Tulane Career Workshop-Portfolio: What Are Employers Looking For?
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“The portfolio is a creative act, showing your skills and imagination, but it is also an act of communication and a tool for self-promotion. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness, but also accept the restrictions and conventions of professionalism, and show that you can get your ideas across in terms that working architects and designers can understand.” - Harold Linton

Harold is an artist, professor, and author of 18 books on architecture, design, visual communications and color.

Work Sample vs. Portfolio?
A work sample (project sheet) is an abridged version of a more comprehensive portfolio. The sheets in a work sample can stand on their own or be grouped together to supplement a resume. A work sample usually includes a few pages of your best work. It can also serve the purpose of a ‘mini portfolio’ for students who are early in their academic careers and may have produced limited content.

A portfolio is a Design Project and a Marketing tool
Start by taking an inventory of your projects and models. Determine which are the strongest and begin to organize and categorize them chronologically, by topic, or other.

- Complete unfinished work
- Develop a 50 word (max) summary of your projects. Text should be supplemental
- Select a font that represents your ‘brand’
- Post-edit photographs, images, and renderings
- Photograph physical models in context or within a framed perspective so they are dynamic and useful tools for understanding your project. Avoid flat, distant and blurry photographs of models.
- Edit your work! Identify the strength of each project so your strongest work can be featured – do not include every drawing, model or image produced. If you built a beautiful, detailed and intricate model, show it off - but if a model was built simply as a process model perhaps include it supplementally or not at all.
- In general, potential employees are most interested in accessing drawing skills (either hand or computer drawings and renderings) since most professional work involves drawing as opposed to physical model making.
Portfolios are personal
What would you like to express about yourself and your work? Strive to craft a portfolio that reflects your personality and strengths as a creative individual. Architecture is as much about abstract problem solving, communication, and creativity as it is about physically designing buildings and spaces. Know your audience and select images that will best speak to your potential employer or position.

- Incorporate process sketches or artwork
- Consider including an image of something non-architectural that you created, designed or crafted: jewelry, pottery, a restored car, photography
- Showcase your travels and interests

Incorporate creative content at different scales
There are many ways to add creative, supplemental content to close out a portfolio. Explore your hobbies and interests - architectural or non-architectural. Creativity is expressed in many ways. And demonstrating the depth of our design training through varied project types, scales and skills is important.

- Craft and Create: millwork, jewelry, furniture, lighting, fashion
- Explore writing: journalism, poetry, music
- Enroll in non-architectural classes and seminars
- Bake and cook

A standout portfolio will secure an interview
Employers flip through portfolios quickly, perhaps spending 5 seconds or less on each spread, and can quickly identify strong portfolios from weak portfolios. Portfolios should be:

- Visually and graphically communicative
- Clear and informative with minimal text. Graphic content should tell the ‘story’
- Illustrative of the applicant’s breadth of skills and interests
- Concise. Less is more (quality over quantity!)
- Consistent but not rigid. The graphic layout can vary throughout

Portfolio Format
Portfolios should be formatted for both print and onscreen viewing. Employers prefer PDFs or links to online publishers such as issuu. Hardcopy portfolios should be reserved for interviews. If given the
opportunity to present your portfolio in an interview, it’s best to describe in detail a single feature project and provide only a brief overview of others.

- 20 pages (max) for a portfolio; 4 pages (max) for a work sample
- Strive for a file size of 20-30MB (max) for a portfolio; 5MB for a work sample (max)
- Organize the portfolio in a landscape format. All pages, including the first and last pages, should be formatted as full-page spreads (add blank pages if necessary).
- Table of Contents are useful
- Start with your strongest project. End with a provocative image or powerful graphic
- Balance space. All images should not be weighted the same. The best images should be the largest.
- Each project should include a brief description, year of completion, and the project location. Ex: Fall 2019, Second Year Studio, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Spell check (read and re-read all text!)
- End with an intentional closing slide that includes your contact information, link to your issuu site, and a short note of appreciation.

Always Critique, Always Refine
Ask professors and peers to review your portfolio. Other resources include the Career Services office, TSA’s AIA (American Institute of Architects) liaison and the AIAS (American Institute of Architecture Students) President. These liaisons can get you in touch with professionals outside of the direct TSA community.

Supplemental Resources
TSA Career Services Office: Kristen Jones, kjones41@tulane.edu
AIA TSA Liaison for 2019/2020: Professor Byron Mouton; bmouton@tulane.edu
AIAS President for 2019/2020: Carson Piontek; cpiontek@tulane.edu
Harold Linton portfolio design: http://portfoliodesign.com/
TSA student Resume and Work Samples: http://architecture.tulane.edu/careers/student-resumes-and-samples
Work Sample vs. Portfolio: https://soa.utexas.edu/sites/default/disk/Work%20Samples%20vs.%20Portfolios.pdf

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