The Illinois Regional Eportfolio Partnership (IREP)

Description/Background
- A partnership of Illinois higher education institutions focused on using eportfolios as a means of facilitating student success, articulating competencies among institutions, and sharing strategies for achieving organizational goals
- An outgrowth of collaboration between NIU General Education, Office of Assessment Services, and Office of the Provost
- Initial IREP meeting, funded by NIU and IBHE, was held at the September 12, 2014 Northern Illinois Electronic Portfolio Symposium and drew 30 representatives from 6 universities and 5 community colleges, including several P-20 Network institutions
- NIU’s P-20 Center obtained IBHE funding for an IREP pilot project involving multiple Illinois institutions as part of engaging higher education institutions in implementing the Illinois Learning Standards, which provide foundational competencies for articulation.

Purpose/Objectives
- Explore ways in which eportfolios can be used to facilitate students’ transfer across institutions in the Illinois higher education system
- Demonstrate the use of eportfolios as a means of assessing college and career readiness and as a way to complement / supplement the use of standardized tests
- Share successes and develop a compelling case for the adoption of eportfolios within the Illinois higher education system
- Share lessons learned in the implementation and use of eportfolios
- Explore ways that eportfolios can foster inter-institution articulation at all levels
- Establish a nationally recognized model for the integrated use of eportfolios across the Illinois higher education system.

Project Goals
- Demonstrate a viable alternative to standardized testing for assessing common core competencies by sharing and collaborating on a mindset of “folio thinking” that requires iterative reflection on learning and professional pathways
- Clarify the issues (technical, procedural, and pedagogical) that need to be addressed in order to facilitate the transfer of student portfolios across institutions
- Determine whether an eportfolio can help to better assess incoming students’ educational needs as they move across institutions
- Show how an eportfolio could help students feel better prepared to transition to a new school or the marketplace
Next Steps

- Obtain letters of support (requires action from P-20 Network institutions)
- Establish IREP steering committee: one or two representatives from each partner institution (requires action from P-20 Network institutions)
- Hold regular meetings focusing on transfer and articulation through eportfolios
- Refine IREP purpose, objectives, and implementation strategies
- Define and establish a multi-institution eportfolio pilot project
  - Focus on foundational competencies required for college and career readiness:
    - Written and oral communication
    - Critical thinking and problem solving
    - Quantitative and qualitative literacy
    - Collaboration and teamwork
  - Focus on a specific professional domain where there is already a substantial degree of student movement, and develop
    - Common definitions of core competencies
    - Clear artifacts that demonstrate college and career readiness
    - Established assessment rubrics

Possible Pilot Projects

- First-Year Composition pilot, that would use eportfolio to help partner institutions coordinate their efforts to place, support, and assess students’ writing abilities to make transfer easier
- Nursing pilot that would use eportfolio to help partner institutions place, support, and assess nursing students in more general competencies, including writing and critical thinking

General Plan for Pilot Projects

- Identify participating institutions/programs
- Recruit student and faculty representatives from each institution/level
- Apply for external funding for pilot project
- Develop or buy-into project outcomes
- Agree on common definitions of relevant student SLOs
- Identify possible student artifacts that would illustrate SLOs at each level/institution
- Determine the extent to which a common template or format is needed or desired
- Identify and share assessment criteria to be used at each institution/level

Contact Michael Day (mday@niu.edu) for more information.