The Socratic Portfolio: A Guide for Future Faculty

Laura L. B. Border, *University of Colorado, Boulder*

The apprentice relationship graduate students share with faculty mentors is founded on dialogue and collaboration. Under this faculty tutelage, graduate students learn to perform teaching, research, and service inform a faculty career. The Socratic portfolio, introduced and described in this essay, provides a tool and a method to facilitate and document the faculty-graduate student apprenticeship. The Socratic portfolio process encourages graduate students and faculty to engage in a conversation about faculty roles and responsibilities, while addressing and developing graduate students' goals and objectives. The resulting inquiry-based portfolio is, at its heart, a response to the Socratic adage, "Know thyself."

The construction of a Socratic portfolio allows graduate students who choose the academic path to explore, articulate, and master skills in teaching, research, and service with the assistance of experienced mentors. It is essential that the Socratic portfolio be based on a dialogue between the graduate student and multiple mentors and serve as a tool of inquiry and reflection throughout the graduate program. The Socratic portfolio requires graduate students to conceptualize and sometimes hypothesize how they might approach the entire constellation of academic responsibilities. Graduate students need to begin to articulate and understand how they enact or plan to enact their philosophical beliefs and educational theories in the classroom, the lab, the library or studio, and in the academic and local community. The Socratic portfolio furnishes novice graduate students with a map to guide them as they proceed through the educational and job requirements of the degree while positioning themselves for a focused job search and a successful career. It also serves the central function of introducing graduate students to the various aspects of the scholarly life, while allowing them and their mentors to adjust to changes in faculty roles over time.

Such changes in faculty roles were articulated by the late Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching when he divided them into the scholarship of teaching, discovery, engagement, and integration (Boyer 1990). The subsequent Carnegie Scholars program has developed into a national effort to introduce tenured faculty to Boyer's concepts. Future faculty can use the Socratic portfolio to explore their fit with each of these areas. As such, a Socratic portfolio becomes the basis for future publications on Boyer's areas of scholarship. Because the Socratic portfolio is inquiry based and developmental, graduate students should begin to work with faculty mentors when they begin their first semester in the program. While all degree programs do not demand the same amount of time or have the same requirements, the following plan is provided as a guide to developing the Socratic portfolio.

During the first year in graduate school, most graduate students take required coursework in the discipline and begin workshops, seminars, or methodology courses on teaching. Some serve as teaching or research assistants. It is important for them to begin to ask what teaching, research, and service mean to them and to interview faculty mentors and peers to inquire about their individual perceptions of faculty roles. They might attend an introductory workshop or receive some kind of assistance from a faculty mentor on how to begin to construct their academic career via the Socratic portfolio process. At the same time, graduate students can begin to gather information and collect data—such as quizzes, worksheets, midterm evaluations, and student work—from their lectures, recitations, or labs. When collecting materials and evidence, graduate students can start a "catch" file or drawer that is a repository for all the work they accomplish, organized according to the teaching, research, and service sections, and the appendices. By the end of the year, beginning graduate students should be able to draft a philosophy of teaching and learning.

During the second and third year of graduate school, most graduate students finish required course work, attend research colloquia, and begin research activities. Some continue to teach recitations, labs, or classes. Such activities bring up many questions and provide opportunities for discussion with mentors and peers. Information and data collection should continue and by the end of the second year, graduate students should be ready to draft a statement of their goals for research. By the end of the third year, a draft of their service interests should be complete. During their fourth year, they should integrate site visits to neighboring college campuses to compare and contrast academic cultures, while continuing to question and dialogue with faculty mentors and peers. An early version of the Socratic portfolio could be submitted for teaching awards or job placement in the department. By the end of the fourth year, potential job paths, post-doc opportunities, and potential academic positions should become the focus of discussion.

In their fifth year, students could perform a research colloquium or practice a teaching colloquium in the department or on a neighboring campus (Shulman 1995). At this point it is good for students to write a reflective essay on the kind of campus environment they most enjoy and to discuss it with their mentors. By the end of the fifth year, portfolio authors should be ready to prepare for the job search and should revise notes, questions, essays, information, and evidence in order to construct a Socratic portfolio that they can submit for job search purposes. The sixth year of their program may then be devoted to teaching and research duties, defending the dissertation, and applying and interviewing for jobs or post-docs.

Producing the Socratic Portfolio

Socratic dialogue is important to the development of the content of the portfolio; however, mentors should also assist graduate students in designing the portfolio as an actual product. The final result should be visually appealing, easy to read, and the layout should be easy to understand. A table of contents with pages listed is important to assist the reader in grasping how the materials are put together. Readers will appreciate a well-organized and clearly articulated composition that guides them chronologically, thematically, and analytically through each section. Peter Seldin stresses that the narrative section of a teaching portfolio is usually under seven pages, but comprehensive—with the teaching biography covering one's career and with teaching improvement focusing on the most recent years (Seldin 1991, 25). A graduate student's discussion of teaching, research, and service agendas should be under seven pages; materials and evidence should be carefully selected to support the questions being asked and the argument being made, just as they are in any other scholarly paper. The Socratic portfolio is divided into two major written sections: the narrative section that includes descriptions of teaching, research, and service, and the appendices that contain all ancillary material.

Developing the Narrative Section of the Socratic Portfolio

Stylistically, Socratic portfolios should represent the author's voice, provide questions for reflection, and suggest a unique approach to the discipline. Writing a Socratic portfolio is a bit like writing a paper on oneself. Nancy Chism recommends that the philosophy statement create "a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to career" (Chism 1997, 1). The narrative part of the Socratic portfolio should follow a logical format with sections on teaching, research, and academic service. In the narrative section of the Socratic portfolio, the author poses questions about teaching, learning, research and service; writes a reflective essay on his or her experiences, beliefs, and theories; and describes future academic career goals.

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The Teaching Section

The teaching section of the Socratic portfolio might include: a philosophy of teaching and learning; a teaching biography that contains current and future teaching goals; diversity and ethics statements; a list of courses taught; a section on efforts made to improve teaching; a section on undergraduate mentoring roles; and a final section on assessment and evaluation. Most publications on the teaching portfolio refer to a philosophy of or statement on teaching. However, a focus on the teaching aspect of the statement may cause graduate students' statements to focus more on personal development skills than on the actual reality of the classroom. It is more useful to view this statement as encapsulating theories about and experiences with teaching and learning in the author's own classrooms. Barbara Millis describes her view of the reflective essay as being "…like a unified composition…governed by a 'controlling idea'…guiding principle…[or]… underlying passion…" (Millis 1995, 67). As Millis suggests, it is important to use a metaphor, focus on a theory of education, or develop an approach that is supported by the attached documentation. For example, a focus on the teacher as facilitator rather than as a sage on stage, on learning styles or collaborative learning, or perhaps a new technological approach that the graduate student has developed allows a theme to flow throughout the narrative.

Graduate students' responsibilities usually extend from grading, to teaching recitations or laboratories, through actually teaching as instructor of record, or developing a syllabus for an existing course. Technological expertise and interests may allow some graduate students to develop and then describe entirely new multimedia or interdisciplinary courses. It is also important to emphasize the working relationship that has been established with the faculty mentors. For example, if graduate students have had the opportunity to work with different methodologies or technologies through collaborations with various faculty members, extracting one guiding principle from them makes it easier for the graduate student to create the narrative. The guiding principle in courses devoted to service learning, problem-based learning, active learning, or nonbiased teaching might be stated as "student engagement" for example.

At most institutions, graduate students are afforded many opportunities to improve their teaching; many teaching assistants are now able to pursue some level of certification. They may be involved in methodology courses within their departments or be able to attend workshops, seminars, or conferences on teaching. Similarly, participation in PFF activities and faculty mentorships on partner campuses can be powerful demonstrations of graduate students' commitment to develop as scholars. Some campuses also offer opportunities for graduate students to serve as lead graduate teachers through a teaching program or through their home department. Such opportunities often provide a meta-level of preparation, which needs to be appropriately explained and documented in the portfolio.

The final part of the teaching section of the narrative should contain a self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses; descriptions, analyses, and explanations of student course evaluations; commentary on records of observation by peers; and written faculty observations and evaluations. Self-evaluations might include reflections on how the teacher has evolved and a perspective on how future improvement might occur. Undergraduate students usually have the opportunity to evaluate instructors via course evaluations. The process used locally for student feedback should be described, as should how the teacher responded to students' comments. Some aspects of graduate teacher preparation, such as peer observation, microteaching, and videotape consultation, fall in the realm of formative feedback. If the graduate students have participated in such activities, they should explain and analyze how they benefited from them.

Graduate students are generally beginning teachers and need to be taught to teach, consulted with, guided, and mentored as they progress through the doctorate. Faculty comments may exist in the form of classroom observations, formal evaluations, or recommendation letters. It is important that the nature of each evaluation be described, analyzed, explained, and put into context.

The Research Section

Chris Golde and Timothy Dore's survey on doctoral education and career preparation investigated how well graduate students think they are prepared to carry out research. Graduate students reported that 74.2% were interested in conducting research, 71.7% were confident about their abilities, and 65.1% reported that they were well prepared. However, students felt that they were not knowledgeable about research; few were prepared to publish or had published, and only 44.7% had had progressively more responsible roles on research projects. (Golde and Dore 2001, 12–13). This lack of confidence and information could be bolstered and avoided by adding a research section to the Socratic portfolio. If graduate students begin thinking about, inquiring about, discussing, and writing about their research interests from the beginning of their graduate studies, they are more likely to seek effective mentors and to develop knowledge and confidence as they progress through the program.

The research section of the Socratic portfolio should begin with a statement describing the topic of dissertation and current and future research goals. It should discuss research modalities, such as individual or collaborative team research. If the author has participated on a research team, he or she should explain and document various roles and levels of responsibility. He or she should describe proposals for funding that have been written and grants that have been received; journals and articles that have been read to develop familiarity with the discipline; descriptions of conferences and research colloquia attended; colloquia and conference presentations made; and papers published. If the author has assisted faculty in the mentoring of undergraduate research students, he or she should articulate the experience gained, lessons learned, and skills developed. The author might also include appraisals of proposals submitted and listings of grants or awards received. Internships in business, government, nonprofit, or industry settings that required the use of research skills might include an assessment of how the internship improved collaborative, teamwork, and communicative skills. The research section should end with the author's self-assessment and self-evaluation of his or her research skills and competencies at that point and include informal reviews or formal faculty evaluations of research in process or already completed, and comments from staff at internship sites as well.

The Service Section

Academic service is an important, though often unrecognized and misunderstood part of faculty work. Graduate students often do not participate in academic service because they feel that it interrupts their studies. In fact, Leigh DeNeef's PFF research shows, "Graduate students are astonishingly naïve about how academic institutions really work…" (DeNeef 2002, 9). By creating service as a category in the Socratic portfolio, graduate students may better understand what effective academic service is and how they can integrate it into their teaching and research agendas. In the service section of the portfolio, it is important for the student to articulate a statement that describes his or her understanding and enactment of service, as well as sketching a future service agenda as a faculty member that parallels and supports future teaching and research agendas. The service section should contain descriptions of service in the department, institution, disciplinary associations, or public arena. Such service educates graduate students about faculty culture and faculty life, allows them to begin to understand how institutions work and are managed, and allows them to decide whether faculty work is of interest to them.

Finally, committee work, peer or undergraduate student mentoring, or serving as the graduate student representative are all functions that educate and increase the future faculty member's skills. Rather than simply listing activities, the student should explain how and what he or she learned and how service activities improved his or her other academic and research skills. For example, giving a research colloquia to undergraduates on another campus is academic service, yet also serves as preparation for research presentations at the national level.

Another area that needs highlighting is service to professional organizations. Graduate students may assist with newsletters, awards, and reports, or serve on national conference committees. Such participation provides them with networking opportunities

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and faculty connections that may benefit them in the job market and in research endeavors. The student should present explanations of how such participation has increased his or her access to other professionals in the field, created publishing or consulting opportunities, or increased his or her knowledge of different types of institutions.

Obviously, graduate students should limit the amount of service they carry out, but if, for example, a student works at a voting booth or on a political campaign, the experience may be beneficial experiential learning as well as service to both academic and local communities. Robert Boice, in his discussion of the service activities of exemplary new faculty, notes "Exemplars limit service to about one hour a week for the first four years…and choose service roles closely related to their own most essential activities" (Boice 200, 256). If graduate students actually integrate service into the articulation of their research and teaching interests, it can become a powerful vehicle for professional development.

Assembling Supportive Material in the Appendices

The appendices, or documentation section, should be carefully selected and add less than seven pages to the length of the portfolio. One should place explanatory material in the narrative sections on teaching, research, and service with references to the appropriate section of the appendices. In an email survey of TA developers, respondents indicated that graduate student portfolios differ from faculty portfolios in the type and amount of evidence available (Border 2002). One of its respondents, Elizabeth O'Connor Chandler, University of Chicago, points out, "There is probably less emphasis on the function of strategies *relative to the course* in a graduate student portfolio and more emphasis on the development of particular teaching skills." Even though graduate students may have less work to select from, their documentation should emphasize two dimensions defined by Robert Diamond: "…why the activity was undertaken in the first place and why it is important" (Diamond 1995, 22). Evidence in a graduate student's Socratic portfolio comprises records of recitations, laboratories, or courses taught, research work accomplished, and service activities undertaken. Teaching documentation might include sample syllabi, if available, or descriptions of work accomplished with students in recitation sections or laboratories; worksheets or handouts; quizzes or examinations; web assignments, student projects or creative work; field work problems; or grading rubrics. In the case of graduate students, plans for courses they would like to teach, as well as research and service agendas they would like to undertake, are appropriate as well.

Because graduate students usually learn to teach during their graduate studies, they should include documents that demonstrate professional development through participation in teacher training, PFF programs, or certification programs. One-on-one teaching activities such as tutoring or mentoring undergraduates or other graduate students could be listed. Portfolio writers could then document teaching workshops attended; methodology courses taken, and projects accomplished with faculty mentors or student mentees.

Graduate student teachers may or may not have been evaluated; they may also have taught just a few sections. Diane Williams of Florida State University comments, "Faculty have more options [than graduate students] for following students over a longer period of time to assess the impact of their teaching… [and] more options as to how they will get feedback from students" (Border 2002). Thus, graduate students need to plan for and use mid-term or end-of-term student evaluations to make sure that they have data available. If possible, assessment data from faculty, students, and teacher-training personnel is useful. Student mid-term or end-of-term course evaluations should be summarized with comparative and explanatory data. Reports or letters from faculty who have observed and evaluated the graduate students' teaching efforts are essential. Unsolicited student comments could also be added.

The research appendix could include: documentation of participation in undergraduate research; descriptions of proposals or awards; and abstracts for articles submitted for publication, published, or delivered at conferences. A plan for research projects is also appropriate. Faculty comments and evaluations are important.

The service appendix could include names of committees; records of participation in or observation of local, national, or international political organizations or public policy meetings; and tutoring, mentoring, or technological duties accomplished for the department. The student might also provide a hypothetical service plan for the future in line with his or her disciplinary expertise. The proposal writer includes acknowledgement letters or evaluations of service provided in the past.

Effective Mentors Are Crucial to the Socratic Portfolio Process

The support of concerned mentors is key to the development of an effective Socratic portfolio. Guidance may come from faculty, TA supervisors, PFF project staff, TA development staff, or peers. It is important that the mentor have "wide knowledge of procedures and current instruments to document effective teaching" (Seldin 1993, 4–5). It is also important that the mentor's guidance be grounded in a Socratic dialogue with the student regarding goals, preferences, experiences, and dreams. Working with multiple mentors and readers is a useful strategy in the creation of the Socratic portfolio.

Faculty mentors should be aware of the job market, appreciative of different postsecondary cultures, up to date on current trends in graduate education, and informed about graduate programs such as the PFF program or teaching certification programs on the home campus or on other campuses. An experienced new faculty mentor who has just been on the job market is an excellent choice as a mentor, especially if he or she is a former PFF fellow. On many campuses, Carnegie Scholars might serve as faculty mentors to graduate students within their departments.

Today more academic departments offer methodology courses in teaching in the discipline than in the past. TA supervisors responsible for instruction in such courses might require that sections of the portfolio be written to fulfill coursework requirements.

Many research campuses, including the ivy league schools, now have centralized TA development offices. TA development and PFF staff are specialists trained to work with graduate students and are often in charge of workshops and activities. Their time is devoted to consulting with and assisting graduate students. TA development offices usually have library and web resources and up-to-date publications on graduate education. In an essay on her graduate experience, Christine Stanley, an experienced TA developer and a current faculty mentor at Texas A&M, emphasized: "Having more that one mentor helped me to expand a variety of social and professional networks and also to create allies and alliances" (Stanley 1994, 124).

Peers may be helpful and resourceful mentors. For example, they might visit each other's classes and offer opinions. They could practice asking analytical Socratic questions about the portfolio's content. They might even read each other's portfolios from a grant, awards, or a hiring committee's point of view.

Faculty mentors should also read the portfolio from a hiring committee's perspective in order to give productive feedback. For example, hiring committees want to know if graduate students have the appropriate skills, education, training, and qualifications for the job. Do their approaches fit with the department's needs? Do they know where they want to go in their careers and do their personal goals match the position? Do they have in mind teaching, research, and service agendas in line with departmental values? Have they made adequate progress toward their academic goals? And, especially, have they demonstrated that they are likely to continue to be scholars and assets to the institution?

If graduate students lack supportive mentors, many other resources are available to them. The American Association for Higher Education, the American Political Science Association; the Stanford Learning lab, the Woodrow Wilson Responsive PhD initiative, the University of Washington, and Preparing Future Faculty initiative provide resources on their web sites that support portfolio development.

Socratic Portfolios for Multiple Purposes

The audience for whom the portfolio is intended has a very definite impact on the style, format, organization, length, and design of the portfolio. Kathleen Yancey and Irwin Weiser state, "From its inception, the

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portfolio has assumed that its composer could exercise some agency, would have something to say worth hearing and an audience who wished to hear" (Yancey and Weiser 1997, 14). Socratic portfolios should be targeted to the audience in question. A full-length formative portfolio should never be submitted as a summative document. Rather a shortened and polished summative version should be used for external evaluation of any sort. If it is for a campus awards committee, it should be short and respond to the requirements of the award. For a teaching job in the department, it should focus on departmental needs. To fulfill certification requirements, it should demonstrate mastery and completion of expected work. For submission to a hiring committee at a college or university, the Socratic portfolio should respond carefully to the job announcement, the culture of the campus in question, and the aspirations the applicant would have if working for the institution in question.

One of the major benefits of creating a Socratic portfolio is simply the process. Successful job applicants from the institutions who responded to Border's survey report that having prepared the portfolio allowed them to be articulate and convincing in their oral interviews (Border 2002). They also report that writing the portfolio helped them target institutions that are a good fit for their interests and to have the confidence not to apply at institutions that are not. Portfolios benefit not only the writer but also the readers. A Socratic portfolio can help a hiring committee to clarify the exigencies of a position so that hires are more likely to fit the needs of the department. For example, Maryellen Weimer, editor of *The Teaching Professor,* suggests that hiring committees use submitted portfolios "to focus interviews and discussions with potential candidates" (Weimer 1997, 1).

Conclusion

Socratic portfolios allow future faculty to begin to articulate values and goals. Pat Hutchings, of the Carnegie Foundation, states, "…portfolios help graduate students develop a conception of teaching as scholarly, intellectual work" (Hutchings 1998, 239). The Socratic portfolio assures that they develop clear conceptions of research and service as scholarly and intellectual work as well. Those who begin the process during the first year of their degree program will develop good habits in collecting, selecting, and evaluating evidence of their teaching practice and will learn early to seek out meaningful dialogue with and guidance from their mentors. They will also develop a scholarly vocabulary and frame of reference. Broadening the portfolio to address all aspects of scholarly work permits graduate students to begin to position themselves within their discipline and within a postsecondary culture that corresponds to their values and goals.

Because graduate students are poised to move from student status to professional status, they need to take themselves and their careers seriously from the beginning. Thus, the most important goal of the entire Socratic portfolio process is to answer for themselves: Who are you? What do you want to be and do? Why, where, how, and when do you want to do it? And, finally, with and for whom do you want to work? Hillary Hamann, a graduate student at the University of Colorado at Boulder wrote in her portfolio: "By talking with faculty and administrators…I have been better able to define the type of environment in which I would like to teach. The most interesting part of my experience has been the dialogue I have had with faculty and administrators about topics ranging from teaching to tenure to university planning" (Hamann 2001). Like Hillary, graduate students should ask these questions and be able to provide satisfactory answers before they proceed to apply for academic positions.

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