A

my* studied physical therapy at an excellent university, graduating near the top of her class. She dug into her new career with enthusiasm and spent long hours at the clinic. After several years, though, she felt tired and burned out, and had little time for her two young children. She began to wonder if she was cut out for this field.

After receiving an A.S. degree in radiation technology, Tim* married and bought a large home. He and his wife came from unpretentious roots and were anxious to acquire some of the things their parents couldn't afford. They filled their fancy new home with furniture bought on credit, purchased several expensive “toys” on impulse, and soon were overwhelmed with debt. The foundation of their happy marriage began to crack, as tempers flared over mounting bills.

What went wrong with these promising young people? Their academic work was excellent, and they were well prepared for their careers. Yet they were unable to achieve a balance between their personal and professional lives. In the relative safety of college, life seemed rosy, but out in the real world, things began to look grim.

The School of Allied Health Professions (SAHP) at Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California) offers three portfolio courses in personal and professional wholeness that examine these and other issues. In to-

Portfolio courses are important in a school whose faith tradition emphasizes service to others.

*Names have been changed to protect students’ privacy.

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day's fast-paced world, these courses have proved as valuable as the core classes in professional programs.

Portfolio courses are important in a school whose faith tradition emphasizes service to others. This article will describe the development, content, and assessment processes of the portfolio courses at Loma Linda University (LLU) in the hope that this can serve as a guide for other schools seeking to develop similar curricula.

**History**
Ten years ago, Cindy Malinowski and a team of LLU faculty members founded the Portfolio program based on the university's motto, “To make man whole.” LLU was facing WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation, and each SAHP professional program needed to complete an outcomes assessment based on SAHP’s goals, which include the skills, abilities, and character of the ideal health professional graduate (see sidebar below). The portfolio program addresses 12 of the goals (e.g., ethics, compassion, diversity, wholeness, personal finance, and lifelong learning). The remaining goals are completed within the student's academic program. Thorough documentation ensures a comprehensive assessment of the student's growth and progress. Emphasis is placed on helping students develop a balanced lifestyle now, rather than waiting until after graduation. For this reason, the course is sometimes called "Life 101."

**How Does a Portfolio Course Work?**
Throughout the course, the student attends workshops and develops his or her portfolio, which is turned in at the end of the year. This portfolio includes both required and self-selected assignments, certificates from elective workshops, and personal reflections. The completed Portfolio binder:
- Documents personal growth and wholeness;
- Demonstrates the student's abilities, experiences, and development of personal and professional skills;
- Showcases the student's résumé and recommendation letters for future job interviews;
- Contains organized evaluations, letters of appreciation, and continuing education/professional meeting attendance certificates as documentation for future pay raises and promotions.

Virtually all SAHP students must take a Portfolio course. Junior students register for Portfolio I, seniors for Portfolio II, and incoming graduate students enroll in Graduate Portfolio. The first week of fall quarter, students attend Portfolio I, II, or Graduate Portfolio orientation and learn about class requirements, which combine required and self-selected activities.

**Curriculum Content**
Required assignments for Portfolio I include writing a personal mission statement, visiting the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance, and completing seven hours of community service or “service learning” (the term used when service is done in conjunction with an academic course). These three assignments require students to write papers that reflect on their experiences.

Optional first-year assignments include attending workshops on study skills, personal finance, and the emotional benefits of laughter. Students with concerns about credit-card debt find relevance in the video *The Overspent American*. And the DVD *Supersize Me* speaks powerfully to those challenged by diet and weight control. The Health & Faith Forum lectures explore issues in ethics and wholeness across disciplines. Another popular option is to visit a house of worship of a different culture and faith tradition. For each of these

### School of Allied Health Professions Goals

The ideal graduate from the School of Allied Health Professions should be an individual who can:

1. Demonstrate clinical competence in his/her chosen profession.
2. Operate from a foundation of personal and professional ethics, which incorporates the fundamental values espoused by Loma Linda University.
3. Demonstrate compassion for others in the manner of Christ.
4. Clarify his/her values and attitudes of human worth in relationship to his/her understanding of God.
5. Perform effectively within a team setting.
6. Communicate effectively with peers, supervisors, patients, family, and the community, orally and in writing, with sensitivity to nonverbal communication.
7. Analyze and respond to the changing field of health care.
8. Critically analyze data.
9. Read and interpret research papers.
10. Contribute to the chosen health profession through participation in professional organization(s).
11. Utilize a theoretical foundation as a basis of treatment or management.
12. Incorporate wholeness into all aspects of personal and professional life.
13. Use sensitivity to accommodate diversity among individuals.
15. Understand the basic skills needed in personal financial management, and where appropriate, in practice management.
options (with the exception of workshop attendance), the student completes a reflection paper.

Often, new students enter the class feeling unclear about the terms wholeness and balance, so one optional assignment helps clarify these terms. After reading about characteristics of a whole person, the student decides on a person fitting the description and sets up a one-hour interview with that individual. The student then writes a reaction paper describing the interviewee and the interview.

For other optional assignments, students may read and reflect on a book selection from the approved reading list or go in pairs to a nearby mall, where they navigate via wheelchair through stores and restrooms. Participating students write a letter to the store manager describing problems encountered in negotiating the maze of narrow aisles and bathroom stalls.

The second-year Portfolio course requires students to complete eight hours of service learning and to create a professional résumé. Because those enrolled in the class are familiar with the program, most second-year assignments are self-selected. Options include attending workshops on topics such as praying with patients, compassion, basic needs of children, public speaking, change in healthcare, professional behavior, controlling emotions, personal credit scores, and buying a first home. Or students may opt to view videos/DVDs on topics such as a Dietrich Bonhoeffer documentary, end-of-life care, disabilities, marriage, self-care for student health professionals, media and the developing child, eating disorders, and addictions. The students evaluate each film, using a one- to four-star rating, and describe their personal reactions. Certain goals allow for art or poetry completion, and credit may be earned for attendance at marital counseling sessions at the student counseling center or relaxation classes at the school fitness center.

The Graduate Portfolio class is similar to Portfolio II, except that, with faculty approval, students may design their own options for each goal.

### Service Learning

Albert Schweitzer said, “The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” Students select their own service activity and location, and then reflect in a written paper on the value of the assignment.

“Service learning is a method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service, frequently youth service, throughout the community. As a teaching methodology, it falls under the category of experiential education. More specifically, it integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection.
to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, encourage lifelong civic engagement, and strengthen communities.42

This portion of the course elicits a variety of reactions, described below by several physical therapy students. Service learning has changed their perceptions and attitudes and informed their choices and thinking about wholeness. Kathryn* tells how helping others enhanced her life: “I learned that any act of compassion done for somebody else is really the best thing you can do for yourself.” Bethany* gained insight into working with others who have problems: “Through this service learning project, I learned that we cannot always fix things, but we can make things better by sharing God’s love with others.” Kris* learned to appreciate the uniqueness of each individual: “The world is just so stuck on being perfect that they forget that we are all imperfect one way or another.” Tom* gained insight into disabilities: “When I was put in a wheelchair and asked to compete against them [the wheelchair basketball team], they would run circles around me.” Maria* said the pediatric patients “stand out in my mind, and I will be able to picture them . . . my entire life.”

In course assessments, 89 percent of the 127 Portfolio I students gave the service-learning assignment an exceptional grade.3 Student reaction papers reveal initial resistance to the service-learning assignment, subsequently changing to gratitude for the opportunity.

“There are two factors that distinguish service-learning programs from other community-service programs. First, service-learning programs explicitly include features that foster participants’ learning about the larger social issues behind the human needs to which they are responding. . . . The second factor . . . is an emphasis on reciprocity. Reciprocity is the exchange of both giving and receiving between the ‘server’ and the person or group ‘being served.’”4

**Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance**

As previously mentioned, one required first-year course component is a day-long visit to the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance. In the past 14 years, more than four million visitors have participated in this experience. The museum’s exhibits challenge bigotry and racism and highlight inequities and abuses. Visitors are asked to respond to real-life situations, such as who is guilty when a driver is arrested for driving under the influence: the driver, the salesclerk who sold the alcohol, or the liquor manufacturer.

The visitor listens to survivors’ eye-opening stories of the Holocaust and leaves with a clearer understanding of its causes and effects. When entering the museum, each person receives a card with a child’s name and picture on it. Throughout the tour, the card is inserted into slots that link to a computer, and the visitor learns what happened to the child—and finally, whether he or she survived the Holocaust.

At another location, the visitor approaches two doors labeled “Prejudiced” and “Unprejudiced.” After visitors attempt unsuccessfully to open the “Unprejudiced” door, the guide explains that it is locked because no one is without prejudice.

Although the museum is some distance from LLU, the visit

**The second-year Portfolio course requires students to complete eight hours of service learning and to create a professional résumé.**


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the topic’s relevance, and their own change in attitudes after attending.

For certain workshops, students complete a pre- or post-test to engage them in the subject. Before the above-mentioned identity workshop, an “ID IQ” test was administered. A sample question read as follows:

How often do you check your credit reports?
- Every time I apply for a loan
- Whenever I feel like it
- I check my credit report regularly
- What’s a credit report?

In their course assessments, 95 percent of the Portfolio II students rated the relevance and quality of workshops as excellent or above average.6

Portfolio Advisory Committee

In the spring of 2006, a Portfolio Advisory Committee was established to regularly review the Portfolio program. The objectives of the committee are to:

1. Fine-tune course curriculum and workshops
2. Solicit feedback on the existing program
3. Plan future courses and workshops
4. Prepare for upcoming accreditations

The 17-member committee includes SAHP program directors and two students, LLU hospital and university administrators, representatives from the LLU Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness, community members, and Portfolio class faculty and staff.

At the May 2006 Portfolio Advisory Committee meeting, students requested a more professional workshop environment. They suggested that the light meal be served after the workshop instead of before to minimize noise and interruptions. To encourage promptness, they recommended that attendance slips be distributed only for the first 10 minutes of workshops. Both of these recommendations have been implemented, with good results.

Grading

A satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading system is used for Portfolio classes, since it would be difficult to give a letter grade to many of the assignments (for example, a personal mission statement). The course spans three quarters; an “in progress” (IP) grade is given for the first two quarters. A final grade is not calculated until near the end of the spring quarter, when workshops are completed and binders are submitted. Approximately 300 students enroll each year in the Portfolio courses offered by LLU’s School of Allied Health Professions. Two online Portfolio courses are offered for students not enrolled in on-campus courses.

Grading for all three classes is completed a month before the end of the school year. There are advantages to early compilation of grades: (1) Portfolios are returned to students in class prior to exam week to eliminate having to mail 300 portfolios to students’ home addresses; (2) students are free to concentrate on their remaining classes the last month of school; and (3) Portfolio faculty are able to select award recipients for excellence in critical thinking and organization in time for the May Awards Chapel.

Online Communication

Portfolio faculty communicate with students via Blackboard, a Web-based course management program that facilitates online teaching and enriches on-campus courses. Blackboard allows the instructor to e-mail information to a single user or to the entire class. This type of communication is extremely valuable, since there are no regularly scheduled class periods. All the required course components are available to the students in Blackboard: workshop and lecture descriptions and dates, assignments and forms, service learning contact information, instructions for résumé creation, and descriptions of DVDs and videos.

Research

Laura Alipoon, chair of LLU’s radiation technology department and instructor for the Portfolio distance-education courses, studied the effectiveness of LLU’s Portfolio program in her doctoral dissertation. She examined the impact of service-learning requirements and the Museum of Tolerance visit on Portfolio students: “The two field experiences, community service and the visit to the Museum of Tolerance, provide a moral challenge or dissonance, which led to growth in moral development, in the students enrolled in the course Portfolio Practicum I.”7

She further commented: “Service experiences that allowed students to interact personally with recipients were reported as the most rewarding . . . Interacting with service recipients caused students to reflect and challenged their assumptions concerning poverty, especially when dealing with the homeless and children of low socioeconomic backgrounds. Students also

Loma Linda University students attend the Wil Alexander Wholeness Series, a component of the portfolio program. The complimentary meal served afterwards gives time for discussion and encourages community.
rethought their assumptions concerning the elderly, realizing that the elderly may still have something to offer or are, at least, deserving of respect and attention.\(^8\)

Alipoon also found that many of the students she interviewed plan to stay involved in their communities after graduation.

Regarding the museum visit, students she interviewed saw the “snowball effect” of prejudice.\(^9\)

“While many Caucasians were surprised to discover they were prejudiced, non-Whites were shocked to discover their prejudice, as they were certain they would never be prejudiced toward anyone due to the way others have treated them.”\(^10\)

**Challenges**

The biggest challenge in producing the workshop series was scheduling. With 39 Allied Health academic programs, it was difficult to find a time when the majority of students could attend.

Finances continue to pose a problem. The LLU Student Affairs Office has co-sponsored the series by providing a meal after each workshop. After a long day of classes, hungry, tired students enthusiastically greet the sight of a hot meal. In addition, eating together gives them a sense of community and an opportunity to get acquainted with people from other programs and schools. As workshop attendance increases, however, it becomes more difficult to find sufficient funding for this meal.

Another hurdle: finding funds to pay workshop speakers more than token honorariums. This year, employees of the Loma Linda University Medical Center East Campus rehab hospital are attending a noontime duplication of the Wil Alexander Wholeness Series evening program. The East Campus administration has begun to sponsor both series by covering the cost of all honorariums.

**In course assessments, 89 percent of the 127 Portfolio I students gave the service-learning assignment an exceptional grade.**

**Future Plans**

Here are some ideas that are presently being examined by the Portfolio staff:

1. Electronic portfolios for today's technologically savvy student. This could include video clips of research presentations or mission trips. Offering the option of an electronic portfolio would showcase the student's computer knowledge as well as his or her personal and professional growth.

2. Collaboration with area universities to implement cutting-edge techniques to strengthen the service-learning program.

3. Purchasing an audience-response system with individual hand-held devices that can create instant charts and incorporate them into a PowerPoint presentation. When the presenter asks a multiple-choice question, the audience's responses immediately appear in a column chart that flashes on the screen. A speaker could also give pre- and post-tests via the electronic equipment to quickly ascertain the audience's knowledge about a subject.

**Looking to the Future**

There are several important questions yet to be answered: Will SAHP alumni continue to perform community service af-
ter graduation? Will their lives be influenced by the practical skills learned in the Wil Alexander Wholeness Series? Will students and graduates access available resources to deal with life’s challenges? When encountering a colleague with addictions, will the Portfolio alumnus recall the lecture on addictions in caregivers? Further research will be needed to determine the answers to these questions, and to make the courses as useful as possible.

The Portfolio courses examine areas of a young person’s life often overlooked in the scramble for a professional education. They integrate a healthy balance into the curriculum and give students a better chance to create a successful future. The classes also give Loma Linda University an opportunity to evaluate how successfully it is accomplishing its mission “To make man whole.”

Each SAHP professional program requires documentation of progress toward the school goals and emphasizes the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ. The Portfolio classes provide a way to do that while giving practical assistance with daily living.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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LLU students improve the landscaping around the Ronald McDonald House on the Loma Linda University campus.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Albert Schweitzer (French philosopher and physician, 1875-1965).
3. One hundred thirteen out of 127 students (89 percent) gave the assignment an A or B, using the A to F grading scale.
5. Ninety-nine out 127 students (78 percent) gave the Museum of Tolerance assignment an A or B, using the A to F grading scale.
6. Fifty-five out of 58 students (95 percent) graded the relevance of workshops and speaker presentation skills an A or B in the A to F grading scale.
8. Ibid., pp. 191, 192.
9. Ibid., p. 194.
10. Ibid., p. 197.
to discern the compatibility of academic excellence and faith. Our colleges and universities have not yet gone that route, but they are vulnerable to this destabilization. Let us not fall away from our center, or take that excursion into decline.

We must not allow academic progress or scholarly attainment, worthy as these may be, to eclipse Christ as the center of our educational endeavors. While we believe in and embrace peace, justice, the relief of suffering, science, reason, and culture, as valuable as are these worthy goals and pursuits, they cannot replace Christ in Seventh-day Adventist higher education.

Conclusion
The USDOE commission summed up its report with the acknowledgement that reaching its goals will require difficult decisions and major changes. It concluded with optimism that “Working together, we can build on the past successes of U.S. higher education to create an improved and revitalized postsecondary system that is better tailored to the demands, as well as the opportunities, of a new century.” Can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, conclude any less?

Ella Smith Simmons is Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) in Silver Spring, Maryland. As part of her work, she oversees several GC departments, including Education. She has worked as a teacher and administrator in several Adventist higher education institutions.

REFERENCES
2. Ibid., Summary, p. 16.