Kristin Swanson - Registrar and Assistant to the Dean for Advising
- Sarah Wilder - Assistant Professor of Communication Studies
- Molly Wilker - Assistant Professor of Chemistry
- Jeff Wilkerson - Associate Dean and Director of Faculty Development

2017-18 Goals

- Make a decision on whether Luther should continue to use Digication into spring 2018 as its e-portfolio platform.
- Determine if there is evidence that the use of an e-portfolio enhances student learning and reflection and creates observable positive outcomes.
- Learn how to best use an e-portfolio tool at Luther College. Initial questions included:
 - When are the best times to introduce students to an e-portfolio, and how should it be introduced?
 - What are the best methods to use to implement an e-portfolio platform?
 - Which venues (e.g. courses, work study, in the major, advising, etc.) provide the best opportunities for reflection?

2017-18 Summary

We started out the 2017-2018 academic year with a pilot of Digication as a potential eportfolio platform. In late August 2017 we organized a sequence of workshops for faculty and staff to introduce the goals of the e-portfolio pilot and the Digication platform. There were 27 faculty and staff who attended those workshops and of those individuals, 10 faculty members (including 5 faculty from the e-portfolio working group) started using Digication in a course or with their advisees at the beginning of the semester. Some of those faculty members stopped using Digication within a few weeks because of the difficulty in using the platform.

As the feedback came back consistently from faculty and students about the difficulty of use of Digication, the committee decided to investigate other platform options for the future. Mahara, Google Sites, and LiveText were considered. Of those options, Google Sites rose to the top as the most promising option, due to its user-friendliness and the fact that it would cost nothing to use.

We decided to use Spring 2018 to work with ITS to learn more about Google Sites and try to better understand the ways it can be used for e-portfolios on our campus. We presented a report for faculty Division meetings in March 2018 that summarized our work so far and our plans for the rest of the academic year.

We planned a series of spring and summer workshops in order to introduce faculty to Google Sites as a eportfolio platform, and to help guide faculty and staff in developing use of eportfolios in their classes, in programs, in advising, and for work study. In April 2018, the eportfolio working group, in collaboration with ITS, hosted two, 1-hour *Introduction to using Google Sites for Creating Eportfolios* workshops for any faculty or staff member interested in learning more about how to use Google Sites for eportfolios. 14 faculty and staff attended that workshop. On June 13, 2018, we will host a longer workshop that will naturally allow time for discussion of pedagogical goals for using eportfolios at the college level and specifically, at Luther. There will also be time to learn about the technical aspects on how to use Google Sites and play around with creating sites.

Next Steps:

Goals for the 2018-19 academic year:

- With participants of these workshops and other interested faculty and staff, launch a new pilot of Google sites during the 2018-2019 academic year.
- Create and provide resources for faculty and staff to help them develop eportfolios for various purposes. Some resources include:
 - Sophomore eportfolio template
 - Rubric for assessing student work
 - Example course assignment guidelines
- Come up with suggested learning outcomes for eportfolios
 - Visual communication skill development
 - Evidence of reflection on learning
- Make intentional connections with other Sophomore Initiative working groups
 - To encourage other working groups to use eportfolios for their tasks next year
 - To determine when to introduce eportfolios to students (probably sophomore year or the first year)
- Work with Assessment Committee to figure out what assessment information can be gathered from eportfolios

Working Group #2: J-term Reflection “Lab” Experience

Members

- Rachel Brummel - Assistant Professor of Env. Studies/Political Science
- Destiny Crider - Anthropology Lab and Collections Manager
- Anne Edison-Albright - College Pastor
- Emily Neal - Assistant Director, Center for Sustainable Communities
- Brenda Ranum - Director of the Career Center

2017-18 Goals

Students participating in J-term “lab” pilots will:

- Reflect on the first semester college experience in support of academic and personal growth so that students may make connections across the liberal arts.

- Use essential learning outcomes identified by Luther All College Learning Goals to articulate the value of a liberal arts perspective.
- Increase their self-authorship and self-efficacy through activities that encourage reflection on strengths, identity, values, and future goals.
- Build and practice the skill of networking through informational interviewing.
- Use information from various sources, including alumni interviews, to grow their sense of self, vocation, and choices.

2017-18 Summary

During the fall of 2017, our group planned a reflective experience for first year students during J-term called “Self in Context” or informally, “Selfie Labs”, guided by the goals articulated above. In conversations with learning communities the previous year, we had identified the Jterm 185 experience as an opportunity for a common experience to embed reflection into the experiences of students, and during a particularly pivotal time between students’ fall and spring semesters at Luther.

Over the course of three sessions and a total of 6 contact hours, students participated in pilot “Selfie Labs”, facilitated by our planning group members. In all, 67 students from four classes participated: Jeff Dintaman’s (VPA) Theatre 185: Theatre Laboratory, Rachel Brummel’s (Environmental Studies and Political Science) ENVS 185: Society and the Sixth Mass Extinction, Holly Moore’s (Philosophy) PHIL 185: Big Questions, and Storm Bailey’s (Philosophy) PHIL 185: Faith & Reason. All participating students met for a reflective activity the first three Wednesdays of the 3.5 week J-term. The first session, all classes met jointly for a session called “Looking Backward”, focused on reflecting on their first semester at Luther, as well as identifying patterns and common threads within their liberal arts experience thus far. To prepare, students wrote a response to a series of reflective prompts they submitted as an assignment. In the “Looking Outward and Forward” sessions, students engaged with upperclassmen in a panel and Q & A session and also completed an informational interview with an alum. For the “Looking Inward” session, students undertook activities to explore their own strengths, values, and identity to think about how that should inform the decisions and experiences at Luther and beyond.

In the spring of 2018, this group synthesized student feedback and assessment, spoke with participating faculty, and ultimately reflected on the value and worth of the experience. Participating faculty commented on the value of the experiences, and student assessment demonstrated both strong learning outcomes, as well as student satisfaction with the selfie labs. For example, over 82% of students responding said that the college should continue the “Self in Context” Jterm experience in some form.

Next Steps:

We see this as a pivotal point where we might potentially meet all students for a reflective experience focused particularly on gaining understanding of the value of the liberal arts and beginning to learn skills such as informational interviewing. In the future, we would like to explore cutting the sessions down to two (the middle two weeks of Jterm) as well as training upperclass students to lead and facilitate the reflective activities. Our group still has questions about the capacity to scale up this work to all 185 sections, though we do hope to continue to use the 185s as a common touchpoint for reflection. Jterm 2019, for example, we hope to engage students in a peer-mentorship model under a new "Vocation across the Academy" grant from CiCNet VUE.

Working Group #3: Sophomore Orientation

Members

- Andrew Bailey - Assistant Controller
- Rachel Brummel - Assistant Professor of Env. Studies/Political Science
- Nan Hibbs - Assistant Director, Assessment & Institutional Research
- Dan Marlow - Assistant Director of the Career Center
- Emily Neal - Assistant Director, Center for Sustainable Communities

2017-18 Goals

- Explore possible models for a common sophomore orientation experience at Luther College.
- Plan the implementation of a sophomore welcome and celebration event for fall 2018.
- Explore the possibility of sophomore retreats accessible to all sophomores to pilot in 2019-20.

2017-18 Summary

The group considered different models for a common sophomore experience including retreats, seminars, and a kickoff event. While the group is still interested in piloting sophomore retreats in the future, it decided to focus on organizing a kickoff event for sophomores in the fall of 2018. The group liked the kickoff event as the best way to reach all sophomores and empower them to make the most of their sophomore year.

The fall 2018 orientation event will be called Sophomores on the Commons, and it will take place in the evening on Thursday, August 30. The event will begin with a 45 minute CFL program that will be open to the entire campus community. The program will feature presentations from a current senior, an alum, and a faculty member who will offer up advice and insights that they would like to have received at the start of their sophomore years. Following the CFL program, all sophomores will attend a celebratory dinner on Bentdahl

Commons. Sophomores will sit at tables with faculty volunteers who will guide them in reflective discussion and encourage them to commit to at least two activities from a list of academic, co-curricular, and career-focused opportunities. Activities across campus will be scheduled around the orientation event in order to maximize participation.

The group identified the following goals and outcomes for Sophomores on the Commons:

Goal 1 - Celebrate the return of sophomores.

- Welcome sophomores back to campus and recognize their collective achievement.
- Provide a special dinner for sophomores at the center of campus.
- Outcomes:
 - 80% attendance rate
 - Sophomores feel celebrated, supported, empowered, hopeful, and excited

Goal 2 - Frame the developmental tasks for the upcoming year of the sophomores' liberal arts experience.

- Provide the following messages to sophomores:
 - It's okay to be unsure or confused.
 - You are in a new position in the Luther community--be good role models and set the tone for the community you want.
 - Work to be your own author and explorer of your liberal arts experience in the context of who you want to be in the world.
- Identify resources and opportunities for vocational, curricular, and co-curricular exploration.
- Outcomes:
 - Sophomores understand how the second year is a unique time in the undergraduate liberal arts experience.
 - Distribute sophomore exploration menu of important activities/events.
 - Sophomores commit to at least two activities from the menu.

Goal 3 - Strengthen the connection between sophomores and the faculty.

- Kick off a year of reflection with faculty-facilitated dinner table conversation.
- Outcomes:
 - Faculty volunteers lead reflective discussions with common prompts.
 - Sophomores begin looking backward and forward as well as inward and outward as the start of a recurring practice.

Next Steps

The cabinet has endorsed the Sophomores on the Commons proposal and provided funding to carry out the event. Work has begun to implement the event and will continue throughout the summer. The goal is for the fall 2018 event to be the first instance of a new tradition that is embedded into the Luther experience.

- Form an implementation group to organize all of the event details and carry out Sophomores on the Commons.
- Create an assessment plan to evaluate and improve Sophomores on the Commons.
- Ask incoming first year students to write a letter to themselves at the start of their sophomore year, in order to incorporate the opening of such a letter into future iterations of Sophomores on the Commons.
- Develop a consistent framing of the sophomore experience that connects to other strategic plan activities.
- Secure funding within the operating budget for an annual sophomore orientation event.
- Consider a pilot of a sophomore retreat that builds on the framework of Sophomores on the Commons.

Working Group #4: Work Study

Members

- Andrew Bailey - Assistant Controller
- Destiny Crider - Anthropology Lab and Collections Manager
- Jeff Dintaman - Professor of Theatre
- Missy Flack - Student Employment Coordinator
- Corey Landstrom - Vice President and Dean for Student Life

2017-18 Goals

- Create a foundational reflection exercise that students will complete before beginning a work study position after the first year.
- Create a self-assessment form that all work study students will complete once per semester in order to reflect on job performance, contributions to the Luther community, and skill development. Self-assessment responses will be shared with supervisors to facilitate meaningful conversations.
- Create a universal work study job description template that includes information about the skills that are utilized in each position at Luther.

2017-18 Summary

The group drafted Google forms to pilot both a reflection exercise for rising sophomores and a self-assessment for all work study students. Based on pilot responses and feedback, the group decided that the two reflection tools were similar enough that a special reflection exercise would be redundant to rising sophomores who are also completing self-assessments. The group decided to pursue only the self-assessment tool.

A December pilot of the self-assessment Google form elicited 44 responses. Feedback from the pilot prompted small changes to the form, but overall the feedback was positive. In March, the work study group sent the form to all work study supervisors and encouraged them to ask their student employees to complete the self-assessment. 301 different students

submitted 317 responses, for a response rate of about 25%. For the most part, the student responses indicated sincere reflection of work study experiences.

Before and after completing the self-assessment, students were directed to forward their responses to their supervisors. Based on conversations with supervisors, only about half of the students who completed the form shared their responses. Many supervisors requested a report of their student employees' responses from the work study group. The group utilized a spreadsheet template to share responses in an organized format, but even with some automation through Excel functions, the central process for compiling and distributing reports to supervisors is inefficient.

The group did not have time to begin the process of updating student position descriptions in a consistent format that emphasizes key competencies/skills from a common, institutional set of competencies/skills. The self-assessment form incorporates the Luther College Student Life learning outcomes that are influenced by the list of competencies lifted up by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), with the addition of one new competency--ethical decision making. The form introduces the Student Life learning outcomes within the context of the comprehensive set of student learning goals approved by the Luther faculty in 2007. The work study group identified the need for common language to articulate how Luther's academic program develops skills and behaviors that contribute value to employers and service projects. That common language would enable students to better tell the story of their Luther experience in the pursuit of opportunities after graduation.

Next Steps

The decision to abandon the idea for a reflective exercise for rising sophomores removed the only sophomore-specific goal for utilizing reflection to improve the work study experience offered by Luther. As a result, the ongoing objectives for work study should be carried on outside of the scope of the Next Steps for Sophomores initiative.

- Implement the self-assessment tool as Luther requirement, with supervisors responsible for ensuring student employees complete the self-assessment each spring and share their responses.
- Create a universal work study job description template that includes information about the skills that are utilized in each position at Luther and compile a database through which students can browse student positions by key skills.
- Maintain work study momentum until strategic plan activity 2.2.2 is underway and can incorporate this effort to enhance work study through reflection.

Work Group #5: Sophomore Reflection in the Major

Members

- Storm Bailey - Professor of Philosophy

- Sean Burke - Associate Professor of Religion
- Pedro Dos Santos - Assistant Professor of Political Science
- Mike Garcia - Assistant Professor of English
- Britt Rhodes - Associate Professor of Social Work

2017-18 Goal

- Develop a curricular project involving reflection to pilot in the 2018-19 academic year.

2017-18 Summary

We spent the fall semester exploring and considering four possible projects to pilot in the 2018-19 academic year: 1) developing a new seven-week course; 2) incorporating reflection into existing departmental career talk programs; 3) incorporating reflection into existing departmental gateway courses; and 4) incorporating reflection into the process of declaring a major. Based on feasibility and the goal of reaching every single student, the group decided to develop a pilot project that would incorporate reflection into the process of declaring a major.

We spent the spring semester figuring out the procedural and technical issues involved in adding an opportunity for reflection to the two different modes students use to declare a major: 1) the hard-copy materials distributed to students in their 185 course in January Term; and 2) the electronic form by which students declare a major at all other times. We developed the prompt that we will use, the procedure by which the materials will be distributed, and a plan for assessing the pilot.

Next Steps for 2018-19

Sean Burke will work with Web Services and the Registrar's Office this summer to incorporate the prompt the group developed into the electronic form and to work out how hard copies will be distributed and collected in the context of 185's in January Term. Sean will receive a copy of each student's reflection, which he will distribute to each department head to be shared with the student's advisor in the major. He will also archive the materials for assessment. Toward the end of the 2018-19 academic year, a survey will be distributed to all advisors who received reflections to assess their impact on advising. Sean will then gather the available members of the working group, along with some of the advisors who made use of the reflections, to read through the reflections and the survey results to assess the quality of the reflections and their impact on advising.