

## Prior Learning Portfolio Development



# Prior Learning Portfolio Development

*A Guide to Presenting Experiential Learning for  
Academic Credit*

*BAKER LAWLEY*

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY ECAMPUS CENTER  
BOISE, IDAHO



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# **Prior Learning Portfolio Development**

## **A Guide to Presenting Experiential Learning for Academic Credit**

# PRIOR LEARNING **PORTFOLIO** DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTING YOUR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT



BAKER LAWLEY

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Baker Lawley

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# Introduction



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Fast and well-traveled roads may make for a quicker trip, but they also miss the nuance and beauty of the scenic route. For some, the long way around is just worth it. The adventures, mishaps, connections, and coincidences that happen along the way are a teacher like no other.

If this sounds familiar to you when you think about your journey in education, then this textbook is for you. Let's take another look at those years of experiential learning along the scenic route: your work, travel, volunteering, community involvement, entrepreneurship, and whatever else you've explored while not in the traditional classroom setting.

Let's reconsider that experience as **Prior Learning**, and dig in to see what you've learned on the way.

Let's translate that learning into academic terms, and work towards applying for credit where credit is due.

This textbook will lead students with significant experiential backgrounds through the process of exploring, defining, and expressing their prior learning in settings outside of a traditional classroom. Students will study knowledge acquisition theory and apply it to their own experiences, and then will journey through the process of explaining their learning in an academic context in order to petition for credit for specific university courses.

# What to Expect

Boise State University's Bachelor's of Applied Science and Multidisciplinary Studies program offers four upper-division courses that can be challenged for credit through a portfolio and a demonstration of learning.

The courses that can be challenged are:

- **BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety**
  - Study of safety as a vital element of human behavior in society, business, and industry. Examines the safety responsibilities of leaders, managers, and supervisors, focuses on developing skills in planning, implementation, awareness, monitoring, and risk management, and covers governmental influence, hazard awareness and control, operational considerations in the workplace, accidents, and planning.
- **MDS 410: Case Studies in Leadership**
  - This course introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Additionally, leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people.
- **MDS 430: Ethics**
  - This course examines universal ethical principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. Exploration of personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in the light of existing ethical, moral, and social values across disciplines will also be discussed. This course is designed to enable students to form individual positions on ethical conduct and social responsibility, and

both identifies and applies ethical principles to real-world situations.

- **MDS 450: Teamwork and Innovation**
  - This course identifies the creative people, processes, and conditions necessary for fostering innovation and models of innovation, including creative problem-solving with teams. Students show their understanding through demonstration of competency in identifying, describing, fostering, demonstrating, and assessing programs that foster creativity and innovation in a team environment.

## Prior Learning Portfolio Overview

To be awarded credit for prior learning in the BAS/MDS Program at Boise State for MDS 410, 430, or 450, or BAS 425, you must be able to demonstrate the Learning Objectives from the course. This is done by creating an online portfolio and, if requested by your portfolio reviewers, participating in a demonstration of learning.

To frame your learning as you dig in to the textbook, this is a short overview of the components of your online portfolio. The textbook will look into each of the four courses and will go over all of these components in much greater detail in later chapters.

## Components of the Prior Learning Portfolio

The prior learning portfolio is composed of an assortment of documents and artifacts demonstrating previous college-level learning. The portfolio contains three required components that each validates the mastery of course objectives. Those components are:



- **The Resumes**

- There will be two different resumes included: a traditional resume and the PLA resume.
  - The PLA resume is organized by your skills and expertise, rather than a chronological record of your employment
  - The traditional resume—you know what that is!
- Through your resumes, you will highlight more detail about your responsibilities and accomplishments that have supported learning.
- The resumes provides the reviewing committee with a timeline and demonstrates the progression of learning.
- You will include both your PLA skills-based resume as well as your traditional/professional resume in the portfolio.

- **The Educational Statement (a separate Narrative for each course you're challenging)**, which is a document that do the following:

- Examines your personal motivations and educational goals in the context of learning and how you will achieve them.
- Examines and discusses past instances that led to learning.
  - This portion should address each course objective found on the course syllabus, and demonstrate that you have mastered the objectives to the same extent as students who have completed the course. Showcases how your learning applies to the objectives for a specific course.

- **Supporting Documentation**

- You will need to supply documentation to support the narrative.
- Documentation is as individual as the learner, and it may include items such as sample work products, training

certificates, workplace evaluations, letters of recommendation, and/or photographs.

- **The Demonstration of Learning**

- If reviewers find your ePortfolio makes a strong-enough case on its own, they may award credit automatically.
- However, in many cases, reviewers will request to talk with you about your ePortfolio and experiential learning in order to get a more full picture of your knowledge. This Demonstration of Learning will be scheduled after the end of the 7-week semester, and you will be given materials to help you prepare for the interview.

## PART I

# CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND STYLES OF LEARNING



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According to Credit for Prior Learning criteria at Boise State University, students get credit for the *learning* they've achieved through experience, not just for the experience itself.

In order to demonstrate the learning you've done, it's key to understand how we as humans learn. In this chapter, we'll look at several important theories for experiential learning, and begin to understand what you learned by how you learned it.

This chapter will cover Kolb's Learning Theory, Bloom's Taxonomy, Multiple Intelligences, and Emotional Intelligence. We

will also take a close look at what makes experiential learning equivalent to college-level learning.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Comprehend Kolb's theory of experiential learning.
- Synthesize experiential concepts and tie them to your past experiences.
- Analyze Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning and how it can be applied to prior learning.
- Expand cognitive function into multiple intelligences.
- Define college-level learning as acquired through experience.

# I. Realizing What You Already Know

Think of someone you know—perhaps yourself—who knows their job so well they can anticipate problems, work on instinct, and make difficult decisions based on a wealth of experience. Or perhaps you know someone who has an ability to play a musical



Photo by [Ahsanization](#) ツ on [Unsplash](#)

instrument so well that they can express their emotions with it and get into a creative flow state. Maybe there's someone who you think of as a "walking encyclopedia" about their field, someone who seemingly has an amazing amount of professional knowledge.

To know something deeply and thoroughly, you have to earn it. And usually, that kind of knowledge is earned the hard way, through thousands of hours and many mistakes. It takes lots of reflection and self-analysis, and learning from honest feedback. It takes guts and grit. And by the time you get to that state of deep knowledge, you know it so well that it's a part of you. It's hard to explain that knowledge to others sometimes, because it seems so easy after all these years of practice.

But explaining that knowledge and how you attained it is our challenge in Prior Learning. Students in this course often don't realize how much they actually know, because they know it so well that it seems like common knowledge. Or maybe they never thought it "counted", because it didn't happen in a traditional classroom.

**Prior Learning is about disrupting these notions.**

Your learning counts, no matter where it happened.

Prior Learning isn't a shortcut, either. All the years of effort and

mistakes and introspection were important for your learning. (If anything, the traditional classroom is actually the shortcut!)

You will have to prove your learning through your portfolio and interview, but this book and the course will help you make your best case. You are part of a program and a university that honors experiential learning, and we want to help you work towards the credit that Prior Learning offers.

This chapter will help you to start thinking about what you already know, whether you have realized it fully or not. We will look at different ways we learn as humans, and contextualize those learning theories specifically for learning through experience.

## 2. Metacognition and Stages of Learning



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### Metacognition

**Metacognition** is one of the distinctive characteristics of the human mind that enables us to reflect on our own mental states. It is defined as “cognition about cognitive phenomena,” or “thinking about thinking.”<sup>1</sup> Metacognition is reflected in many day-to-day activities, such as when you realize that one strategy is better than another for solving a particular type of problem, or when you are able to recognize

how your own experiences and perspectives may impact how you understand, react to, or judge certain situations.<sup>2</sup>

Metacognition includes two clusters of activities: knowledge

1. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 10906-911.
2. Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-Cognition in Mindfulness: A Conceptual Analysis. *Psychological Thought*, 8(2), 132-141. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v8i2.139>

about cognition and regulation of cognition.<sup>3</sup> *Metacognitive knowledge* refers to a person's knowledge or understanding of cognitive processes. In other words, it is the ability to think about what you know and how you know it. This includes knowledge about your own strengths and limitations as well as factors that may interact to help or hinder your learning. *Metacognitive regulation* builds on this knowledge and refers to a person's ability to regulate cognitive processes during problem-solving. You use metacognitive knowledge to make decisions about how to approach new problems or how to effectively learn new information and skills. This involves using various self-regulatory mechanisms like planning ahead, monitoring your progress, and evaluating your own efficiency and effectiveness in learning a task.<sup>4</sup>

To give a concrete example of these metacognitive activities, let's

3. Cross, D. R., & Paris, S. G. (1988). Developmental and instructional analyses of children's metacognition and reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(2), 2131-142. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 10906-911.
4. Cross, D. R., & Paris, S. G. (1988). Developmental and instructional analyses of children's metacognition and reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(2), 2131-142. Schraw, G., Crippen, K. J., & Hartley, K. (2006). Promoting self-regulation in science education: Metacognition as part of a broader perspective on learning. *Research in Science Education*, 36(1-2), 1-2111-139.



apply them to how you study for an exam. Knowing that your cell phone's notifications tend to distract you from studying is an example of metacognitive knowledge: you are aware of your phone's potential to hinder your learning. Metacognitive regulation requires you to take *action* based on this knowledge and would involve you making the conscious decision to put your cell phone where you cannot see or hear it or to turn it off completely, while you study. In doing so, you regulate your use of your phone to help yourself be more successful in preparing for your exam.

## Stages of the Learning Process

We said earlier that metacognitive knowledge involves thinking about the cognitive process, about what you know and how you know it. An important first step in developing metacognitive knowledge about yourself as a learner is to develop an awareness of how we learn new things. Consider experiences you've had with learning something new, such as learning to tie your shoes or drive a car. You probably began by showing interest in the process, and after some struggling, it became second nature. These experiences were all part of the learning process, which can be described in four stages:

1. **Unconscious incompetence:** This will likely be the easiest learning stage—you don't know what you don't know yet. During this stage, a learner mainly shows interest in something or prepares for learning. For example, if you wanted to learn how to dance, you might watch a video, talk to an instructor, or sign up for a future class. Stage 1 might not take long.
2. **Conscious incompetence:** This stage can be the most difficult for learners because you begin to register how much you need to learn—you *know what you don't know*. This is metacognition at work! Think about the saying "It's easier said than done." In

stage 1 the learner only has to discuss or show interest in a new experience, but in stage 2, he or she begins to apply new skills that contribute to reaching the learning goal. In the dance example above, you would now be learning basic dance steps. Successful completion of this stage relies on practice.

3. **Conscious competence:** You are beginning to master some parts of the learning goal and are feeling some confidence about what you do know. For example, you might now be able to complete basic dance steps with few mistakes and without your instructor reminding you how to do them. Stage 3 requires skill repetition, and metacognition helps you identify where to focus your efforts.
4. **Unconscious competence:** This is the final stage in which learners have successfully practiced and repeated the process they learned so many times that they can do it almost without thinking. At this point in your dancing, you might be able to apply your dance skills to a freestyle dance routine that you create yourself. However, to feel you are a “master” of a particular skill by the time you reach stage 4, you still need to practice constantly and reevaluate which stage you are in so you can keep learning. For example, if you now felt confident in basic dance skills and could perform your own dance routine, perhaps you’d want to explore other kinds of dance, such as tango or swing. That would return you to stage 1 or 2, but you might progress through the stages more quickly this time since you have already acquired some basic dance skills.<sup>5</sup>

Take a moment to watch the following video by Kristos called *The*

5. Mansaray, David. "The Four Stages of Learning: The Path to Becoming an Expert." DavidMansaray.com. 2011. Web. 10 Feb 2016.

*Process of Learning.* As you watch, consider how painful it can be—literally!—to learn something new, but also how much joy can be experienced after it's learned. Note that the video has no audio.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=40>

You can see that the skater, through repeated practice, must identify where he is going wrong, what he is doing that prevents him from landing the skill. Over time, he is able to isolate the problems and gradually correct them, until he is ultimately successful in mastering the new trick.

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## 3. Kolb's Learning Model

In this chapter you will be exploring who you are as a learner. That is, you'll be learning about your own learning style and performing metacognition. This is important for Prior Learning because the better you can understand how you learned the areas of expertise, the better you can explain that expertise to your portfolio reviewers. It's worth the effort to think about your own thinking so that your portfolio expresses your learning in a clear way.

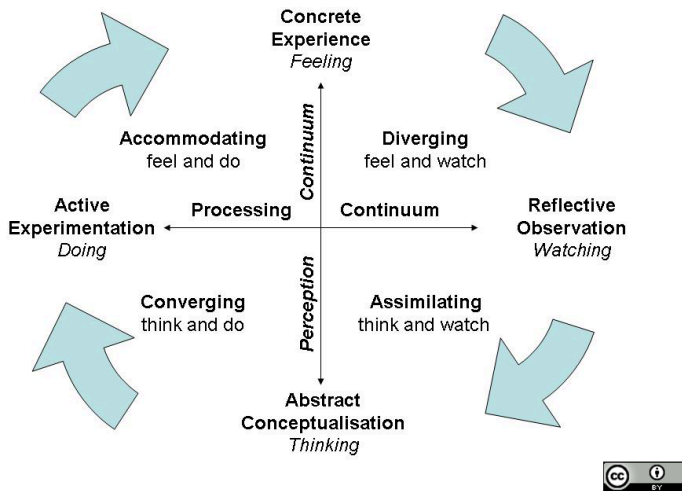
### Experiential Learning

Some say that all learning is experiential, which means learning by doing or learning from direct experience. Humans have been doing this type of learning from the beginning of time. Think about how you learned to walk, ride a bicycle, or play a sport. You start with small steps, then gradually improve, and eventually you don't even have to think about what you do. Sometimes experiential learning is contrasted with academic (or didactic) learning, learning from a book or a lecture. Going to the zoo and learning about animals through observation and interaction is experiential learning; reading about animals in a book is academic learning. There is a place for each kind of learning, but in this course we are focusing on the experiential type.

PLA transforms your experiential learning by allowing you to articulate what you have learned from your experiences.

# Kolb's Learning Model

David Kolb has been a pioneer in the field of experiential learning, visualizing his theory in his Learning Model (1984). His model depicts a cycle. The following is a visualization of his model:



“[Kolb's Learning Styles](#)” 2017 by [Cynthia D'Costa](#)  
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This illustration shows the four learning styles. According to Kolb, a person usually has a preference for at least one learning style but can also develop facility in others with exposure. The four styles, simply put are:

- **Diverger:** Enjoys seeing things from many viewpoints, is imaginative and enjoys working with people
- **Assimilator:** Likes the world of ideas and abstract concepts; does not necessarily need to relate them to real-world

situations

- **Converger:** Enjoys working to solve abstract problems using logic and analysis, but enjoys applying solutions to real-world situations.
- **Accommodator:** Likes solving problems in a hands-on fashion and enjoys taking action

This illustration also displays Kolb's learning cycle. The cycle symbolizes the journey of a person when learning occurs. According to this theory, to learn a person needs to go beyond the concrete experience through a process of reflection, analysis (conceptualization) and testing (experimentation)—basically a scientific process. Kolb described learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” (Kolb, 1984, p.38). Kolb states that learning is a process that requires the learner to move around the wheel. A person can start anywhere on the wheel, depending which is the individual's preferred learning style.

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References:

Kolb D. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

## 4. Bloom's Taxonomy

Kolb's model is really insightful partly because it is so universal. It applies to every kind of learning, from say, a baby taking her first steps to Einstein discovering his theory of relativity.

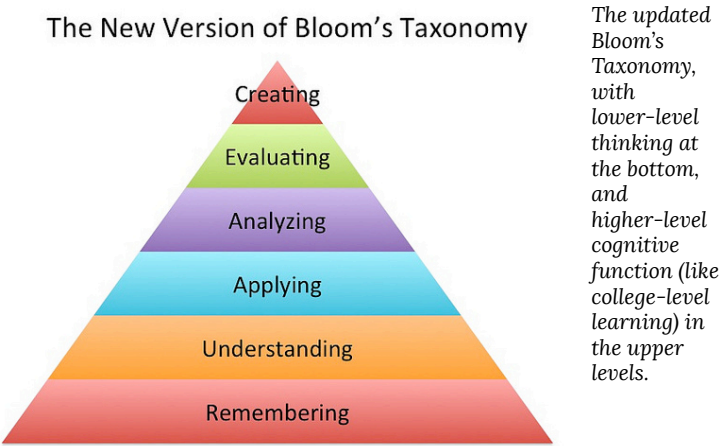
However, another important way to think about the learning process is to differentiate between lower and higher levels of cognitive development. This is a very important consideration for your Prior Learning portfolio, because your task is to demonstrate *college-level* learning.

One helpful way to approach your Prior Learning Portfolio is to think about what makes something a higher level of learning. Using that framework, you can talk about your experience in a college-level context, to make your best case that you've achieved the course's Learning Outcomes. The best-known way to differentiate this is by using **Bloom's Taxonomy**.

In 1956, Dr. Benjamin Bloom, an American educational psychologist who was particularly interested how people learn, chaired a committee of educators that developed and classified a set of learning objectives, which came to be known as Bloom's taxonomy. This classification system has been updated a little since it was first developed, but it remains important for both students and teachers in helping to understand the skills and structures involved in learning.

Bloom's taxonomy divides the cognitive domain of learning into six main learning-skill levels, or learning-skill stages, which are arranged hierarchically—moving from the simplest of functions like remembering and understanding, to more complex learning skills, like applying and analyzing, to the most complex skills—evaluating

and creating. The lower levels are more straightforward and fundamental, and the higher levels are more sophisticated.<sup>1</sup>



The following table describes the six main skill sets within the cognitive domain and gives you information on the level of learning expected for each. Read each description closely for details of what college-level work looks like in each domain (note that the table begins with the lowest level of the taxonomy, Remembering, and works its way towards higher levels of thinking).

1. Wilson, Leslie Owen. "Anderson and Krathwohl - Bloom's Taxonomy Revised." The Second Principle. 2013. Web. 10 Feb 2016. ↴



MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Remembering	When you are skilled in remembering, you can recognize or recall knowledge you've already gained, and you can use it to produce or retrieve definitions, facts, and lists. <i>Remembering may be how you studied in grade school or high school, but college will require you to do more with the information.</i>	identify · relate · list · define · recall · memorize · repeat · record · name
Understanding	Understanding is the ability to grasp or construct meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages. <i>Each college course will introduce you to new concepts, terms, processes, and functions. Once you gain a firm understanding of new information, you'll find it easier to comprehend how or why something works.</i>	restate · locate · report · recognize · explain · express · identify · discuss · describe · review · infer · illustrate · interpret · draw · represent · differentiate · conclude
Applying	When you apply, you use or implement learned material in new and concrete situations. <i>In college you will be tested or assessed on what you've learned in the previous levels. You will be asked to solve problems in new situations by applying knowledge and skills in new ways. You may need to relate abstract ideas to practical situations.</i>	apply · relate · develop · translate · use · operate · organize · employ · restructure · interpret · demonstrate · illustrate · practice · calculate · show · exhibit · dramatize

MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Analyzing	When you analyze, you have the ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components, so that its organizational structure may be better understood. <i>At this level, you will have a clearer sense that you comprehend the content well. You will be able to answer questions such as what if, or why, or how something would work.</i>	analyze · compare · probe · inquire · examine · contrast · categorize · differentiate · contrast · investigate · detect · survey · classify · deduce · experiment · scrutinize · discover · inspect · dissect · discriminate · separate
Evaluating	With skills in evaluating, you are able to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose. <i>At this level in college you will be able to think critically. Your understanding of a concept or discipline will be profound. You may need to present and defend opinions.</i>	judge · assess · compare · evaluate · conclude · measure · deduce · argue · decide · choose · rate · select · estimate · validate · consider · appraise · value · criticize · infer
Creating	With skills in creating, you are able to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. You can reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. <i>Creating requires originality and inventiveness. It brings together all levels of learning to theorize, design, and test new products, concepts, or functions.</i>	compose · produce · design · assemble · create · prepare · predict · modify · plan · invent · formulate · collect · generalize · document combine · relate · propose · develop · arrange · construct · organize · originate · derive · write

Reading and interpreting learning objectives is a metacognitive act, as the information can help you determine the level of learning expected of you and give you clues as to how you can prepare for assessment.

For example, if your objective is to identify the parts of an atom,

you should first recognize that being able to “identify” information falls within the domain of “remembering”; you will need to memorize the parts and be able to correctly label them. Flash cards, labeling a diagram, or drawing one yourself should be sufficient ways to prepare for your test.

If, however, your objective is to calculate atomic mass, you will need to know not only the *parts* of the atom but also how to account for those parts to come up with the atomic mass; “calculate” falls within the domain of “applying,” which requires you to take information and use it to solve a problem in a new context.

You can explore these cognitive domains further in the two videos, below. The first is from the Center for Learning Success at the Louisiana State University. It discusses Bloom’s taxonomy learning levels with regard to student success in college.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=207>

This next video, *Bloom's Taxonomy Featuring Harry Potter Movies*, is a culturally-based way of understanding and applying Bloom's taxonomy.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=207>

Familiarity with Bloom's Taxonomy is important in PLA, because to earn credit you will need to demonstrate that you have achieved college-level learning. You will be relating your learning to existing BAS and MDS courses, all of which are numbered at the 400-level, meaning the highest level of undergraduate study and therefore having more of the upper level skills. Bloom's terminology will help you to express your learning in terms the subject-matter expert can recognize as college-level learning.

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# 5. Multiple Intelligences

## Classifying Intelligence

What exactly is intelligence? The way that researchers have defined the concept of intelligence has been modified many times since the birth of psychology.

British psychologist Charles Spearman believed intelligence consisted of one general factor, called *g*, which could be measured and



Photo by [Tamaricus Brown](#) on [Unsplash](#)

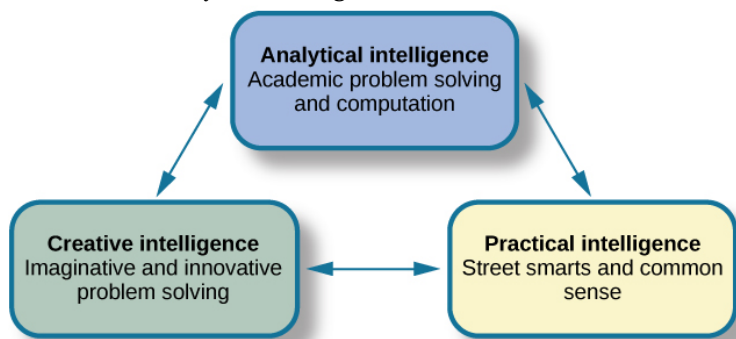
compared among individuals. Spearman focused on the commonalities among various intellectual abilities and demphasized what made each unique. Long before modern psychology developed, however, ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle, held a similar view (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004).

Others psychologists believe that instead of a single factor, intelligence is a collection of distinct abilities. In the 1940s, Raymond Cattell proposed a theory of intelligence that divided general intelligence into two components: crystallized intelligence and fluid intelligence (Cattell, 1963). **Crystallized intelligence** is characterized as acquired knowledge and the ability to retrieve it. When you learn, remember, and recall information, you are using crystallized intelligence. You use crystallized intelligence all the time in your coursework by demonstrating that you have mastered the information covered in the course. **Fluid intelligence** encompasses the ability to see complex relationships and solve problems. Navigating your way home after being detoured

onto an unfamiliar route because of road construction would draw upon your fluid intelligence. Fluid intelligence helps you tackle complex, abstract challenges in your daily life, whereas crystallized intelligence helps you overcome concrete, straightforward problems (Cattell, 1963).

Other theorists and psychologists believe that intelligence should be defined in more practical terms. For example, what types of behaviors help you get ahead in life? Which skills promote success? Think about this for a moment. Being able to recite all 44 presidents of the United States in order is an excellent party trick, but will knowing this make you a better person?

Robert Sternberg developed another theory of intelligence, which he titled the triarchic theory of intelligence because it sees intelligence as comprised of three parts (Sternberg, 1988): practical, creative, and analytical intelligence.



Sternberg's theory identifies three types of intelligence: practical, creative, and analytical.

**Practical intelligence**, as proposed by Sternberg, is sometimes compared to “street smarts.” Being practical means you find solutions that work in your everyday life by applying knowledge based on your experiences. This type of intelligence appears to be separate from traditional understanding of IQ; individuals who score high in practical intelligence may or may not have comparable scores in creative and analytical intelligence (Sternberg, 1988).

**Analytical intelligence** is closely aligned with academic problem solving and computations. Sternberg says that analytical intelligence is demonstrated by an ability to analyze, evaluate, judge, compare, and contrast. When reading a classic novel for literature class, for example, it is usually necessary to compare the motives of the main characters of the book or analyze the historical context of the story. In a science course such as anatomy, you must study the processes by which the body uses various minerals in different human systems. In developing an understanding of this topic, you are using analytical intelligence. When solving a challenging math problem, you would apply analytical intelligence to analyze different aspects of the problem and then solve it section by section.

**Creative intelligence** is marked by inventing or imagining a solution to a problem or situation. Creativity in this realm can include finding a novel solution to an unexpected problem or producing a beautiful work of art or a well-developed short story. Imagine for a moment that you are camping in the woods with some friends and realize that you've forgotten your camp coffee pot. The person in your group who figures out a way to successfully brew coffee for everyone would be credited as having higher creative intelligence.

**Multiple Intelligences Theory** was developed by Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist and former student of Erik Erikson. Gardner's theory, which has been refined for more than 30 years, is a more recent development among theories of intelligence. In Gardner's theory, each person possesses at least eight intelligences. Among these eight intelligences, a person typically excels in some and falters in others (Gardner, 1983). [Table](#) describes each type of intelligence.



## Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence Type	Characteristics	Representative Career
Linguistic intelligence	Perceives different functions of language, different sounds and meanings of words, may easily learn multiple languages	Journalist, novelist, poet, teacher
Logical-mathematical intelligence	Capable of seeing numerical patterns, strong ability to use reason and logic	Scientist, mathematician
Musical intelligence	Understands and appreciates rhythm, pitch, and tone; may play multiple instruments or perform as a vocalist	Composer, performer
Bodily kinesthetic intelligence	High ability to control the movements of the body and use the body to perform various physical tasks	Dancer, athlete, athletic coach, yoga instructor
Spatial intelligence	Ability to perceive the relationship between objects and how they move in space	Choreographer, sculptor, architect, aviator, sailor
Interpersonal intelligence	Ability to understand and be sensitive to the various emotional states of others	Counselor, social worker, salesperson
Intrapersonal intelligence	Ability to access personal feelings and motivations, and use them to direct behavior and reach personal goals	Key component of personal success over time
Naturalist intelligence	High capacity to appreciate the natural world and interact with the species within it	Biologist, ecologist, environmentalist

Gardner's theory is relatively new and needs additional research to better establish empirical support. At the same time, his ideas challenge the traditional idea of intelligence to include a wider variety of abilities, although it has been suggested that Gardner simply relabeled what other theorists called "cognitive styles" as "intelligences" (Morgan, 1996). Furthermore, developing traditional measures of Gardner's intelligences is extremely difficult (Furnham, 2009; Gardner & Moran, 2006; Klein, 1997).

## Emotional Intelligence

Gardner's inter- and intrapersonal intelligences are often combined into a single type: emotional intelligence. **Emotional intelligence** encompasses the ability to understand the emotions of yourself and others, show empathy, understand social relationships and cues, and regulate your own emotions and respond in culturally appropriate ways (Parker, Saklofske, & Stough, 2009). People with high emotional intelligence typically have well-developed social skills. Some researchers, including Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*, argue that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of success than traditional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). However, emotional intelligence has been widely debated, with researchers pointing out inconsistencies in how it is defined and described, as well as questioning results of studies on a subject that is difficult to measure and study empirically (Locke, 2005; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004)

Intelligence can also have different meanings and values in different cultures. If you live on a small island, where most people get their food by fishing from boats, it would be important to know how to fish and how to repair a boat. If you were an exceptional angler, your peers would probably consider you intelligent. If you were also skilled at repairing boats, your intelligence might be known across the whole island. Think about your own family's culture. What values are important for Latino families? Italian families? In Irish families, hospitality and telling an entertaining story are marks of the culture. If you are a skilled storyteller, other members of Irish culture are likely to consider you intelligent.

Some cultures place a high value on working together as a collective. In these cultures, the importance of the group supersedes the importance of individual achievement. When you visit such a culture, how well you relate to the values of that culture

exemplifies your cultural intelligence, sometimes referred to as cultural competence.

## Creativity

**Creativity** is the ability to generate, create, or discover new ideas, solutions, and possibilities. Very creative people often have intense knowledge about something, work on it for years, look at novel solutions, seek out the advice and help of other experts, and take risks. Although creativity is often associated with the arts, it is actually a vital form of intelligence that drives people in many disciplines to discover something new. Creativity can be found in every area of life, from the way you decorate your residence to a new way of understanding how a cell works.

Creativity is often assessed as a function of one's ability to engage in divergent thinking. Divergent thinking can be described as thinking "outside the box;" it allows an individual to arrive at unique, multiple solutions to a given problem. In contrast, convergent thinking describes the ability to provide a correct or well-established answer or solution to a problem (Cropley, 2006; Gilford, 1967)

## Summary

Intelligence is a complex characteristic of cognition. Many theories have been developed to explain what intelligence is and how it works. Sternberg generated his triarchic theory of intelligence, whereas Gardner posits that intelligence is comprised of many factors. Still others focus on the importance of emotional intelligence. Finally, creativity seems to be a facet of intelligence, but it is extremely difficult to measure objectively.

Attribution:

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# 6. Defining College-Level Learning

## Tips for Defining College-Level Learning from Experience

Use the following tips in creating your portfolio to display learning at the 400-level.

1. Identify the intermediate stages involved each step of the process. This will give a fuller picture of the process as well as your understanding of it.
2. Personalize your knowledge and experiences. For example, if you are talking about your knowledge of the criminal justice system, also tell about the people you interacted with everyday. What issues did they introduce, and how were these issues solved?
3. Critique your experience. List and describe characteristics of well-run/poorly-run programs; good/ineffective leaders, and so on. Use real-life examples. Illustrate your learning with your experience.
4. Discuss patterns you observe in working with people. What commonalities and differences have you observed or experienced with your particular population: customers, students, employees, parents, and so on? How do you use your learning to predict needs and solutions?
5. Explain how to predict success or failure in your area of expertise. Discuss risk management and how to problem-solve with real situations from your experience.
6. Describe your competition. Describe your work culture and

that of your competitors. How do you move through the communication pathways?

7. Explain how you run your own business or how you observe the company you work for being managed.
8. Describe your decision making process.
9. Demonstrate your critical-thinking and analytical skills.  
Provide analysis of the critical aspects in the narrative.  
Remember that PLA is about reflecting on and analyzing learning, not merely recounting details.
10. Provide a knowledge base. What body of knowledge do you work from every day? Has the level of knowledge changed over time? What theoretical concepts underlie your experience?

### **Adaptations**

This chapter is an adaptation of [PLA 200: Introduction to Portfolio Development](#) by [Theresa Hoffman and Thomas Edison State University](#), and is used under a [CC BY 4.0 International](#) license.

## 7. Key Takeaways: Theory and Styles of Learning

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Metacognition is thinking about thinking. It involves metacognitive knowledge (what do you know and how do you know it?) as well as metacognitive regulation (how do you use what you know to approach different types of problems?).

In the stages of the learning process, you move from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence; metacognition helps you advance through the 4 stages.

Learning objectives state what you should know or be able to do as the result of a course.

Interpreting learning objectives can help you understand the extent to which you are expected to learn and be able to use the material.

Successful intelligence involves a combination of analytical, creative, and practical thinking.

According to Kolb's Learning Theory, learning is a cyclical process that includes 4 stages: Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating.

A learner can start at any stage in Kolb's cycle, depending on their preferred learning style.

Bloom's Taxonomy outlines six main learning-skill levels,



arranged in the following order from simplest to most complex: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating.

The higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, sometimes including Applying and always including Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating, denote college-level learning at the 400-level.

Multiple intelligences must be taken into account when considering Bloom's Taxonomy and Kolb's Learning Theory.

Emotional Intelligence and Creativity are harder to quantify but are often considered essential for higher-level thinking.

Creative thinking helps you look at problems from fresh, new perspectives. Everyone has creative thinking skills, even those who don't think of themselves as "creative."



PART II

# CHAPTER TWO: COURSES YOU CAN CHALLENGE



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The Multidisciplinary Studies program offers four upper-division

courses that can be challenged for credit through a portfolio and a demonstration of learning. The courses that can be challenged are:

- **BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety**
  - Study of safety as a vital element of human behavior in society, business, and industry. Examines the safety responsibilities of leaders, managers, and supervisors, focuses on developing skills in planning, implementation, awareness, monitoring, and risk management, and covers governmental influence, hazard awareness and control, operational considerations in the workplace, accidents, and planning.
- **MDS 410: Case Studies in Leadership**
  - This course introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Additionally, leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people.
- **MDS 430: Ethics**
  - This course examines universal ethical principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. Exploration of personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in the light of existing ethical, moral, and social values across disciplines will also be discussed. This course is designed to enable students to form individual positions on ethical conduct and social responsibility, and both identifies and applies ethical principles to real-world situations.
- **MDS 450: Teamwork and Innovation**
  - This course identifies the creative people, processes, and conditions necessary for fostering innovation and models of innovation, including creative problem-solving with teams. Students show their understanding through

demonstration of competency in identifying, describing, fostering, demonstrating, and assessing programs that foster creativity and innovation in a team environment.

This section will cover the specific courses students can petition for credit in Boise State's BAS/MDS Program, and lead them through exercises on interpreting the learning objectives of each course and expressing the ways their experiential learning addresses them.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Explore and evaluate credit for prior learning options by reading the university's credit for prior learning policy.
- Evaluate the courses you can challenge within the MDS program through reviewing the course descriptions and participating in the journal assignment.

# 8. Credit for Prior Learning Policy

Now that we have explored learning theories and you've started re-engineering how you learned the things you know well, we will begin the process of building your Prior Learning portfolio, which you'll use to officially challenge courses for credit.

As a reminder from the Introduction to this textbook, the Prior Learning Portfolio consists of three sections:

- **The Resumes**
  - There will be two different resumes included: a traditional resume and the PLA resume.
    - The PLA resume is organized by your skills and expertise, rather than a chronological record of your employment
    - The traditional resume—you know what that is!
  - Through your resumes, you will highlight more detail about your responsibilities and accomplishments that have supported learning.
  - The resumes provides the reviewing committee with a timeline and demonstrates the progression of learning.
  - You will include both your PLA skills-based resume as well as your traditional/professional resume in the portfolio.
- **The Educational Statement (a separate Narrative for each course you're challenging)**, which is a document that do the following:
  - Examines your personal motivations and educational goals in the context of learning and how you will achieve them.
  - Examines and discusses past instances that led to learning.

- This portion should address each course objective found on the course syllabus, and demonstrate that you have mastered the objectives to the same extent as students who have completed the course. Showcases how your learning applies to the objectives for a specific course.
  - **Supporting Documentation**
    - You will need to supply documentation to support the narrative.
    - Documentation is as individual as the learner, and it may include items such as sample work products, training certificates, workplace evaluations, letters of recommendation, and/or photographs.
- 

## Credit for Prior Learning at Boise State University

As a student in the BAS/ MDS Program at Boise State, you are part of a program and a university that highly values Prior Learning. Prior Learning is an important academic policy which many students use to get academic credit for their study outside of the college classroom.

While we are focusing on portfolio credit in this textbook and accompanying course, there are many other forms of prior learning available for credit. The official Boise State policy on Prior Learning can be found at this link:

[Office of the Registrar: Credit for Prior Learning](#)

If you feel you may have other avenues for further credit, please speak with your advisor or instructor to inquire about how that might fit in with your Degree Plan.





## 9. Aligning Experiential Learning with Academic Learning Objectives

As we read earlier, a foundational principle of Prior Learning Assessment is that the credit awarded to you is for the *learning* you've done, not just for the experience itself. And PLA awards academic credit for specific classes already in the BSU Academic Catalog, so the way you demonstrate your knowledge has to address a specific course's material. For example, if you were challenging Interpersonal Communication, you'd need to give evidence of what you've learned about that specific topic, rather than simply listing your years of customer service work.

In other words, PLA is a way to confirm that you've already learned all the things a class would've taught you. You just learned them outside of a classroom. For many students, they know the material so well that not only should they not have to take the class, but that they could actually teach the class.

When you're preparing to challenge a course, how do you know what the course covers, to see if you've already learned the material through experience? The answer is the same one so many questions students ask their professors: *it's in the syllabus*.

In every syllabus there should be a section titled Course Objectives. It may also be called Learning Outcomes or Learning Objectives or some similar phrasing. The course objectives are a list of things students in the course should know, understand, or be able to do after passing the class.

**But for PLA, the course objectives are like a key or a treasure map.**

If you find course objectives and feel like your background aligns with them, then you can use those course objectives to guide your

portfolio! If you are confident that you know and can do what the objectives are asking of you, then you should be successful with your prior learning assessment. Through your Learning Narrative, Supporting Documentation, and PLA Resume, you can address the learning outcomes directly and clearly demonstrate to your reviewers that you are comfortable and facile with the course material and have met the course objectives through your on-the-ground experiences.

Sometimes, the course objectives will reveal a gap in your knowledge, but that can be addressed or overcome. For example, there might be specific terminology the objectives refer to, which you might not know even though you've been doing those things for years. With a solid background and experience, those gaps can usually be filled with a little research to be able to reframe your experience and write about it from an academic perspective.

NOTE: For each course you want to challenge, you'll have to craft a separate Educational Narrative addressing those course outcomes (though, of course, there will be overlaps and ways to reuse parts of your work across separate courses). In Chapter 5, we'll take a very close look at the Educational Narrative.

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# 10. MDS 410: Case Studies in Leadership

Students challenging MDS 410 come from a variety of experiential backgrounds, including HR, law enforcement, food service, industry, military, education, and nonprofit administration, to name just a few. It's a versatile course that embraces a lot of different leadership styles, so many experiential learning backgrounds apply.

Typically, students have success in this challenge when they've been in leadership roles for a number of years, and especially when they have put in self-study and professional development to become good leaders.

## **What this course is (and is not) about**

Case Studies in Leadership leads students through an in-depth study of different types of leadership. It uses case studies of well-known leaders to illustrate and illuminate leadership styles and put those styles in context with each other. It leads students through theoretical understandings of leadership, and it asks students to reflect on their own leadership style based on the case studies and readings in leadership theory. In other words, the course combines academic theory and real-world examples to help students understand their leadership style so they can grow as leaders after the class.

The course is not a step-by-step guide to becoming a leader for someone with little to no experience in managerial or leadership positions. It's not just a self-reflection on your leadership experiences. It's not purely a study of famous leaders.

To do well in this challenge, students weave academic terminology and theory from the textbook and other resources into their own stories about leadership experiences. They also link their artifacts in the Supporting Documentation to the Course Outcomes very clearly.

While the above is intended to help guide you through thinking about the course and how to frame your experience to challenge it, what follows below is the official language from the MDS 410 syllabus. You need to address the following course outcomes, and if the reviewers request an interview, be ready with answers to the questions below.

Use these Course Objectives to shape your Learning Narrative and help you in selecting and requesting Supporting Documentation. You may also think of sections to add to your PLA resume by using these Outcomes as a guide.

## Course Description

Case Studies in Leadership introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people. Completion of LEAD 325 is recommended. PREREQ: Admitted to MDS or BAS program or declared a leadership certificate with upper-division standing or PERM/INST.

## Course Objectives

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Assess the current status of your personal leadership practice inventory and identify areas to improve using application in real-world situations.</li><li>● Utilize research perspectives on leadership to analyze traits, behaviors, and relationships that leaders possess.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Learn how leaders shape organizational culture and values and how a leader facilitates change.</li><li>● Utilize the language of leadership as described by Kouzes and Posner. This shared language will support your analysis.</li></ul></li></ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Utilize journaling as a writing tool to impact your leadership practice.</li><li>● Understand and communicate what it means to be a leader.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Use your own experiences to articulate the validity of current and past leadership research.</li><li>● Evaluate and implement effective and respectful communication strategies using written, verbal, electronic, and other appropriate technologies.</li><li>● Gather academically substantive information to support analysis of leadership practices in the language of Kouzes and Posner.</li></ul></li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Understand and communicate what it means to be an exemplary leader.</li><li>● Evaluate and implement effective and respectful communication strategies using verbal, electronic, and other appropriate technologies.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.</li><li>● Demonstrate critical thinking by applying what you've learned to personal experience and your leadership goals.</li></ul></li></ul>  |

## MDS 410 Demonstration of Learning Questions

What artifact(s) can you provide to demonstrate your experience in the content of this course?
--

How are your personal leadership practices related to your personal and professional goals?
---

Tell me about different types of leadership styles you know of.
---

Tell me about opportunities you've had to intentionally practice leadership skills.
---

Tell me about leaders or role models who have informed your leadership practice.
--

Describe how technology skills and research techniques enhance one another. Provide me with a few specific examples of this relationship?
---

## II. MDS 430: Ethics

Students who do well challenging MDS 430: Ethics often have jobs or responsibilities that ask them to make difficult decisions. These moments of ethical consideration give students a background in understanding their own ethics as well as the ethics of others. Successful challenges have a deep understanding of ethical systems and stances, and can understand how those are constructed even if they differ from the student's own personal ethical system.

### **What this course is (and is not) about**

MDS 430: Ethics is a study of Ethics that goes beyond a student's personal views. It looks at ethics from many different disciplines and contexts, including universal standards and principles. Students in the course understand what makes up ethical stances and systems, beyond just a vague idea of "right and wrong."

The course is not about being a good person, a helpful neighbor, a dedicated parent, or many other worthwhile things. It goes beyond those personal attachments. To challenge this course successfully, students need a good understanding of the theoretical frameworks that make up a person's ethics, and be able to apply those frameworks to both themselves and to others whose frameworks are vastly different.

To do well in this challenge, students need to understand concepts on a universal level and move beyond current events and personal experience into a more holistic understanding of ethics.

## Course Description

MDS 430 examines universal ethics principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. Exploration of personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in the light of existing ethical, moral and social values across disciplines will also be



discussed. Designed to enable students to form individual positions on ethical conduct and social responsibility, this course both identifies and applies ethical principles to real world situations.

## Course Objectives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess different ethical stances and their efficacy in solving current moral and social problems.</li><li>• Describe and defend an ethical system with a view to application in real-world situations.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe and defend a personal ethical system with a view to application in real-world situations.</li><li>• Apply various ethical systems to moral and social problems.</li><li>• Create and defend a solution to a current ethical or moral problem using an ethical system.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate and implement effective and respectful communication strategies using written, verbal, electronic, and other appropriate technologies.</li><li>• Gather academically substantial information to support a specific point of view on an ethical topic or issue.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice writing assessment style responses to formative tests and questions.</li><li>• Demonstrate grammatically correct and respectful writings to peers.</li><li>• Produce academic-level written assignments.</li><li>• Review peer submissions of written artifacts.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpret assigned material and correctly apply it.</li><li>• Submit thoughtful written selections to instructors and peers.</li><li>• Defend and critically evaluate ethical systems and ethical stances.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpret assigned material and correctly apply it.</li><li>• Submit thoughtful written selections to instructors and peers.</li><li>• Defend and critically evaluate ethical systems and ethical stances.</li></ul>

## MDS 430 Demonstration of Learning Questions

- What are the parts of “Ethical Stances”?
- What are the parts of the relationship between Ethical Stances and the Moral or Social Problems?
- How are these stances related to solving ethical and moral problems? Can you give me an example?
- Distinguish an Ethical System. What are the parts of an Ethical System? Tell me about Ethical Systems, and give me a few examples of characteristics of these systems.
- What is the relationship between Ethical Systems and Real World Situations? Can you give me an example of how you'd apply an ethical system to a real-world situation?
- Is an Ethical System part of a Solution to an Ethical or Moral Problem?

## 12. MDS 450: Teamwork and Innovation

Experience working with others is key to a successful challenge for MDS 450: Teamwork and Innovation. Being part of teams in different roles—both as a team member and as a leader—are important, as is a deep understanding of the way good teams are built through stages. Experience working on a team with people who bring different perspectives and expertise is also very helpful in articulating the goals of this course.

Further, the kind of work the teams did is key. Beyond just managing a task, successful challenges tell a story of a team thinking strategically and overcoming or creating something new. Having a good understanding of Innovation and articulating how your team came together and engaged in the process of innovation helps make a strong case for these challenges.

### **What this course is (and is not) about**

It's important that the portfolio reflect experience working with others, even others from very different mindsets, on a common issue. These teams don't have to be in the workplace; they can be neighborhood associations, volunteer groups, mission trips, informal gatherings for a cause, or, yes, they can be teams in work environments: corporate, restaurant, academic, manufacturing, logistics, and many other organizations.

The course is about both Teamwork and Innovation; it's not about being on a team that didn't have to do anything new or different, nor is it about innovating by yourself. The best challenges can encompass both elements of the course.

## Course Description

MDS 450: This course identifies the creative people, processes, and conditions necessary for fostering innovation and models of innovation including creative problem solving with teams. Students show understanding through demonstration of competency in identifying, describing, fostering, demonstrating and assessing programs that foster creativity and innovation in a team environment.

## Course Objectives

After finishing the course, the successful student will be able to:

<p>Identify components of high performing teams</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the stages of team development</li> <li>2. Distinguish team development vs detrimental behaviors</li> <li>3. Discuss personal team experience</li> <li>4. Identify current team stage from personal example</li> </ol>
<p>Explain the influence of teams on creativity in organizations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain how organizations use teams</li> <li>2. Locate organizational examples of creative teams</li> <li>3. Review current best practices for driving innovation</li> </ol>
<p>Write personal development goals for advancing appropriate behaviors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify personal behaviors that diminish team unity</li> <li>2. Write 3 personal development goals to adjust behavior</li> </ol>
<p>Demonstrate Team Problem Solving Techniques.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review current best practices for team problem solving</li> </ol>
<p>Apply team innovation tools and techniques to a given situation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify one tool or technique to apply</li> <li>2. In a small group, lead a team through the creative process</li> </ol>

## MDS 450 Demonstration of Learning Questions

- Explain the difference between a work group and a work team. When should an organization use a team?
- Tell me about the 4 stages of team development and explain emotional and behavioral characteristics of each stage. What are the potential pitfalls in each stage? How do you move to the next stage? Use personal examples.
- Describe both developmental and detrimental behaviors of team members. Provide examples of your own behaviors that developed team unity and behaviors that were detrimental to team unity.
- Explain how diversity affects team effectiveness.
- Explain a best practice for providing performance feedback directly to a teammate that is not meeting expectations. This is peer to peer feedback, not leader to employee feedback. Provide one example where you delivered direct feedback to a non-performing team member and describe what you learned from that interaction.
- Identify 2 examples of why a team member might stop participating. Explain what the team should do to bring that team member back into the fold.
- What is the difference between creativity and innovation?
- Explain the role of creativity in organizational success. What inhibits creativity at work? What promotes creativity? Describe one behavior you do that could inhibit team creativity and one that could promote team creativity.
- Describe a Team Problem Solving tool. Provide a personal example of team problem solving and explain what you learned from that experience. Describe at least one thing you would do differently the next time you are problem solving as a team.
- Describe 3 tools or techniques that a team can use to generate creative/innovative ideas.  
Describe a personal experience of a team creative process.

What did you learn from that experience?



# 13. BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety

Creating a Culture of Safety is an intentionally-designed course that covers the integration of safety and wellbeing into many different environments and workplaces. It's a holistic view of Safety, looking at the issue from many different perspectives and exploring many solutions.

## **What this course is (and is not) about**

This course isn't an OSHA Certification course, but being OSHA-certified in a few areas would cover the material in this course. Many other industry-standard trainings speak well to this course, as well.

The course isn't about choosing right and wrong about safety issues, but is about understanding safety from a legal and professional perspective as it applies to the workplace or other organizations.

## **Course Description**

A combination of principles and practices designed to provide the student with a basis for understanding the nature of occupational accident prevention and loss reduction. The topics to be examined include legislative aspects, accident causation, and strategies for minimizing injury and losses, and sources of assistance in resolving safety and health problems.

# Course Objectives

After finishing the course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss classic and emerging occupational safety and health issues in the context of their historical and social significance
2. Describe the basis for the OSH Act, the OSHA inspection process, standards, and reporting of workers compensation records and statistics
3. Apply the discipline of safety and health to the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, control and prevention of occupational health hazards
4. Understand the impact of management and regulatory strategies on the day to day responsibilities of occupational safety and health professionals
5. Discuss the role of a safety and health professional in a comprehensive safety and health program and understand the complementary roles of allied health professionals
6. Conduct basic hazard identification and assessment techniques, and recommend common/basic methods to mitigate hazards

# 14. Key Takeaways: Courses You Can Challenge

## Key Takeaways

Each course has its own Course Outcomes that should be addressed in your PLA Portfolio.

Each component (resumes, documentation, and narrative) can work together to address the Course Outcomes.

You will need to write a separate Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging. You do not need separate PLA resumes for each course (just one will suffice).

Study the terminology and language used in the Course Outcomes to incorporate that into your Portfolio.

You may need to do a little research to fill in some gaps in your knowledge about terminology or academic philosophy mentioned in the Course Outcomes.

Sometimes reading the course textbooks or reading articles online can bolster your Educational Narrative and/

or give you confidence that you know the material as you begin to create your Portfolio.

## PART III

# CHAPTER 3: THE PLA RESUME

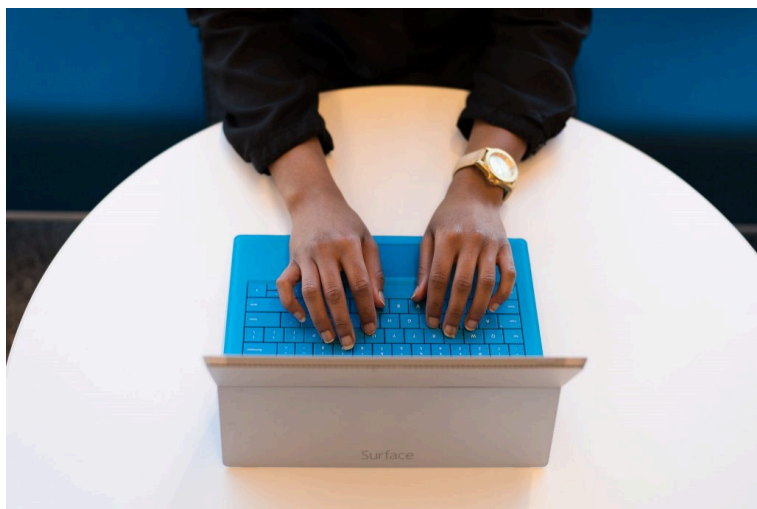


Photo by [WOCinTech](#) Chat from [Flickr](#)

The Prior Learning Portfolio procedure requires two kinds of resumes. One, the traditional resume, gives a quick overview of your work history. The other is the Prior Learning Assessment (or PLA) Resume. The **PLA Resume** is a skills-based resume, that presents your experiential learning in terms of the expertise you've gained through your learning outside the classroom.

This chapter will cover the PLA resume in detail, helping you think about how to brainstorm and list your skills and expertise areas, how to engage in the writing process of this resume, and how to address the portfolio reviewers.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Understand the difference between a traditional chronological resume and a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) resume organized using skills and experiences
- Understand the context of the PLA resume as a component of the learning portfolio
- Frame your skills based on the learning outcomes of the courses you are challenging
- Prepare your PLA resume using the prompts and guidelines found in the assignment instructions.

# 15. Traditional Resume vs Skills-based Resume

The **traditional resume** is the one we all know and love. Well, perhaps not *love*.



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In the traditional resume, you have a few standard sections like Education, Work Experience, Skills. You list your jobs on there, most recent first and then work backwards. You give your contact information, maybe some references. You try to make the layout

professional and have the proper look for your industry. You try to cram all this into one page!

But if you think about the traditional resume, it displays a lot of biases and assumptions.

It values a straight-as-an-arrow career that makes sense at a glance, such as moving up within a company or field in progressively higher positions. It has a bias towards someone working in the same field or industry the whole time, so there's no new ventures or confusing leaps between job types. It assumes everyone should work continuously, and penalizes you for “having a gap” from taking time away from jobs to do things like raise a family, travel, re-skill at school, or find a new job after getting laid off or furloughed.

Now, to be clear: in spite of these negatives, your PLA portfolio *will include* one of these traditional resumes. There's something interesting in seeing work history in chronological order, and your PLA reviewer won't hold it against you if it's full of jags and zig-zags.

But we'll also be including an accompanying resume specifically

designed for prior learning, the **PLA resume**, which is organized to tell your story a different way.

In short, the PLA resume doesn't care about when you worked where. It cares about what you know.

It's organized in a table that can be (*get this*) several pages long! It has 4 columns: Expertise, Source of Learning, Accomplishment, and Dates. Here's a quick breakdown of each section, with a little insight.

**Column 1: Expertise**, the most prominent column, lists the skills you've learned through your experience. Skills on the resume might be things like Communication, Teamwork, Safety, Problem-Solving, and other terms along these lines. You can actually focus your PLA resume on the specific skills taught in the courses you're challenging. Just organize your PLA resume by skills that speak right to those Course Outcomes. Nifty!

**Column 2: Source of Learning**, the next column, lists the experience where you learned that Expertise (through a job, travel, stay-at-home parenting, self-study, whatever it is). This is one advantage of the PLA resume, that all experiences count towards learning. It might be considered a gap in your traditional resume, but on the PLA resume it becomes a source of knowledge.

Further, with the PLA resume you can highlight a skill that might not be associated with a particular experience. Say that someone owned a small outdoor expedition company. Many would instantly think they'd have expertise in Survival and Safety, but they'd also know Marketing, Communications, Teamwork, and many other skills that are built in to that experience but not apparent at first glance. Here's your chance to highlight the work you *actually* did in your experiences, rather than what people assume.

**Column 3: Accomplishment** in the next column is a chance for you to tell your reviewer what you did to gain that Expertise. Rather than a traditional resume where all job duties are lumped together, here you can list specific projects you completed, things you managed, widgets you created or collaborated on, and the like.

**Column 4: Dates** is where you list the timeframe for the learning of this Expertise with each Source of Learning. PLA resumes don't



care about the order of learning—you can have years or decades between learning. This column is there to benefit you by showing how many cumulative years, and how much timespan, you've been learning this Expertise.

---

As we prepare to write your PLA resume, let's consider an example of how experience might be translated onto the PLA resume:

Perhaps an apprentice plumber worked on a team in constructing a subdivision, then left to be an independent contractor for a decade. After all that experience, she joined a Plumbing Supply company as a manager. So she may list Teamwork as an Expertise, which she learned about as an apprentice and again as a manager, but with a ten-year gap while she worked alone. PLA resumes doesn't care about that gap; it shows she's had two long stints working with others as part of a team, and that's what counts.

# 16. Showcasing Experiential Learning with the PLA Resume

Just as a traditional resume shows a potential employer what makes you qualified for the job you are trying to obtain, a PLA résumé serves a similar purpose in that it focuses on what qualifies you to earn credit for a particular course.

A PLA résumé will show what you have done but reframe it to focus on *what you have learned* from this “doing.” Thus, a PLA résumé will include your work experience as well as information about your community and personal life.

While you will likely have to write a different Educational Narrative for each course you’re challenging, you will only include one PLA resume that should cover all courses you want to challenge. The PLA resume should address areas of expertise that are relevant to the courses being challenged first and foremost.

Keep in mind that your life is very familiar to you, but your reviewer will be seeing your experiences for the first time. You will want to be concise, making it clear that the Expertise items work directly as evidence for your course challenges. You will have to decide how best to arrange your PLA resume table to include relevant learning while remaining organized and coherent.

## Formatting Your PLA Resume

To start your PLA résumé, make a bulleted list of your accomplishments. If you had to distill your traditional resume down

into your best works, what would those be? List them here, as long as they're relevant to the courses you're challenging.

Your examples can be from your job, volunteer work, or hobbies. Be sure, however, that they are significant learning experiences relating to the course outcomes of the courses you're challenging. These will be listed in the "Accomplishments" area of your PLA résumé. For example:

#### Accomplishments

- Sold over \$10 million in real estate in my first year at Jenkins Real Estate firm.
- Managed my own computer business for 10 years.
- Held a government contracting job as an analyst for 11 years and brought in \$5 million in contracts per year on average.
- Started a pet grooming business and managed over 50 pets a month.
- Trained in computer technology in the military and can operate in UNIX, C++, COBOL, Oracle and People-Soft.
- Volunteered with a studio that records books for the blind and dyslexic for 15 years, becoming an experienced reader over time.
- Maintained membership in a Civil War reenactment group for 10 years, gaining detailed knowledge of Civil War history in the process.

Then, underneath that you will make a table like the one below to identify and expand on your most knowledgeable areas in the PLA resume. A template for this table will be provided for you in MDS 301: Prior Learning Seminar course activities.

In the four columns of your PLA resume, do the following:

- In the "Expertise Area" column, list the general area where you have experience and expertise.
- In the "Source of Learning" column, list what job title, volunteer work, or hobby provided this expertise.

- In the “Accomplishment” column, list the actual activity.
- In the “Dates” column, list the date span over which this learning occurred.

Expertise Area	Source of Learning	Accomplishment	Dates
Communications	Assistant Editor: Oregon State Office of Personnel	Wrote technical manual for state government	1997-2007
	Volunteer: City of Sandy River, Tennessee	Wrote speeches for mayoral candidate	2000-2001
	Hobby: Writing	Self-published novel; Ride the Rails	2003-2004
Management	President: COMPUFIX	Managed a technology business selling computer services to government agencies  Hired and supervised 50 employees and contractors	1990-2010
	Troop Leader: Bluebird Girl Scouts, Merrill County, Maine	Managed a Girl Scout Troop	2007-present
Technology	Corporal: U.S. Army: Stationed in Germany	Developed computer LAN systems for the military overseas	2001-2007
Training	Assistant Director: Finance Office, JANTA Corporation	Developed PowerPoint presentations for training sessions  Trained executives on budgeting processes	2005-present
	Instructor: YWCA, Mitchellville, Georgia	Taught dance  Became certified as an aerobic dance instructor	2010-present

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# 17. Writing Strategies for the PLA Resume

Since the PLA resume is usually a strange, new kind of document for many students, this section will outline a few ways former students have approached the writing process.



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The final PLA document has to be a 4-column table such as the example in the previous section, but there are infinite ways each student will get to that final version. Just as all of you bring vastly different prior learning experiences, you also have a wide variety of work processes and thinking patterns. Each student's steps in writing the PLA resume will look different.

Therefore, you should create your PLA resume in a way that works well with your strengths and the flow of your unique, beautiful brain.

Below, there are three writing strategies that may help you write your PLA resume.

Please note: these strategies are meant as guides to help you start thinking about this PLA resume; they are *not* all-inclusive or prescriptive. They're not magic, and they're not required. In fact, there are many more ways to approach this writing activity. You could use a mind-map, pencil and paper sketching, an interview with a long-term partner, a brainstorming session with a coworker, gamified freewriting, etc.

That said, here are three possible ways to frame your thinking and begin writing your PLA resume.

## The Accomplishments Strategy

Make a bulleted list of your accomplishments. Your examples can be from your job, volunteer work, community work, side hustles, hobbies, or more. Be sure, however, that they are significant learning experiences that align with the Course Objectives for your challenges. These accomplishments will be listed in the “Accomplishments” area of your résumé. (Shocking, I know.) For example:

- Sold over \$10 million in real estate in my first year at Jenkins Real Estate firm.
- Managed my own computer business for 10 years.
- Held a government contracting job as an analyst for 11 years and brought in \$5 million in contracts per year on average.
- Started a pet grooming business and managed over 50 pets a month.
- Trained in computer technology in the military and can operate in UNIX, C++, COBOL, Oracle and People-Soft.
- Volunteered with a studio that records books for the blind and dyslexic for 15 years, becoming an experienced reader over time.
- Maintained membership in a Civil War reenactment group for 10 years, gaining detailed knowledge of Civil War history in the process.

Using this list, group Accomplishments together into what you learned by that achievement. Put those Accomplishments together into the table under their related Expertise area, and fill out the remaining columns for each Accomplishment.



## The Expertise Strategy

Make a list of all the things you think of as your strengths. These might include professional skills like Management, Budgeting, or Customer Service, but they might also include less tangible skills like Tenacity, Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Keeping It Together, and the like. Just make the longest, most self-aggrandizing list you can. Don't be shy—show off your awesome, because this is just for you at this stage.

Then consolidate the list—can you combine items into one larger Expertise area? Can you professionalize the wording or title for your reviewer? Then cut all the strengths that don't apply to the courses you're challenging. You don't want to overwhelm your reviewers.

Now that you have a manageable list of how great you are, look through your traditional resume and find connections between those strengths and your work experience. Link those together, then throw the net wider and think of other places (community work, travel, volunteering, side gigs, social and church settings...think big!) where you practiced and learned those strengths.

Write them all down, then start filling out your PLA resume table. As you do, you may start paring down a little more, keeping things clear and concise for your reviewer as you go.

## The Learning Outcomes Strategy

Read through the Course Outcomes for the course or courses you'd like to challenge. Highlight or note the words or terminology that stand out to you and speak to your experiential learning. See if you can reuse or slightly translate those words and terms into words you can use in the Expertise column. Write them all down in the PLA resume table.

Then, reverse engineer those terms. Why did those terms stand out to you? What part of your experience were you thinking of when you noticed those terms? Try to link your intuition about those terms to your experience, and remember to think big about prior learning: it can be work and jobs, but it can also be hobbies, travel, study abroad, volunteering, community service, apprenticeships, and more.

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# 18. Key Takeaways: The PLA Resume

## Key Takeaways

Your PLA Portfolio will include both a traditional resume and a PLA resume.

The traditional resume is based on chronology, with certain inherent assumptions and values. The PLA resume is based on skills, valuing the learning you've done.

Random or haphazard jumps in work history are de-emphasized in the PLA resume in favor of Expertise and Learning.

The PLA Resume has 4 columns: Expertise, Source of Learning, Accomplishment, and Dates.

The format of the PLA resume should be a four-column table with the above headings. All final versions of the PLA resume will look similar, but each student will have a very different process for brainstorming, drafting, and writing their PLA resume.

While you will write a separate Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging, the single PLA resume and

single traditional resume will cover all the courses you're challenging.

## PART IV

# CHAPTER 4: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

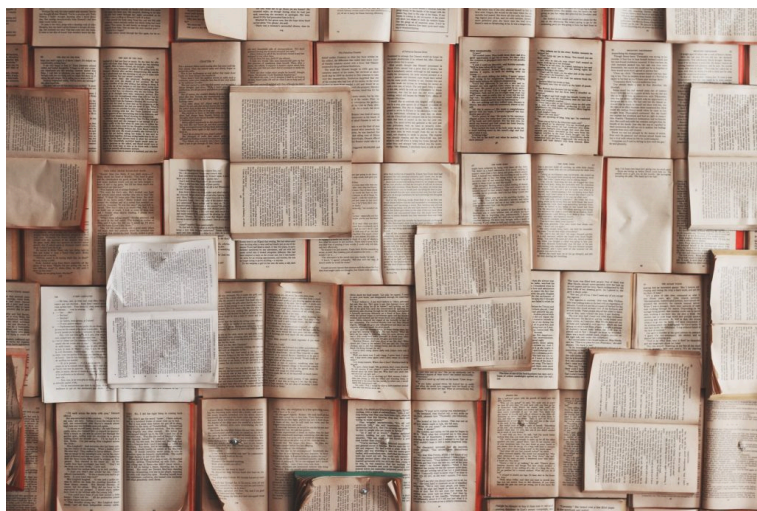


Photo by [Patrick Tomasso](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The **Supporting Documentation** section of the PLA portfolio showcases documentation of your learning achievements through experience. This chapter will delve into the many acceptable types of documentation, leading students through brainstorming activities for discovering and acquiring documents, best practices for presenting the documents, and ways to give context for the reviewers relating to course learning objectives.

### Learning Objectives

- Evaluate supporting documentation in terms of relevance and impact as part of a Prior Learning Portfolio

- Reflect on supporting documentation as a component of the learning portfolio in context with other components
- Frame documentation in relation to course learning outcomes
- Collect supporting documentation for the prior learning portfolio.

# 19. The Role of Supporting Documentation

Supporting Documentation is included as part of your portfolio in order for you to be able to leverage any official trainings, courses, commendations, publicity, letters of recommendation, or other sources that speak to your experience and demonstrate the learning you've done.

It is, in other words, a “paper trail” of your learning.

This section is the only part of the portfolio that has voices that are not yours in it, since you've written the resumes and Educational Narrative yourself. Supporting Documentation is simply a way to give weight to the stories in your Narrative, by giving verified proof of your expertise. The Supporting Documentation allows other voices to vouch for what you wrote.

## Cases of Very Little or No Supporting Documentation

It's important to remember that all three components of the Portfolio work together. The Educational Narrative, PLA Resume, Traditional Resume, and Supporting Documentation all work in concert to make your case for challenging a course. Supporting Documentation is not more important than any other part.

So, if you don't have dozens of Professional Certificates, that's okay. If you can't find that report you wrote or that news article about you, don't fret. If you've always been taught informally by your mentors and don't have any documents at all, we can be creative with that. If you sold all your worldly possessions and trashed all your old documents in order to travel the country in an RV while

running a business and raising kids, well, that's a story we can't wait to hear.

The bottom line is, if you do have a lot of Supporting Documentation, it can really help to make your case for your course challenge. But if you don't have lots of documents, you can still do very well with your challenges. We understand that the paths students take through experiential learning might make Supporting Documentation difficult to locate. We have mechanisms in place that can help with that situation.

And furthermore, there are ways to generate *new* Supporting Documents that we'll go over in the next section.



## 20. Types of Documentation

Your documentation should, of course, relate to the Learning Outcomes and competencies of the courses you're challenging.

That said, the BAS/MDS Program takes a wide view of what counts as documentation, and are open to many kinds of evidence, including:

- Samples of your work
- Documentation of job skills, including evaluations.
- Letters of Recommendation from employers or others who have firsthand knowledge of your abilities or skills
- Descriptions of requirements for obtaining licenses and/or certificates
- Scanned licenses or certificates
- Video clips or streaming video showing a skill, ability, or item produced
- Media coverage highlighting your expertise or knowledge
- Audio recordings demonstrating an ability or skill
- Thank You notes/emails from clients, students, co-workers, etc.
- Web site links
- Certificates of attendance and notes taken in training courses
- Transcripts
- An annotated bibliography
- Proof of membership in professional or trade organizations
- Any other material agreed upon with your PLA seminar instructor that offers proof of your college-level learning

As noted earlier, many Prior Learning students don't have reams of Supporting Documentation available, and that is acceptable since this component of the portfolio can be bolstered by the other components.

However, you can generate some Supporting Documentation for your portfolio by obtaining Letters of Recommendation.

You can get Letters of Recommendation from a current or former employer, a customer, a co-worker, or some other person who can provide supporting evidence. The letters need not be formalized or on official letterhead, if those are a barrier to you getting them. We've had students use emails as letters of recommendation.

If you will be using Letters of Recommendation, ask for them as far in advance as you can. Usually you'll need to include the following in your request for a letter:

- A greeting and an explanation of why you are writing the letter
- A brief description of your participation in the Prior Learning Seminar, including a brief explanation of what it is
- An outline of what the person's letter should include, such as:
  - A statement about their relationship to you,
  - A statement about the time period of your relationship,
  - A statement about the duties you performed
  - An evaluation of your level of performance
  - Any other comments that will support your claims
- An up-to-date résumé or any updates on your experience

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## 21. Key Takeaways: Supporting Documentation

### Key Takeaways

Many different kinds of documentation are acceptable for your ePortfolio.

The most effective documentation makes clear reference to Course Outcomes.

If you have little or no supporting documentation, that's okay because the ePortfolio components all work in concert.

Letters of Recommendation are very effective documentation, and can be generated if you don't have a lot of other documentation.

Ask for Letters of Recommendation as early as possible.

The best ePortfolios link the Educational Narrative with the Supporting Documentation so that the two components are intertwined and strengthen each other.



## PART V

# CHAPTER 5: THE EDUCATIONAL NARRATIVE



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The most difficult part of the prior learning portfolio, the **Educational Narrative** is a longer essay in which you'll write about your experience and gives specific examples that demonstrate you have met the course learning objectives. It also demonstrates your knowledge by use of the terminology of the courses you're challenging, as well as your aptitude when discussing the course topics and outcomes.

Note that you will likely write a separate Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging. It's more work, yes, but this

component is crucial for communicating to your reviewers that you know the course material well. Using specific examples, terminology, and Course Outcomes to frame your narrative for each individual course will make this component more convincing for your reviewers. (That said, there may be cases where you can reuse part of one course's Educational Narrative in a Narrative for another class, if the example speaks to Course Outcomes for both courses.)

This chapter will provide a guide through the writing process and revision, highlighting brainstorming activities to find powerful examples and demonstrating best practices to show evidence of learning to the course review committee.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Understand the fundamental elements of a good Educational Narrative
- Frame the Educational Narrative in terms of context and audience
- Explore experiences to find vivid examples linking to course learning outcomes
- Draft and revise examples to provide sufficient detail addressing course outcomes
- Begin developing your educational statement/narrative.

## 22. The Story of Your Learning

This component has a strategic name. The Educational Narrative is asking for a very specific thing from you so that your reviewers can understand the learning you've done and relate it to the course you're challenging.

What is that thing it's asking for?

A story. Several stories, actually.

The word Narrative means "story," of course, so this component is asking you for the story of your learning. To tell that story, you'll need to have several examples that clearly demonstrate your expertise with the course's subject matter. And these examples need to be specific. Here's why:

In creative writing, teachers often say that the universe is in the specific. The more detailed the description, the better the reader can visualize the characters and scene. Take, for example, this line:

We got dressed up and went to the concert.

Who are they? What'd they wear? How old were they? What kind of concert was it? Who was playing? None of that is apparent, so every reader sees something different.

But what if that line was written like:

We teased our hair to the ceilings, doused it in White Rain, snapped on spandex and pleather. We tore out of the suburbs, left a mile-long streak of rubber on our way to go see Twisted Sister at CBGB's.

Now can you see it?

That's your task in the Educational Narrative, though of course you'll be writing about professional learning matters and not an 80s hair band (unless, of course, you are drawing on your experiential learning from when you were a member of an 80s hair band...).

Some ways of thinking about the narrative that will help you get started:

- Remember Chapter 1 and all the learning theories we studied (Kolb, Bloom, Emotional Intelligence, Creativity, et. al.). Recall what kind of learner you most related to and how that might affect the kind of story you tell about your learning through experience. Use that to your advantage in your storytelling!
- Think about a time when you had to deal with a problem in your work or other experience. How'd you handle it?
- What's something you do every day that seems common to you but would be too complicated to explain to others?
- What's an accomplishment that you're proud of from work or other experience?
- What is one of the hardest parts of your job? What responsibilities do you have because of your expertise?
- Think of a time when others were struggling with some problem but you came up with an easy solution (easy to you, at least). How'd you have that easy solution so readily?



## 23. Organizing and Planning Your Narrative

The Educational Narrative and accompanying Supporting Documentation are the heart of the PLA portfolio because they articulate and provide evidence to support the claims you are making about your learning.

The two sections of your portfolio are separate but very intertwined. In this section we will begin planning and outlining your Narrative, and you will be using the work you've done on the PLA resume and Supporting Documentation to help shape your outline. You will also refer to specific documents in your Narrative as a way to intertwine the two sections.

### Organization

A typical learning narrative is divided into four sections:

1. Introduction to yourself in relation to the course being challenged
2. Series of Examples/Case Studies (descriptive discussion of college-level learning through experience, with references to documentation)
3. Referenced documentation
4. Conclusion

You will be outlining the second and third of these sections in this module.

## Educational Narrative Length

First, however, you might ask: How long should my narrative be?

We generally aim for a length between 1000-1200 words. However, there is no definite number of pages required for an effective narrative; the length depends primarily on the subject matter and on the extent of your own learning.

Keep in mind that you are asking to “test” out of a semester-long course, and thus your rationale for doing this and its proof should be substantial. You need to be sure that your narrative addresses all relevant course objectives for each of the courses in your portfolio.

## Introduction

Begin with a general introduction. In this section, provide background information about what you did, when you did it, and where you did it. Include a discussion of your own personal background as it pertains to your area of knowledge and how you came to have the opportunity to learn. Your PLA résumé is a source for this introduction.

If your academic area is computer science, an outline of your introduction might look like this:

1. Interested in computers since childhood
2. Received my own computer at age four
3. Learned how to type and search by age 6
4. Took computer courses in school and in the community through high school years.
5. Became proficient in various computer languages and troubleshooting over 10 years at X corporations and government agencies.
6. Was sent abroad to assist military operations

## Series of Examples/Case Studies and the Use of Learning Outcomes

An essential aspect of a successful narrative section is your description of your theoretical knowledge and applied learning. The person who reads your narrative needs explicit proof of the learning. Your narrative should provide examples, stories, and plenty of detail.

The best way to give this proof of learning is to organize your Narrative around the course's Learning Outcomes. Each grouping of outcomes can act as a major outline topic. As you work with the outline, you'll need to fill in subtopics, examples, and documentation within each major topic. We will look more closely at this in an upcoming section of this textbook, and the course will lead you through a writing exercise on this.

For each outcome, you will list any of your experiential knowledge, theoretical understanding, or applied learning that is relevant to it. You have done much of this work already by writing your PLA resume and gathering Supporting Documentation. Use what you have produced already to create an outline for a narrative that will support your challenge. List as many examples as you think necessary to substantiate your claims that you've already learned everything the course teaches, and relate your documentation to the examples.

Sample:

Business Management course

1. Learning Objective 1: Write a business plan.
  1. Attended a community college lecture on setting up a business
  2. Listed everything I needed to run my business
  3. Mapped out how it would work
  4. Decided how much money I needed
  5. Found sources for those funds

2. Learning Objective 2: Develop a philosophy of business.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
3. Learning Objective 3: Explain basic accounting practices.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
4. Learning Objective 4: Discuss issues involved in hiring and firing employees.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.

#### Generalization of Learning

As needed, explain and discuss ways you have generalized the knowledge and learning to settings other than the original experience or of how you might generalize it.

For example: I used the knowledge and skills from the business plan to start a viable business.

1. How class business plan applied to startup
2. Narrative about growth and success of business

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## 24. Methods for Writing Specific Examples

The purpose of the learning narrative is for you to tell the story of your learning by using specific examples, as we covered in the previous section. But let's break that down just a little further.

There are two kinds of specific examples that work well in the Educational Narrative, as well as a way to think about phrasing your examples that links it strongly to the Course Outcomes:

### Specific Instances

First, is the “one time” or “one day” example, in which you recall a specific day or incident, and use that to display your ability to implement the Course Outcomes. This is a specific segment of time—the day you had to fire your friend for unethical behavior, or the day you had to pull all your coworkers together in a snowstorm to address and build team unity over a disagreement; or the time you facilitated between a disgruntled client and coworker who had missed a deadline.

### Generalized Applied Knowledge

The other example is the “many times” example. In this, the volume of your experience speaks more clearly to the Course Outcomes. In other words, the pattern of your actions exhibits your learning better than a specific moment in time. For example, if you've led your office through three external audits, you might be able to say that each time you divided up preparation responsibilities, reviewed

reports, led coworkers to review receipts, prepared portfolios, etc. This is weeks or months of work, so we don't need the daily play-by-play; the larger overview serves as a specific example by outlining the process and including all the details and steps involved.

A strong Educational Narrative will ideally use both kinds of examples

## Strategic Use of Terminology

As you write the above kinds of examples, think carefully about the words you're choosing to describe your experiences. Use terminology from the Course Outcomes to clearly link your prior learning to the class. You may want to research or browse the textbooks used in the class to get a feel for a few phrases or ways of presenting ideas, to show that you're able to both talk the talk and walk the walk.

## Remember and Utilize Learning Theories

Recall which learning theory you most identified with back in Chapter 1. Review those theories and think about how they might apply to the experiences you brainstorm which match course objectives. How might your understanding of those learning theories help you tell your story and show your learning? Would they be beneficial to show the stages of your learning in your examples/case studies in your Educational Narrative?

## 25. Key Takeaways: The Educational Narrative

### Key Takeaways

- The Educational Narrative is the most difficult part of the PLA Portfolio to generate. It takes lots of writing, including several drafts while incorporating feedback.
- Specific examples are the most powerful way to display your mastery of the Course Outcomes.
- Using terminology from the course displays expertise in the course material
- The Course Outcomes should guide you in choosing your specific examples. Your examples should reflect your learning of those Course Outcomes.
- Educational Narratives are generally 1,000-1,200 words in length, but may be longer depending on your examples.
- Two effective kinds of examples are the Specific Example (“one day” or “one time”) and the Generalized Applied Knowledge Example (“many times/each time”).





# Appendix

- Sample PLA Resumes
- Sample Educational Narratives (forthcoming)

# Sample PLA Resume 1

**[Student Information Redacted]**

## **PLA Resume**

### **Accomplishments:**

- Earned numerous Exceeds Expectations performance review ratings as a manager and individual contributor
- Most requested Blind Spots and Leading Through Change facilitator
- Selected to lead high visibility projects at Progressive and Micron
- Nominated for exclusive Vassar Leadership Development Program
- Nominated for Micron Leadership in Action Program
- Nominated for Micron Women's Leadership Network Steering Committee and Professional Development Chair
- Recipient of Counter Culture Award
- Recipient of Culture Champion Award
- Traveled fulltime for two years with my family
- Became first costumed volunteer tour docent at Lyndon B. Johnson State Park's Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm
- Achievements in three distinct industries
- Delegate and volunteer for Braver Angels (formerly Better Angels)
- Mentor for Girl Scouts
- Micron Women's Leadership Network (MWLN) Steering Committee
- MWLN Professional Development Sub team leader
- Micron Organizational Change Management Center of Excellence lead
- Prosci® Certified Organizational Change Manager



<b>Expertise Area</b>	<b>Source of Learning</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Change Management</b>	Progressive Insurance & Micron Technology	Prosci® Certification; continuing education.	2013-current
		Association Change Management Professionals member & conferences	
<b>Communications</b>	Progressive Insurance Company	Responded to California Department of Insurance complaints in written form. Exceeded goal for response rate (speed and further inquiries).	2000-2002
	Progressive Insurance	Created and facilitated curriculum for a Communications Skills Training.	2000-2008
	LBJ State Park & Historic Site	Living History Farm volunteer docent. First volunteer in three years to earn ability to wear period costume and conduct tours.	2015
	Westat – Field Interviewer	Field Interviewer for American National Elections Study. Built trust through communication for permission to conduct study; exceeded goals for % of studies conducted.	2016-2017
	Micron Technology	Organizational Change Manager – formal and informal communication (written and verbal) to stakeholders – entry level to C-suite.	2016-current

	Braver Angels (formerly Better Angels) Citizen Moderator	Moderated community depolarization workshops within Boise, with excellent reviews. Moderated workshops at Annual Convention as well.	2018-current
<b>Management</b>	Estee Lauder/ Macys	Business Manager w/ 5 direct reports and \$1.5 million in annual sales.  Account Coordinator with 10 stores, 68 indirect reports, inventory management Training Coordinator with 70 stores in three state territory.	1994-1997
	Gottshalks Department Store	Managed Cosmetics Department with 38-60 employees, vendors, inventory, and store management responsibilities.	1997-1998
	Progressive Insurance	Managed 7 teams, including creating a new, distributed companywide team.  Managed/created processes – service resolution, quality, leadership development	1999-2014
	Micron Technology	Consultation with leaders on Change Management, and Diversity, Equality & Inclusion	2016-current

<b>Professional Education</b>	Estee Lauder	Vassar Leadership Development Program (nominated opportunity)	1996
	Progressive Insurance	Leadership Circuit	2000-2014
	Micron Technology	Core Management Culture Wizard Journey to Higher Performance Leadership Conductor Micron Leadership in Action (nominated opportunity)	2016-current
<b>Technology</b>	Progressive Insurance, Micron Technology & Personal	Microsoft Office: Excel, Outlook, Powerpoint  WebEx, GoToMeeting, Zoom	2000-current
	Boise State University & Personal	Google Suite	2018-current
<b>Training Conducted</b>	Estee Lauder/ Macys	New Hire Product Training  Coach Training Sales Training Leadership Training	1994-1997
	Progressive Insurance	Quality Training  Communication Skills Training Change Management Training Leadership Development Experiential Learning	2000-2014

	Micron Technology & Community	Blind Spots (Unconscious Bias)  Change Primer for Project Teams Inclusive Leadership Experience Leading Through Change Multi-generational Teams	2016-current
Volunteering			

# Sample PLA Resume 2

[Student information redacted]

## Accomplishments

- Owned an electrical contracting business and gained experience managing employees
- Worked as a crew foreman managing as many as 28 electricians on multiple projects
- Years of experience managing electrical projects with large workforces
- Worked as an Assistant Manager for a large electrical wholesale firm
- Partnered with my wife to homeschool two very bright boys from Kindergarten through high school
- Developed and deployed a regional SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition) system for my current employer
- Attended night school to earn my AAS degree and currently pursue an online BAS degree through Boise State University



<b>Expertise Area</b>	<b>Source of Learning</b>	<b>Accomplishment</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Communications</b>	Public Speaking program enforced through membership in a cult	Delivered numerous and regular public speeches before large audiences (age 8 – 16)	1978-1986
	California Academic Decathlon-Interview	Placed first among hundreds for impromptu speech	1986
<b>Management</b>	Foreman of Electrical and Instrumentation for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	Responsible for personnel and resource management for up to 7 crews working on multiple projects. Conducted daily safety meetings for all crew members.	2004-2005
	Level 1 coach for National Interscholastic Cycling Association	Managed, taught and motivated young mountain biking competitors	2018-2019
<b>Technology</b>	Inductive Automation	Learned development of IGNITION software applications	2018

# Sample PLA Resume 3

**[Student Information Redacted]**

## **PLA Resume**

### **Accomplishments:**

- Attained an Associate of Arts in Psychology in 2018, Magna Cum Laude
- Maintained Professional in Human Resources certification since 2008
- Worked for the State of Idaho for 29 years.
- Worked in Human Resources for 18 years.
- Volunteered at our church for 10 years. President of the women's group for two years. Participated on the worship team. Facilitated children's church. Prepared and served meals weekly.
- Mission trip to Tanzania, Africa in 2007. Painted elementary school. Assisted with building a new above ground water tank. Played games and sang with the children.
- Co-owner of Life's Little Treasures gift shop for 3 years.

### **Expertise Areas:**

Expertise Area	Source of Learning	Accomplishment	Dates
Leadership	<p>HR Officer: Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: Division of Human Resources (DHR)</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: Boise State University (BSU)</p>	<p>Lead an HR team of 5 employees; Member of Senior Management Team</p> <p>Analysis of various types of leadership styles. Adjust style based on each employee.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>

Communication	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: BLR and HRHero</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: BSU</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	<p>Effective and respectful oral, written, and electronic communication with internal and external customers; presentations; investigative interviews &amp; reports; mediating disputes; terminating employees; interviewing applicants; and providing constructive feedback.</p> <p>Journaling for documenting employee performance; recommending recognition; documenting investigative interviews; writing extensive reports, formal disciplinary actions, policies, procedures, and guidance.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: 2013</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: 2006</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>

Critical Thinking	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: BLR and HRHero</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: BSU</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	<p>Critical thinking skill development through problem solving, dispute resolution, constructive feedback, policy and procedure development, investigations, and presentations.</p> <p>Development of new programs and processes to gain efficiencies.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: 2013</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: 2006</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>
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Problem Solving	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: BLR and HRHero</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: BSU</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	<p>Ethically assess and apply problem solving during employee disputes, performance management, and investigations. Complete these processes with integrity. Treat individuals involved with dignity and respect. Conclusions are based on policies, rules, or laws that have been broken.</p> <p>Frequent and honest communication with the team. Dissect problems and ask for feedback.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: 2013</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: 2006</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>

Ethical Principles and Standards	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Respectful Workplace: DHR</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: BLR and HRHero</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: BSU</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	<p>Treat employees and supervisors equally and with dignity and respect. Base thoughtful conclusions on facts against policies, rules, and laws. Withhold making a conclusion before having all of the facts. Withdraw from any situation I may have a bias towards one side over the other.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Respectful Workplace: 2019</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: 2013</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: 2006</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>

<p>Interpretation &amp; Evaluation of Policies &amp; Rules</p>	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: BLR and HRHero</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p>	<p>Constantly review policies and rules for needed updates. Interpret them based on intent and past application. Evaluate the effectiveness of them. Create new policies and rules as needed based on situations.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>How to Conduct an Internal Investigation: 2013</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p>
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Team Development & Performance	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: BSU</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: BSU</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	<p>Build and maintain trust and respect within the team. Frequent and honest communication. Constantly monitor the morale of the team. Address issues as they arise and don't let them linger. Ask your team for input into processes and goals.</p> <p>Conduct a resource analysis annually to determine improvements needed. Develop an annual work plan for the team.</p>	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Mediating Workplace Disputes: 2006</p> <p>Intercultural Conflict Management: 2006</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>
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Innovation and Creativity	<p>HR Officer: DEQ</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: DEQ</p> <p>Lean Practitioner Training: DEQ</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: DHR</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback, Supervisory Academy: DHR</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: Fred Pryor Seminars</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: BSU</p>	Continually look for ways to improve processes. Eliminate non-essential steps. Embrace change with a positive attitude. Encourage staff through change.	<p>HR Officer: 2012 – Present</p> <p>HR Specialist Senior: 2005-2012</p> <p>Lean Practitioner: 2019</p> <p>Crucial Conversations: 2017</p> <p>Coaching and Feedback: 2014</p> <p>Developing Emotional Intelligence: 2012</p> <p>Supervision I-IV: 2003-2004</p>
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# Sample PLA Resume 4

## Accomplishments:

- Led and trained multiple teams of employees in various fields
- Kept extremely large jobs on budget and within schedule
- Performed audits to ensure multi agency compliance
- Developed training programs to increase yearly revenue
- Developed SOPs for structural steel shop
- Directed and worked with sub-contractors to ensure proper job completion
- Volunteered at Rake Up Boise yearly to help those in need
- Worked with a team to develop and manufacture production vehicles
- Utilized CAD and fabrication skills to translate architectural drawing into actual products

EXPERTISE AREA	SOURCE OF LEARNING	ACCOMPLISHMENT	DATES
<b>Management and Leadership</b>	Kitchen Manager:  Casanova's Italian Ristorante (Seattle, WA)	Hired and led teams of up to 8 employees.  Calculated weekly labor and food costs and adjusted budget accordingly.  Developed weekly promotions and media for advertising.	2001 – 2003
	Kitchen Manager:  The Ram Restaurant and Brewery (Boise, ID)	Hired and trained teams of over 40 cooks, prep cooks, and dishwashers.  Scheduled weekly shifts to ensure adequate coverage in kitchen as well as meeting employee requests for time off.  Adjusted staffing daily to maintain accurate labor budgets.	2003 – 2005
	General Manager:  Bucks 4X4 Off Road Center (Boise, ID)	Hired and trained sales staff and technicians.  Managed social media marketing and branding.  Developed training for sales staff which increased yearly sales by 20%.	2010 – 2012

	<p>Shop Foreman / Operations Lead:</p> <p>Sloan Metal Solutions (Boise, ID)</p>	<p>Hired and led teams of up to 20 people.</p> <p>Developed shop SOPs with input from HR and board of directors.</p> <p>Maintained labor and expense budgets for construction jobs of over \$1 million routinely.</p> <p>Performed audits to ensure compliance with OSHA, EPA, and AISC standards quarterly.</p> <p>Scheduled and oversaw employee training programs.</p>	2013 – 2016
	<p>General Manager: Throttle Works, LLC (Boise, ID)</p>	<p>Hire and train new technicians.</p> <p>Monitor costs and labor hours on as many as 50 jobs per week.</p> <p>Maintain customer relations and account management.</p> <p>Use Google analytics to adjust advertising according to market trends.</p> <p>Develop branding to promote new business and increase sales.</p>	2019 – 2020
<b>Teamwork</b>	<p>Shop Foreman / Specialty Fabricator: Sloan Metal Solutions (Boise, ID)</p>	<p>Worked with multiple teams to collectively finish very large construction projects.</p> <p>Worked with subcontractors to have parts produced and schedules maintained.</p> <p>Volunteered at Rake Up Boise every year to help others in need.</p>	2012 – 2016

<b>Innovation</b>	Shop Foreman / Specialty Fabricator: Sloan Metal Solutions (Boise, ID)	Utilized CAD and fabrication skills to interpret architectural drawings to develop physical products.  Designed gate lock mechanisms as well as security crash barriers to meet K12 testing requirements.	2012 – 2016
	General Manager: Throttle Works, LLC (Boise, ID)	Oversaw manufacturing and design of small-scale production vehicles for sale on open market.  Designed all primary components of production vehicles including engine, suspension, chassis, and electrical systems to meet DOT regulations.	2017 – 2020

# Sample Educational Narrative

## MDS 410

### MDS 301 – Prior Learning for Case Studies in Leadership

#### Educational Statement

As we live through this pandemic and global shared experience, leadership case studies are shaping in real time. Every aspect of our lives – family, school, work, community, country and world – is impacted by leadership competencies and decisions. I am certain the leadership we are seeing today will be studied for years, given some decisions are so far reaching. I am seeing Kouzes and Posner's Five Leadership Practices in action and at an accelerated level in my company. I am privileged to contribute to the way my company is challenging processes through experimentation and innovation in working from home to drive business goals. Given lengthy experience working remotely, in a former job, I have been proud to model the way with remote best practices and guidance on leading distributed teams. Communication is different in a remote environment, and I have been able to recommend and implement effective and respectful communication such as how to use our new technologies to ensure an inclusive meeting experience. We encourage the heart of our team members through video connections, allowing us to peer into the "natural habitats" of one another's home lives of pets and kids, in addition to the incredible amount of volunteering and fundraising we have done for COVID-19 related efforts. Our CEO has demonstrated vulnerability and transparency through this challenging time, driving our organizational culture and demonstrating how our company value of "People" comes alive.

This educational statement is for my portfolio challenging the Case Studies in Leadership course toward my Bachelor of Arts degree in Multidisciplinary Studies. Achieving a B.A. degree has

been a decades' long dream, and one that will be a stepping stone to my next chapter of graduate school studying International Relations and Diplomacy. My next chapter is shaping up as my two children are soon to be grown and flown.

I have been studying leadership for many years through my roles in school, work and community. As a lifelong learner, and current university student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Multidisciplinary Studies, I study the academic aspects of leadership in coursework ranging from Energy for Society to Globalization. In Foundations of Leadership I have studied the ethics and values and emotional intelligence in leadership, in addition to culture and effective leadership in organizations. As a team member in a multinational organization, I observe and live these factors daily. Continuous learning, and assessments, allows me to identify areas to improve and practice. I seek feedback in 360° assessments and other mechanisms to understand my personal leadership practice inventory. As an Individual Contributor, my current role requires me to influence without authority. I am seen as a subject matter expert for many leadership areas, including “Leading Through Change” and “Inclusive Leadership” as a curriculum creator and facilitator. To be a credible creator and facilitator of this content, I utilize research mechanisms to understand and articulate the leadership behaviors required to be successful. Data analysis and storytelling are additional competencies I use to build the leadership acumen in myself and others. I am able to strengthen my own leadership skills daily as a lead of numerous teams, including an Organizational Change Center of Excellence, professional development and grassroots feedback teams.

My career has spanned three decades in three disparate industries. I have also taken college courses, in addition to formal trainings, and personal enrichment development, while relocating and raising a family during that time. I am proud that almost every role I have taken on personally, and professionally, has been deliberate. If I were to chart my career, the line would be more



zig zag than linear. Although I've had progressively responsible positions, I have sought many lateral roles to expand the depth and breadth of my skills and leadership competencies.

Currently, I work as an Organizational Change Manager at Micron Technology. As Change Manager, I facilitate the change process at the individual and organizational level. True organizational change IS the culmination of every individual person changing. I am a leader, although I do not currently manage people I do influence without authority. Influencing without authority requires emotional intelligence and agility, in addition to other leadership skills, to effect change with all levels of the organization. A typical day includes coaching an executive sponsor, writing a communication plan, training a "Leading Through Change" course, conducting impact assessments, and facilitating a focus group.

To become an Organizational Change Manager, I received a professional certification from Prosci®, a research organization that combines the words "professional" and "science." A Prosci® certification is the most widely recognized and accepted change management certification. I keep my skills fresh through continuing education in change management methodology, such as conferences, classes and webinars. I also am a member of the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP) trade organization and regularly attend and present at ACMP conferences. In the past three years at Micron, I have taken various leadership classes such as Journey to Higher Performance, Leadership Conductor, and Core Management. I was selected for the highly competitive Leadership Accelerator program. In addition to courses I have taken, I have developed and delivered courses such as "Blind Spots" (Understanding Unconscious Bias), "Inclusive Leadership Experience", "Leading Through Change," and "Leadership in a Multigenerational Organization." Currently, I am developing curriculum for Resilience, given the unprecedented time we are going through. Before joining Micron, I worked remotely for eight years, so as Micron sent 78% of their workforce home to work due to COVID-19, I stepped up to provide guidance and best

practices for leading remote work. At Micron, I have successfully led change adoption of many high visibility projects.

Prior to joining Micron, my other professional experiences included many years with Progressive Insurance as a leader in individual contributor and people management roles. Many of my people management roles involved creating teams, or taking on teams of great complexity. The complexity was often beyond my technical expertise, but I was placed in these roles because of my proven leadership competencies. For example, I joined Progressive in an entry level capacity after choosing to leave another industry as a manager, account coordinator and trainer. After a brief time, I was invited to apply for a manager role for a very technical Quality department. The Quality department was full of incredibly talented, and tenured, employees who took great pride in their processes and expertise. I was tasked with creating new quality processes and tools. To be successful, through emotional intelligence, I focused on building the trust of my team. My team was initially skeptical of my skills and abilities because they had little insight into my prior leadership experience. I enabled them to act by demonstrating my leadership ability, while allowing them to demonstrate their technical expertise to shape the new procedures. This was one of the most challenging, and rewarding, teams I ever had the honor to work with. Another rewarding role I had at Progressive Insurance was creating a new process and team. Progressive decided to adopt Organizational Change Management as a core competency, and I was asked to lead the efforts to choose a methodology (I vetted many and recommended Prosci®), and build a team. To build the team, I researched, benchmarked and consulted with companies to understand best practices. My proposals were accepted and I built a team of Implementation Specialists throughout the country that still exists today. To succeed, it was critical that I create and articulate an exciting shared vision of change management and implementation for my team and the company. In both of these examples, building a collective team vision and culture of trust were key factors in my leadership success. I ended my career at

Progressive in one of my favorite positions, as a Leadership Development Consultant. In this role I worked with advisory committees to develop experiential leadership development offerings for individual contributors and senior leaders.

Ending my career at Progressive was a difficult choice in that I respected the company leadership, and the continuous learning and opportunities I chose. Instead of continuing at Progressive, I took a two year “career pause” to travel and learn with my family. We sold our home and most of our possessions, resigned our careers, and started traveling in an RV around the USA while “road schooling” our middle school aged sons. During this time we learned together, and I seized the opportunity to volunteer as a docent at a 1890-1915 era German-Texan Living History Farm. The farm, the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm at Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site in Stonewall, Texas , was run by park rangers and volunteers. Typically volunteers would assist with back office items, but my quick learning and enthusiasm garnered me a costumed docent position leading tours for school groups, travelers and local families. During our travels I also worked a temporary, holiday position in an Amazon warehouse “picking” items. This position was challenging, and humbling given the physical and productivity demands. During my two month tenure, I did share my observations and leadership insight with the site director, which led them to invite me to attend a regional site director call to share my observations. Although my position was entry level and temporary, I jumped on the opportunity to improve teamwork and leadership through actionable and constructive recommendations. There were plenty of team leadership and management gaps I could have ignored, given my position, but that was not ethically responsible given my experiences over the years.

Over the years I did manage many teams. My first team management role was not an immediate success, but is an experience I will never regret. After dropping out of university for financial reasons, I returned to my hometown to care for my ailing grandparents. I accepted a fulltime position with Estee Lauder

Cosmetics to support myself and grandparents. A year later, I was somewhat thrust into a business manager role (managing the team, budget and inventory of a department store cosmetics counter) when my manager was terminated for theft. I was only 20 years old and had never managed people before. There was no leadership development offered, so I learned through trial and error (more error than trial at first), reading and acquiring mentors. For example, initially I believed being friends with my direct reports was a sensible way to gain cooperation. Unfortunately, I lost the respect of my team quickly and I quickly had to earn trust and respect back. I earned their trust by evaluating my actions, and communicating what I was doing wrong. I respectfully met individually with each team member and communicated my errors and what I planned to do to earn their trust. I requested feedback and learned to simply say “thank you for providing that feedback. That was likely not easy.” As a team, we practiced respectful communication in providing feedback to each other. Our team soared and we drove business up by 18% year over year.

In the many years since, I have had the benefit of excellent leadership development in the form of classes, research, mentoring and insight. I have participated in many leadership competency inventories such as Emergenetics, Strengths Finder, Myers Briggs and 360° assessments. I value insight to increase my leadership effectiveness as a leader at home, work and in the community.

In the community, I add value to others through volunteering as a mentor with Girl Scouts, and the refugee community, in addition to being a Citizen Moderator with Better Angels to facilitate communication and reduce polarization in our communities. I spend time at Assisted Living Facilities interviewing and collecting the stories of our elders. This was a passion I found through travel.

My family travels extensively to expand our worldviews and learn from others. Travel has been such an important part of our family's personal development, my husband and I took two years out of the professional workforce to travel fulltime with our then middle school aged boys, for example. We spent the two years traveling

primarily the United States in an RV, while learning and volunteering. We have since used every opportunity to visit new places and cultures.

My personal guiding principle is to “improve myself and add value to others.” Continuous improvement involves increasing the depth and breadth of my experience by saying “yes” to challenges with a growth mindset and reflecting on those experiences. I build my credibility through honesty, and transparency of those experiences and inspiring others to achieve their best.

# Sample #2 Educational Narrative MDS 410

## Challenge to MDS 410 Case Studies in Leadership

As a child, I was always curious about the world around me but being the daughter of a single, uneducated mother growing up in Boise in the 70's and 80's, not much was expected of me. After my high school graduation, I dabbled in college learning but only halfheartedly. At twenty years old I married my high-school sweetheart and we moved away to San Diego where my new husband was enlisted in the Navy. Much has happened since then, nearly thirty years of work and life experience, that has given me a wealth of wisdom, knowledge and insight that I hope to pair with academic learning to prove to myself that I have what it takes to earn a degree. The past eleven years have been the most professionally rewarding years of my career, overseeing the Family and Patient Housing department at Mountain States Tumor Institute (now St. Luke's Cancer Institute). While I may never return to the corporate world, after recently being outsourced and laid off, I am finally able to put myself first and invest in the education I have been dreaming of.

When I started at St. Luke's in 2008, I inherited a department that was struggling to survive. Over the years I worked to build a reputation with both clients and colleagues, eventually becoming the subject matter expert for all things travel and lodging at the hospital. Through the years I sought to develop my leadership skills and emotional intelligence while managing a small staff and the patients and caregivers who were my clients. Working with oncology patients can be an emotionally exhausting endeavor, but it was the most professionally rewarding thing I've ever done. The years I have spent leading and being lead in this job have given me the skills I think I will need to challenge the class MDS 410

Case Studies in Leadership in my pursuit of my Bachelors of Art in Multidisciplinary Studies with a Certificate in Leadership and Human Relations.

Until you have been in the hospital or have cared for someone who was, it is difficult to fathom the amount of people required to run such a facility. The clients who stayed with me were patients or the caregivers of patients who had to travel to the hospital for treatment. My clients were unique to the hospital system, bringing distinct personalities and challenges with them that required teamwork with all the departments involved in their care. As the leader of the department it was essential for me to collaborate with my colleagues, like social workers and clinical staff to provide a meaningful picture of the patient's needs and struggles while staying at my facility. We often had patients who were receiving oncology treatment, but had a history of drug or alcohol use. While this type of behavior could be benign in most environments, it can quickly compromise treatment. This was the case with David. David, a leukemia patient, was lodging in my facility while in active treatment for his cancer. When his girlfriend started staying with him, I noticed a change in both their behaviors. Upon further discussion with David, he reluctantly admitted to me that he had shared some of his medications with his companion, putting his health and safety at risk. As part of David's care team, I was quickly able to communicate this with David's social worker, another important part of the patient's team, and they were able to intervene and support him through his and his girlfriend's addiction. Without knowing how to build his trust and the emotional intelligence to connect with him, I would have never been able to accomplish this.

As a lodging facility we operate much like a hotel which makes housekeeping an integral part of maintaining a hospital-clean environment. Typically, commercial housekeeping has an annual turnover rate of approx. 300%, which was not conducive to our patients, given housekeepers access to sensitive situations and information. Hiring the right person for this low-wage job wasn't easy but I was able to find people who stayed with me for years.

This was accomplished in the beginning by using the situational approach of leadership as my new housekeepers had to be trained and oriented to the unique clients we served and understand the laws and ethics that governed our space. When competency was low but commitment was high, I offered a high-directive, low-support leadership style. This also allowed me to assess trustworthiness and follow through. Over time, I was able to move into a delegating role after we had earned each other's trust. For one housekeeper, trust was an important issue, after having been treated poorly in other jobs. As a natural affiliative leader, emotionally connecting with her by standing up for her when a guest became threatening, or advocating for wage increases for her was part of the building blocks I used to earn her loyalty, and in return she stayed with me for four years, as lead housekeeper at one of my buildings. As a team, we worked so effectively that we could sense problems quickly and always had each other's back. This allowed her to work independently and have ownership over her schedule, while freeing up my time and energy to focus on our clients. After about four years she decided it was time for her to move on so I became more of a servant leader which helped to empower her, putting her needs first in recognition for her years of service. I began helping her refine her resume and interview skills so she could take the next step in her career. As her manager, I learned just how impactful my leadership was as I watched her grow and mature over those four years.

In February of 2017 I hired an over-qualified but hard-working woman to perform housekeeping duties for my new patient lodging facility. After she had worked for me for several months, she began bringing her dog to work with her, which was completely inappropriate. As an affiliative leader, I suggested, rather than clearly saying, that she not bring her dog to work. Things went along fine for several more months but then her adult daughter started showing up for coffee a few days a week, which progressed to every day fairly quickly. Although I made it clear she should never take space from a patient, I reasoned that giving some flexible



liberties could reward me with loyalty and service. After a few more months I became aware that she had continued taking advantage of our flexible work environment to the point of staying in empty rooms and having her children come to use our facilities to cook, launder and shower. The worst part was I found all this out from a precious woman who was battling leukemia and didn't need the drama. After meeting with Paula to talk about her egregious activities, it became clear that she was not capable of reform so I terminated her. Part of what I learned from this experience was to listen to my intuition. Being an affiliative leader is emotionally fulfilling and cultivates deep connections but it allows resonance to become unbalanced. I allowed Paula to take advantage of me when I failed to enforce the existing policies. This event prompted me to take the class COM390 Conflict Management during which I was able to write and record a revised interaction for this situation that showcased all that I learned through this process. This situation also led me to change how I vet applicants. Traditionally, this is done by an outside vendor, however, upon further investigation it became clear that they had missed several red flags that perhaps would have changed my decision to hire her in the first place.

When it became clear to the hospital that they would need the ground my building sat on, to expand the footprint of the main hospital I started brainstorming and planning how we could continue providing lodging services to patients at another location. Displacement planning required that I write a justification for continuing the services we currently offered. My first goal was to educate the leaders at the hospital about the service we offered by creating a powerpoint that I presented to approximately two hundred hospital leaders and executives. It was critical that I conveyed the importance of low-cost housing to my audience who, for the most part, had never been to my facility or met with the patients I was advocating for. Next, I met with my director to discuss where we could move operations to after my building was moved. After doing some research on possible locations, my director met me at a local bed and breakfast that was for sale near the hospital.

We toured the building then had a meeting with our stakeholders to discuss and tour the property again. Based on my recommendation, the hospital purchased that property allowing patient housing to continue operations. It is my belief that, without my leadership and advocacy, patient housing would have ceased to exist in February of 2017.

Throughout my professional life I have found opportunities to learn and grow in every job, side-hustle and experience. For every patient that walked through our doors, I learned to assess their needs using verbal and non-verbal tools, determine any risks of placement using mature emotional intelligence to address health, safety and staffing concerns. I have had amazing successes with both employees and clients, and a few failures from which I have studied and learned realizing that, as the leader, I set the tone for my department. Over the past eleven years, and even much further back in my career, I have continued developing the communication and leadership skills that I believe are the cornerstone of my success, making me a top performer with a very loyal client base. The leadership lessons I have learned have been earned on the proverbial battlefield, leaving me with wounds and a lot of practical experience. It is my hope that my thirty plus years of experience has the value I believe it does and will allow me to challenge the course MDS 410 Case Studies In Leadership.

# Sample Educational Narrative

## MDS 430

### **MDS 430 Ethics**

#### **Introduction**

I have worked for the state of Idaho since 1991. My job has provided our family with a steady income, health insurance, and a retirement account. Working full-time and raising a family kept me very busy. I did not have any time for pursuing my education until our two daughters were teenagers. I was also at a point in my career that I could not advance without some education past high school. Within this same time frame, Nampa opened the College of Western Idaho. The community college setting allowed me to start taking classes at a minimal cost.

Before officially working towards a degree, I had taken Human Resource Management (HRM 305), Employee and Labor Relations (HRM340), and Compensation and Benefits (HRM 406) classes at Boise State University. In 2008, I passed the test to become a Professional in Human Resources through the Human Resource Certification Institute. I have kept the certification since that time with continuing experience and training. I have worked in various Human Resource (HR) positions for 18 years. This experience has provided me with opportunities to develop and practice ethical principles and standards. My goal is to receive prior learning credit for MDS 430 Ethics.

#### **Career Goals**

I have worked for the state of Idaho for 28 years. I started as a General Typist and moved up through the various levels of administrative support positions for the first ten years of my employment. Starting at the Department of Corrections and moving to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) after five years of service. In 2001, I had the opportunity to move into the HR

section of DEQ and provide administrative support. I had never considered a career in HR, but quickly had the opportunity to move up into a Human Resource Associate role in 2002. In this position, I learned about the data entry involved in the various personnel actions and processing payroll. Soon after when we lost some of our HR consultants who provided support to the various groups within the agency, I was given the opportunity to step into that role on a temporary basis and provide assistance to one group. I started taking classes at this time to increase my knowledge of the HR laws. I always worked hard and had a goal to learn as much as possible. This led to an opportunity to apply for a senior level position in HR. I qualified for the position and was promoted in 2005. It was a several pay grade jump to this position and it was a steep learning curve. I am a dedicated and strong employee, driven to succeed. As I moved into this position, we lost our HR Officer over the section and a previous peer was hired for the job. The new HR Officer provided lots of opportunities for me to learn and grow in my new position. He also pushed me outside of my comfort zone. I quickly found myself in a lead role in HR and the go-to person for supervisors and employees. After six years in this position, the HR Officer left DEQ and I was promoted into the HR Officer position. I have been in this role for eight years.

The promotion to HR Officer in 2012 was another jump in my career with a steep learning curve. I had extensive knowledge of DEQ and had developed many great professional relationships over the years. As the HR Officer, I am part of the senior management team for the department. I provide direction and interpretation to my team and the agency for HR policies and procedures. I have enjoyed being part of the senior management team and the opportunity it allows me to set the HR role for the agency and have significant input into the overall direction for the agency. Working side by side with my fellow leaders of the agency has provided lots of reward. This has given me a desire to strive towards a larger leadership position as an administrator for business operations in a larger agency or a private company.

## **Educational Goals**

The recent events of the Coronavirus have made it necessary for our agency to take an ethical stance in dealing with the pandemic crisis. When Idaho had no cases and we were all still going into the office to work, employees were beginning to panic. As part of the Senior Management team, the decisions were made to bring in precautionary hand sanitizer, post reminder signs on washing hands, and recommend employees stay home if they are sick. During this time, we were instructed not to send employees home if they were sick because we would have to pay them administrative leave with pay. We had to figure out a way to get them home, without directing them to go home. Employees would resist going home because they thought they only had allergies or they had no paid leave left. Supervisors worked with me to develop language to direct them to work from home. This worked around the issue of sending them home, but dealt with the immediate concern of safety for others in the work environment.

HR describes and defends ethical systems ensuring non-discrimination of applicants and employees on a daily basis. Our team has developed informational emails and training for supervisors regarding hiring, promotions, and discipline. Often HR sits on the interview panels with supervisors to ensure laws are being followed. Supervisors cannot consider any information learned in the interview or application that could be discriminatory such as religious preferences, race, pregnancy, gender, disability, age, and sex. An example of this was when a supervisor was reviewing their applicants on the hiring list and could tell one of them was older due to when they completed school and their work history. He made a comment that the applicant was old and wouldn't be able to perform the inspections. HR informed him he could not consider the applicant's age or physical condition. He was also informed he should not make assumptions prior to interviewing them. Since there were physical requirements to the job, we worked with the supervisor to structure the interview question in a way

that the individual would either confirm or deny they were able to perform that function with or without an accommodation.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to accommodate employees when they need adjustments to their job to allow them to perform the essential functions. This law is difficult to work through with employees and supervisors. An example of this was when an employee had a medical condition that sometimes impacted their sleep and would prevent them from reporting to work on time. HR worked with the employee to request information from their medical provider. I also asked the employee and medical provider for ideas on what they need in order to complete the essential functions of their job. I worked with the supervisor to determine essential functions of the job. It was not essential for the employee to be at work early in the day. They could easily complete their job later in the day and into the evening, if needed. The employee and medical provider stated the ability to come in later on some mornings and work later would benefit the health of the employee. A flexible schedule was created and specific call in procedures for the employee. All of this was accomplished without sharing protected health information with the supervisor or other staff in the work group who might question the situation.

As the HR Officer for the agency, I am responsible for writing and revising HR policies and procedures. I make notes on changes we want to consider and implement. The policies need to follow federal and state laws and directives. The policies are non-discriminatory and are applied to all employees equally. All employees are required to read the policies and procedures and complete an acknowledgement form. Another example of my writing experience is through the workplace investigation process. When we have a complaint turned in that an employee may have broken a policy, I complete an investigation. I've investigated hostile work environment claims such as the supervisor being accused of yelling and cussing at the employees. I've also investigated sexual harassment claims based on activities that happened after hours between employees and supervisors. When a complaint comes in,

I develop a plan including what policies may have been broken and who I need to interview. Respectful interview questions are developed to assist me with acquiring the information needed to make the determination. When I interview each employee, I am respectful and do not make any assumptions. I show empathy when appropriate. I ask clarifying questions to help receive the information needed. Once all of the interviews are completed, I write up an extensive investigation report. The information included in the report is focused on the facts and not assumptions. I state a conclusion on whether or not policies or laws have been broken. This report is reviewed by our legal department and then sent to the director for determining if disciplinary action is needed. I am involved in the discussions with the director and legal to determine disciplinary action or follow up. It is important to focus on the facts. If disciplinary action is decided on, I write up the extensive notification to the employee. I will then accompany the supervisor when the disciplinary action is delivered to the employee. It is done in a respectful manner considering heightened emotions. These situations need to be handled with care from both a moral and social view.

I have attained my associate's degree in Psychology, Magna Cum Laude, from the College of Western Idaho. This accomplishment provided me with a better background of education to enhance my HR Officer role. With my career goals of advancing past my current position, I need to complete my bachelor's degree. I am currently enrolled in the Multidisciplinary Studies online program through Boise State University. My focus will be on a certificate in Leadership.

# Sample Educational Narrative

## MDS 450

For this educational statement, I will be focusing on the MDS 450 class. I will highlight what prior learning experiences have helped me to learn the importance of Teamwork and Innovation. In order to accomplish this, I will also write of my personal education goals and attempt to provide a window to you of who I am and how I have arrived where I am today. Also, I will be using experiences from my work history in management to highlight some key moments that have molded me along the way.

I returned to Boise State after leaving school about 7 years ago. My family was growing and I was struggling to provide for them and maintain good grades. I had to put my then small and young family's needs first. That decision eventually led me to the hardest, most frustrating and most fulfilling job I have ever had and almost five years later I am still plugging away at it. I am currently the Custodial Supervisor for the largest school district in the state of Idaho. After working in this position for a few years, I learned that in order to best help my large team of now 220 custodians I needed to add some more tools to my tool belt. That is when I decided to go back to school to help sharpen my tools and add new ones. I discovered the Multidisciplinary Studies program with its focus on leadership and business. I knew immediately that it was a program for me. I wanted to help my team rise to a new level and I knew that by investing into and improving myself, it would allow me to then invest in and help improve my team.

In short, my personal education goals and professional goals are tightly intertwined. I want to advance in my education so that I can be better prepared to serve and help my team. I want to foster a culture built on a system of trust that encourages and supports teamwork and innovation. It is by and through teamwork and



innovation that the Custodial team in the West Ada School District will be able to continue to provide a safe and sanitary learning environment for the students in our schools.

About 8 years ago I started working for a company called GCA Services. Our regional manager always preached that we as a team succeed together and failed together. When we would have our weekly team meeting, this same regional manager would call the account manager and us shift supervisors together and we were to shut up, listen and do as we were told. He would preach team work; however, we were not a team. We were a group of people being led by a dictator. Not one soul had an opportunity to give a suggestion or be allowed to have a creative or innovative thought. In my opinion this was a detrimental behavioral trait of that regional manager. He constantly was damaging and harmful to the moral of those he was supposed to lead.

Fast forward to eight years later, I now work for a school district. A few months ago I took a problem I was working through regarding one of my employees to my supervisor. My Supervisor did not order me on what to do. In fact he said “wow that’s a doozy, I see why you’re having issues with it. Let’s call the other supervisors over and let’s round table it and come up with a solution as a group”. My supervisor could have come up with a directive he wanted me to follow and sent me on my way. Instead he saw an opportunity to not only allow me to learn and voice my ideas; but, also the other supervisors in the office. We were all able to learn from this experience and become more unified as a team. This experience taught me why organizations use teams and the importance of organizations effectively using creative and collaborative teams.

I have in between these two personal team experiences, I have had my own opportunities to assemble teams and I have learned to do it with an open mind. When I hire new employees and assign them to a school, we try to place like minded people together. The interview questions I wrote after working for the district for about a year allows me to better gauge a potential new employee’s personality. Before the questions were all skill and performance

based. I figure I can teach someone the trade, I cannot teach them to be a good human. These new questions allow me to determine that. After the interview, my assistant and I will decide if we want to hire that person or not. If we do want to, then we have a lengthy conversation about team development, detrimental behaviors and what school to assign them too. When discussing the team development we consider the personality of the Head Custodian and other custodians and also the building principal and the culture of the school. When discussing detrimental behaviors, we look at the application, letter of recommendations and our notes from the interview. We try to identify red flags that would be detrimental to the current team.

About a year ago I interviewed an individual who was currently transitioning from male to female. The person interviewed well and we decided to hire her. The hardest part about hiring her was deciding on what school and custodial team to assign her to. We considered everything including the demographics of the students. We did not want to put her in a situation that would be difficult for her to succeed. We ended up assigning her to a small elementary school that had one of our most seasoned and welcoming Head Custodians. This Head custodian has worked for the district for 38 years and is one of the nicest people I have ever met. The principal and the school were equally welcoming. The lady we hired worked there very happily until she decided about ten months later that she wanted to pursue a different path as her and her significant other moved out of state. It was interesting to see this team go through the stages of team development. The forming stage was by far the most interesting. A lot of that had to do with the lifestyle of the new employee. However, the Head Custodian did a great job at listening to her and getting to know her before making quick judgments. This experience is one of the many times I learned the importance of team development vs. detrimental behaviors and the stages of stages of team development.

Learning to identify the different team stages (forming, storming, norming and performing) is extremely helpful when a team is stuck

in one of the 4 stages. I have learned that most teams get stuck in the forming stage. I have had multiple employees unwilling to look pass the little annoying habits of their teammates. They allow it to boil inside them until it one day explodes. Before learning to identify different team stages, when a team started to struggle and under perform, I would simply take disciplinary action. Now that I have learned the different team stages, I now can first take a mentoring or coaching role. By taking a mentoring or coaching role, I can help the team to grow as individuals and as a team.

It was through teamwork and innovation between a vendor and I that allowed my district to be prepared for the current COVID 19 pandemic. At the end of last cold and flu season I worked with a vendor to find a way to better disinfect the schools. It was then that I discovered electrostatic sprayers. These devices at the time were very new to the industry and many did not believe in the technology. The vendor presented the opportunity to me and my assistant. We tested it and allowed some of our head Custodians to try it. We ended up loving it so much we bought 60 of them. Once the COVID 19 pandemic hit the Treasure Valley this device became a highly sought after piece of equipment. But the manufacturer was completely sold out. However because of the innovative thinking and team work of the vendor, my leadership team, and I were ready to face the challenge with the best tools in the valley to do so. This experience showed me the importance of best practices for driving innovation. Being willing to have a safe space for innovation and keep a broad perspective when the vendor presented the idea was key.

These many experiences have helped me to learn the importance of creating balanced teams that can work through the different stages of team development. Also they have helped me to quickly identify the current team stage and how to help the ones that get stuck. These experiences have helped me to more appreciate the importance of innovation and why organizations use creative teams that foster and drive an innovative culture.

# Sample #2 Educational Narrative MDS 450

## Educational Statement- Teamwork and Innovation

Throughout the course of my life I have held many different positions in several fields. I've worked in the service industry, banking, health care and I'm currently Operations Coordinator for a defense contractor. I have a lot of experience working with teams, some of them more effective than others. I learned something from each experience and have implemented those lessons in my current position. I thought this would be an excellent opportunity for me to demonstrate my prior learning for Teamwork and Innovation. Throughout my portfolio, I will outline the course objectives and how my experiences over the last 20 years in the workforce has helped me to meet these objectives.

After spending two years at home with my children I made the decision to finish my college degree. It had been a goal of mine for many years and I felt I was ready to make it a priority. Around that time, I was approached by a family friend who is running a company in the defense industry. She was looking for someone to come in to the office in an administrative capacity and help them organize their day-to-day operations and implement some of the basic things a company needs to be effective and productive that they had missed in the early days of establishing the company.

Within six months I had decided I really liked the company and could see myself there long term but knew I wouldn't be satisfied in my current role for much longer. I thought about what I really enjoyed doing and the kind of work environments I had enjoyed in the past. The common thread for me was that I worked best and learned the most when I was part of a team. In health care I was part of a team that consisted of Doctors, nurses and the patients themselves and we had a common goal of getting the patient healed

and out the door. I had a rotating list of teammates depending on who was on call and learned the best ways to work with whichever team I was in for my 12-hour shift. Understanding the dynamics of how 30 different people worked together in ever changing groups with sick and injured patients was a steep learning curve but was an environment I thrived in and enjoyed.

Within my new role I wanted to be part of a team again. I had been hired in an office administrator capacity and wore several different hats but wasn't really part of any one department. In deciding what I wanted my role to be I knew that working with a strong team leader was important and team members I respected and could learn from was a priority. I decided that the operations Department would be a good fit and volunteered to head up a project implementing a new ERP system within the company and training all the employees in the new system. The president of our company agreed, and my position was created. I admit that I had a much better insight into the company's teams, as I'd seen how they worked together and had the opportunity to pick the team I felt I would work well with. The team had already gone through forming, storming, norming, performing and were comfortable with one another. I took some time to understand the way they worked together and the biggest lesson for me was learning how they communicated with each other and how I needed to slow down and listen.

Within our company, teams are used in a very straightforward way. The production team produces, the integration team integrates. We've got software developers and sales reps. It's all very clear cut and straightforward. Each team lead is part of the leadership team, which reports to the CEO. Each team is an integral part of the mission and if one team is failing it affects the company. Within the Operations department collaboration and creativity is encouraged. My boss supports any new ideas and works with team members to use their time in the most "productive and efficient" use of each person's time. He focuses on our individual strengths and encourages cross training so there is a general knowledge across the department. Within the team itself, I oversee big internal

projects. For example, in December we began the implementation of a new ERP system, which will completely change the way we do business. I was given control on how I wanted to carry out the management and training with the expectation that I would report honestly about my experience and as for help as needed. I worked with team leaders to establish the best way to approach training within each department and worked with my boss to create individual departmental training programs based on the team leaders' feedback.

The steps I wanted to take were building the team, motivating them, encouraging new ideas, and guiding them to the end goal. Understanding that dictating direction or attempting to establish authority would ultimately hurt the team I was trying to create was an easy lesson. The difficult part was taking each person's ideas and learning styles into account while trying to maintain my own goals and timelines. Being conscious of other expectations, letting unimportant details go and actively listening are aspects of myself that I am still working on in order to be the best team member I can. While I work well with everyone on and off my team company wide, having a strong understanding of my own behaviors and goals will help me work well with any team in business and in life.