

More tips on Portfolios, by Liz Kneen '08
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When we were on campus recently to talk about portfolios, many of the students stayed for feedback on their portfolios. We jotted down a few notes on trends that we saw across the different portfolios so that you can spread the word about a few common areas of improvement as well as areas where they are looking good.

- Every portfolio we saw was online. This isn't bad, just an interesting trend to note.
- Students could improve the segmentation/hierarchy of the projects on their portfolio. There are often a sea of projects, and nothing pointing me to which ones are the most important to look at.
- When students select images that are the 'icons' for the portfolio entry on their home page, think about what that image tells a reviewer to look for when they click on that project. If it is a project where you want to highlight your cad skills (say the SAE club), show a screen shot of the CAD you did as the icon rather than a team photo.
- A lot of students are formatting their portfolio entries like blog posts--a couple of images and LOTS of text in paragraph form. This helps them write it initially in a conversational tone and think about how they want to talk through the project. However, it assumes that the hiring manager is taking 5-10 minutes to read each entry in detail which is hardly the case. Students should transform the content (which is mostly great, and highlights process points and learnings) into quicker-to-scan posts where I can hit all the major points in 30-60 seconds. This isn't to say that the blog post entries are bad for student reflection, they'll just never get read by a hiring manager and aren't ideal for in-interview presentations.
 - Think about using bold text, bullets to draw the eye
 - Add captions to images (if the website doesn't support that, one trick is that you can do this in photoshop right within the image file)
 - Make process diagrams or other non-photo visual cues to talk about your process
 - Add text call-outs to images of the prototype to point out different components and what is important about them (manufacturing process, design process, user insight that led to design, etc)
- It seems like more classes (like POE) are requiring project teams to do websites documenting their project. This is great! They are well done websites and have a lot of great imagery and process. However they are done as a team, so I have no idea what that student's contribution is and like the tuna-fish-robot story, is the same for every Olin student. Each student should have either their own version (lots of work) or a page on their portfolio with the link to the team website that also talks more about their specific contribution and insights (easier).
- If a student is interested in getting into a user research/strategy role, they could improve working on connecting the insights of what they learned to the end results (the WHY). Being able to ask users questions is a skill many have--being able to transform what you learned into actionable results brings this learning to the next level.
- Before looking at the portfolio, I asked each student "Who am I and what role am I hiring for?" before reviewing. About 2/3 of the students knew exactly who that is. 1/3 could use some help navigating through the "What do I want to be when I grow up" process. The

latter 1/3's portfolio suffered from that lack of focus (e.g. I saw one where the top three posts were an app developed, mini-baja, and an art project).