

Many students return to the college campus with years of experience through their work, professional and military training, self-study, hobbies, and community activities, as well as various tests such as Dante's, CLEP, proficiency exams, Advanced Placement and certificate programs resulting in learning that occurs outside the classroom. Such learning occurs on many levels. To receive credit for learning occurring outside the college classroom, the student must substantiate that the knowledge is college-level.

As an adult returning to college, you have many life and work experiences from which you have learned. Is the learning college-level? Can it be applied to your degree program? Assume, for example, you manage your own business. You have experience in human resources, planning, scheduling, marketing, and customer service. You can explain not only what you have done on the job for the past ten years, but the reasons for your actions and your knowledge and skills in these areas.

### **Getting Credit for Life Experience**

A La Roche student can earn up to 30 credits at the undergraduate level through the options listed below. Credit for Life Experience credit hours can be applied toward general and major electives and courses for lower and upper division requirements for your major.

### **Non-Traditional Learning Options to Consider:**

- **Advanced Placement (AP).** Departments approve qualifying scores through the Advanced Placement Program of the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Students must have their scores sent directly to the College Registrar to receive credit.
- **Challenge Examinations.** A qualified applicant may earn credit by proficiency Examination upon the recommendation of the dean of his/her college and the approval of the registrar. The exam must be taken prior to the last 30 hours at La Roche and a minimum grade of C scored.
- **External Examinations.** Satisfactory scores on the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), and other examinations evaluated by American Council on Education (ACE) for college-level credit. Students must have scores reported directly to the College Registrar.
- **Credit for Training.** Credit will be awarded for military training that has been evaluated and recommended for college credit by the American Council on Education (ACE). Students must submit documentation (AARTS or SMARTS transcript is recommended, at minimum a DD214 or DD295) of training to the College Registrar.
- **Portfolio Development.** A student may develop a portfolio to gain college credit. Portfolios are submitted to the Registrar's Office and evaluated by La Roche faculty in the student's intended major.

### **How to Begin Portfolio Development**

You must be enrolled as a student in a degree program at La Roche. At the beginning of your academic career at La Roche, your academic advisor and the Registrar will review your educational and career goals, your official college transcripts, and your remaining degree requirements. The Registrar will decide what requirements you have already met, and what courses you need to take and will assign a

portfolio advisor to you. He/she will help you to determine what credit you might earn through Credit for Life Experience.

To begin the process of maximizing credit from external sources you should follow the steps listed below.

- Make sure all your college transcripts have been submitted to the Office of Admissions.
- Talk with the Registrar about military training that could be counted toward your degree. You must have an AARTS or SMARTS transcript sent directly to the College Registrar, or present a copy of your DD214 or DD295.

If you have taken examinations for college credit, submit official copies of your scores to the Registrar's Office. If you are planning to take examinations, review the College Catalog to make sure you know what will count for credit. Discuss with your academic advisor what courses can be challenged through examination. Always verify your eligibility with the Registrar prior to taking these exams.

These essential first steps ensure that program requirements are met, there is no duplication of credit, credit will apply in the desired degree program areas and all appropriate options are used.

### **What Is A Portfolio?**

A portfolio is an organized collection of essays and documentation demonstrating your learning through work and life experiences. Through the portfolio, you show that the knowledge you have gained through experience is equivalent to college training. In gaining academic credit through your experiences outside the college classroom, you must be able to identify and document your experiences and learning. Since you do not earn academic credit for experience alone, you must meet the challenges of analyzing the learning and finding parallels with the La Roche curriculum.

Each portfolio you submit must include the following major sections/documents:

- An expanded resume
- An educational and career goals statement;
- A learning narrative; and,
- Documentation, (including letters of verification, copies of certificates, etc.), that provides evidence of your experience and learning.

You may submit portfolios for several subject areas. While some components of each portfolio you submit (e.g., the resume and goals statements) will be the same, the Learning Narrative and Documentation will be specific to that portfolio.

### **Portfolio Checklist**

Your portfolio should contain the following:

- Title sheet - name, address, social security number, e-mail address, and telephone number
- Letter of Submission
- Copy of official transfer evaluation or Program Guide sent to you by the Registrar

- Table of contents
- Expanded Resume
- Educational and career goals statement
- Learning narrative
- Documentation

### **Major Components and their Requirements: Expanded Resume**

- The expanded resume should include the following information:
  1. Name
  2. Educational background/experience
  3. Employment history
  4. Relevant specialized training (e.g., CPR training, training in the use of specific software programs, etc.)
  5. Relevant life experience (e.g., volunteer work, practical experience with software programs, managing a social organization, etc.)
  6. References
- The resume should include annotations that briefly explain how specific work experiences constitute creditable learning experience.
- The resume should contain cross-references—i.e., references to sections of the narrative or documentation in which an evaluator can find further evidence of the learning in question.

### **Education and Career Goals Statement**

Your 2-3 page Educational and Career Goals Statement should do a number of things:

- Explain what your long-term career and educational goals are.
- Explain what you have accomplished in terms of those goals.
- Explain what you have left to achieve.
- Identify the credit areas you are requesting via your portfolio (i.e., the course areas for which you are seeking credit—note that your statement should identify ALL course areas for which you are seeking credit, even though each individual portfolio will focus on one area).
- Describe how your portfolio, as a demonstration of prior learning, supports your goal of attaining the major/degree you have chosen.

In addition to the statement, you should include a transcript detailing any prior courses for which you have received credit.

### **The Learning Narrative**

The Learning Narrative should include the following:

- A statement of how prior learning relates to your degree plan.

- A list of course(s) or course areas in which you are seeking credit and why (briefly).
- A detailed description of your experience.
- A detailed discussion of the learning that took place and why/how that learning relates to the course(s) or course area in question.
- An Annotated Bibliography.

*Some general expectations to keep in mind:*

- The focus of your narrative will be on the learning experience.
- Where possible, incorporate evidence from a range of sources (e.g., textbooks, interviews, syllabi, other programs, etc.).
- You will be attempting to persuade/argue that your learning parallels learning you would acquire in the course area(s) (i.e., you are not just describing your learning and hoping it fits).
- You should integrate theory and application—i.e., discuss what you have learned and how you have learned it, while showing that it is relevant learning.
- Please remember that you will be providing a separate narrative/portfolio for each major course area in which you will be seeking credit.

The style of writing is important. The learning narrative is not a term paper, and is written in first person, essay form. You are describing your experiences and the learning that resulted from them. You can organize your learning narrative chronologically or under subcategories, using learning outcome guidelines provided by your portfolio advisor.

In general, the length of the narrative ranges from 3-5 pages; length will vary depending upon individual experience, the number of courses being sought for credit, and the learning involved.

### **Documentation**

Documentation is the evidence you present for each section of your portfolio, supporting your learning experiences. You can use direct and indirect documentation. Direct documentation, such as a work product, is usually the strongest supporting evidence of your learning experiences and outcomes. However, Letters of Verification from Employers or Experts who can verify your learning are also crucial.

Gear your documentation to the specific course area or subject area in which you seek credit. Label it for easy review. Make sure it is connected to the learning you are trying to demonstrate. Do not put original documents or photographs in the portfolio.

Examples of the types of documentation you could submit include the following:

- Job descriptions and/or classifications
- Licenses and certificates
- Newspaper and magazine articles about your accomplishments
- Descriptions of training courses you have completed

- Citations and commendations
- Programs of your performances / exhibits
- Letters of verification
- Brochures or other published materials you have prepared

### **Format**

Follow these guidelines when organizing your portfolio:

- Make two complete copies for submission to the Registrar
- Use a three-ring, loose-leaf binder for each copy of your portfolio.
- Make sure the pages can be turned easily without damaging them.
- If your portfolio contains too many sections (areas requested for credit) or is too lengthy for one binder, use smaller binders and break your work into two volumes.
- Number the pages.
- Make sure photocopies of documentation are legible.
- On the spine of your portfolio binder, place a label with your name and the semester of your anticipated degree completion and semester of submission of the portfolio.

### **Portfolio Submission**

Two copies of each portfolio, with the appropriate fee (See Tuition & Fees for current choices.), should be submitted to the Registrar. The Registrar will then forward each portfolio to the appropriate evaluators for review. A portfolio evaluator from the particular discipline where credit is requested will have input in the evaluation of his/her respective area. The time for assessment of each section is approximately three weeks. A copy of the student's completed portfolio is kept in the Registrar's Office for a minimum of one year and may be used as a reference guide for other portfolio participants.

### **Portfolio Evaluation and Evaluation Criteria**

When an evaluator assesses a portfolio, he or she wants to see:

- Current skills and knowledge.
- Knowledge applicable in other circumstances outside the specific job or context in which it was learned.
- Learning that includes major principles applied in a given field.
- Familiarity with trends and what experts in the field have said.
- Knowledge that can be measured and evaluated.
- Poor writing will result in a negative assessment of your portfolio. You must demonstrate college-level writing skills for college-level credit. Proofread, revise and edit. Critique for organization, clarity, completeness, and technical accuracy.