From: Stefan Stantchev, President, West Campus Faculty Assembly.

To: Arnold Maltz, President, Faculty Assembly.
cc: Frederick Corey, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.
cc: Deborah Clarke, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel, Office of University Provost.

SUMMARY PROJECT REPORT

IMPLEMENTING DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS IN THE HUMANITIES

At the suggestion of the Provost Office, Dr. Stantchev was assigned the task of discussing a summer project about digital portfolios with Dr. Corey. Stefan Stantchev met with Frederick Corey and Christopher Sheehan from UTO, Digital Portfolio Initiative, in July 2017. The Vice Provost expressed a concern with the lack of information about Digital Portfolios among faculty in the humanities. In turn, Dr. Stantchev, who, since July 2016 has served as Program Director of New College's MA in Interdisciplinary Studies program (MAIS), shared his observations about operational aspects of the MAIS program in need of improvement. It was thus agreed that Dr. Stantchev, with technical support from Christopher Sheehan, will 1/examine the suitability of a digital portfolio for MAIS and 2/work to inform West Campus faculty about digital portfolios. Since oversight of New College's graduate programs was transferred from the Dean's Office to the Schools, the final phases of the work were delayed.

Dr. Stantchev's summer project yielded the following results.

Section I. MAIS Digital Portfolio Project
1/ Dr. Stantchev determined that a functional digital portfolio is precisely what MAIS students need to organize their learning experiences within a uniquely diverse graduate program and to facilitate their contacts with prospective mentors. The MAIS digital portfolio will be required for all MAIS students who enter the program starting Fall 2018.
2/ Construction of a Digital Portfolio Template for MAIS students (link below).
3/ Circulation of the Digital Portfolio Template among current MAIS students for their feedback (first submitted opinions attached below).
4/ Faculty feedback (with its transfer to the School of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies the MAIS program needs a new admissions/advisory committee, which will be formed by Oct 6).
5/ Pilot and implementation. Half a dozen students have already expressed interest in signing up for the MAIS digital portfolio pilot. The pilot will be used to test the portfolio before it becomes mandatory for all new MAIS students. Dr. Stantchev has worked with New College graduate advising to include the maintenance of functional digital portfolios in the satisfactory progress to graduation requirements. Students will begin building their digital portfolios during their introductory core course with help from the Program Director, who teaches the class.

Section II. Other Project Results
1/ Dr. Stantchev has arranged for Christopher Sheehan to provide a presentation about digital portfolios to the New College faculty assembly on November 21, 2017.

2/ Dr. Stantchev offered an extended presentation about the MAIS digital portfolio rationale and structure to the faculty of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies. A shorter presentation was offered to the faculty of New College's School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

3/ Dr. Stantchev raised two concerns about some potential drawbacks to Digital Portfolios. The linked MAIS portfolio template seeks to preempt these concerns (see below).

Key Project Results, Extended

I.1. MAIS Digital Portfolio rationale (from the Welcome section of the portfolio):

Why Digital Portfolios?
ASU New College's MA in Interdisciplinary Studies program offers students the unique opportunity to address problems through insights from two or more disciplines. Consequently, the program also hands students "the keys to the university," allowing them to choose from a broad range of graduate courses offered at ASU. With this degree of freedom, however, comes a corresponding amount of challenge and responsibility. Specifically, students are expected to ensure the coherence of their unique plans of study and learning experiences and to identify prospective mentors. In order to aid this challenging process, the MA in Interdisciplinary Studies program requires students to build and maintain digital portfolios. Digital portfolios will l 1/help integrate the varied learning experiences resulting from taking classes in multiple disciplines, 2/allow students to demonstrate core competences, and 3/facilitate the mentor-student relationship. Digital portfolios thus provide a medium for reflection and integration of each student's entire MAIS experience. It is our assertion that the maintenance of digital portfolios will enable a process of continuous self-reflection in which a student's original goals in the program are continuously re-evaluated against the material mastered in core and elective courses.

Mentorship
Identifying the right mentor is one of the most critical decision points during the entire graduate experience. It is also one of the most challenging ones. How can a prospective mentor know whether your interests and theirs are a good match? Granting access to your portfolio to prospective mentors will turn this challenge into a straightforward process as the content of the portfolio should allow the prospective mentor to assess the suitability of your request for mentorship. Similarly, it will allow your mentor to swiftly understand your current strengths and weakness and thus help you design a plan of study that addresses the latter and prepares you for the capstone project.

Please see the complete if not yet fully polished portfolio at:
https://asu.digication.com/new_college_interdisciplinary_studies_ma/Welcome

Student feedback to the full-size MAIS Digital Portfolio template:

Q1: Is the purpose of the digital portfolio requirement clear? Do you have any conceptual concerns about the policy in general?
A: "I think it is a good idea. It will be useful for students...it is not too much extra work/stress...."

B: "Yes, very clear, have no conceptual concerns."

C: "...I am very interested in organizing my academic portfolio...I have all my old assignments emailed to myself as a way to save them...."

D: "Not as such." However, the student would like examples of what content might violate laws or ASU policies, as I have a note in this regard.

Q2: Does each of the other sections explain clearly 1/its purpose and 2/ what you are asked to do? Do you have any specific concerns about individual aspects of the policy?"

A: "The purpose and expectations of all sections seem clear to me"

B: "Yes, it is clear and to the point."

C: "Yes and yes. The only 'concern' I might have is if I am doing or answering the questions accurately." Student suggests providing a sample profile.

D: "Yes. Perhaps my only concern would be in Section 3 as it assumes MAIS students will be pursuing a PhD…." Neither I, nor the other students read it this way but will solicit further feedback.

Q3: Does the portfolio need to feature any other sections?

A: "None that I can think of."

C: proposed adding a section containing a list of prospective mentors and other related information. This was an extremely helpful suggestion. Already fully incorporated.

D: Proposed a technical section, answering all HOW TO questions. To be incorporated.

II. 3. **What faculty must know about digital portfolios.**

As every other technological aid, digital portfolios can be used in multiple ways. As the President of the West Campus Faculty Assembly, Dr. Stantchev raised two concerns with the potential of some digital portfolio designs, specifically about the type of information that can be collected and the ways in which this information can be used. With respect to students, Dr. Stantchev warned that digital portfolios can be used as a way for program directors and advisors to "look over the students' shoulders" in ways that go well beyond helping students stay on track to graduation. In Dr. Stantchev's opinion, directors, mentors, and advisors should use the portfolios to help students, not to micro-manage their learning experiences. With respect to faculty, Dr. Stantchev raised a concern with the potential of some digital portfolio designs to offer not only a way of assessing the program as a whole, but also to serve as an opaque tool for the assessment of teaching at the individual level. Accordingly, Dr. Stantchev has included the following section in the MAIS digital portfolio policy, which distinguishes between program level and individual level.

Program Use of Digital Portfolio Information (from the MAIS digital portfolio template)
Typical uses at the individual level: the program advisor will verify the existence and maintenance of a functional digital portfolio at critical junctures like the time of iPOS approval. Moreover, students frequently ask for advice or express uncertainties about their trajectory from program entry to program completion. While the Digital Portfolio itself is the primary answer to this challenge, it will also allow the program director to provide meaningful advice--if and when you ask for it. At the program level, the program director will use aggregate information derived from all portfolios in order to identify and address any program-wide issues and thus improve the experiences of future students.