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The power of syllabi: Faculty roles in ePortfolio

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Undergraduate Views of the Structure and Value of the Clemson General Education ePortfolio

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Summary Statement

The goal of the current study was to gather objective information about the content of the Clemson general education ePortfolio as well as students' views of the ePortfolios' educational, professional, and assessment values.

Background and Introduction

The Clemson general education ePortfolio is a collection of a student's work throughout their undergraduate career. The ePortfolio is intended to enhance learning and aid in career development by requiring students to upload artifacts with a rationale statements for each competency.

Clemson's ePortfolio aims to help students learn about themselves as learners,
help the university learn more about the core effectiveness of general education, and encourage students to engage in critical self-reflection.

Award winning portfolios contain general education portfolios that are not elaborate, so they may not be valuable to students. There is some suggestion that the ePortfolios are not elaborate, and so may not be valuable to students. We surveyed students who had already completed their ePortfolio in order to explore this hypothesis.

"Award-winning" vs "typical" ePortfolio
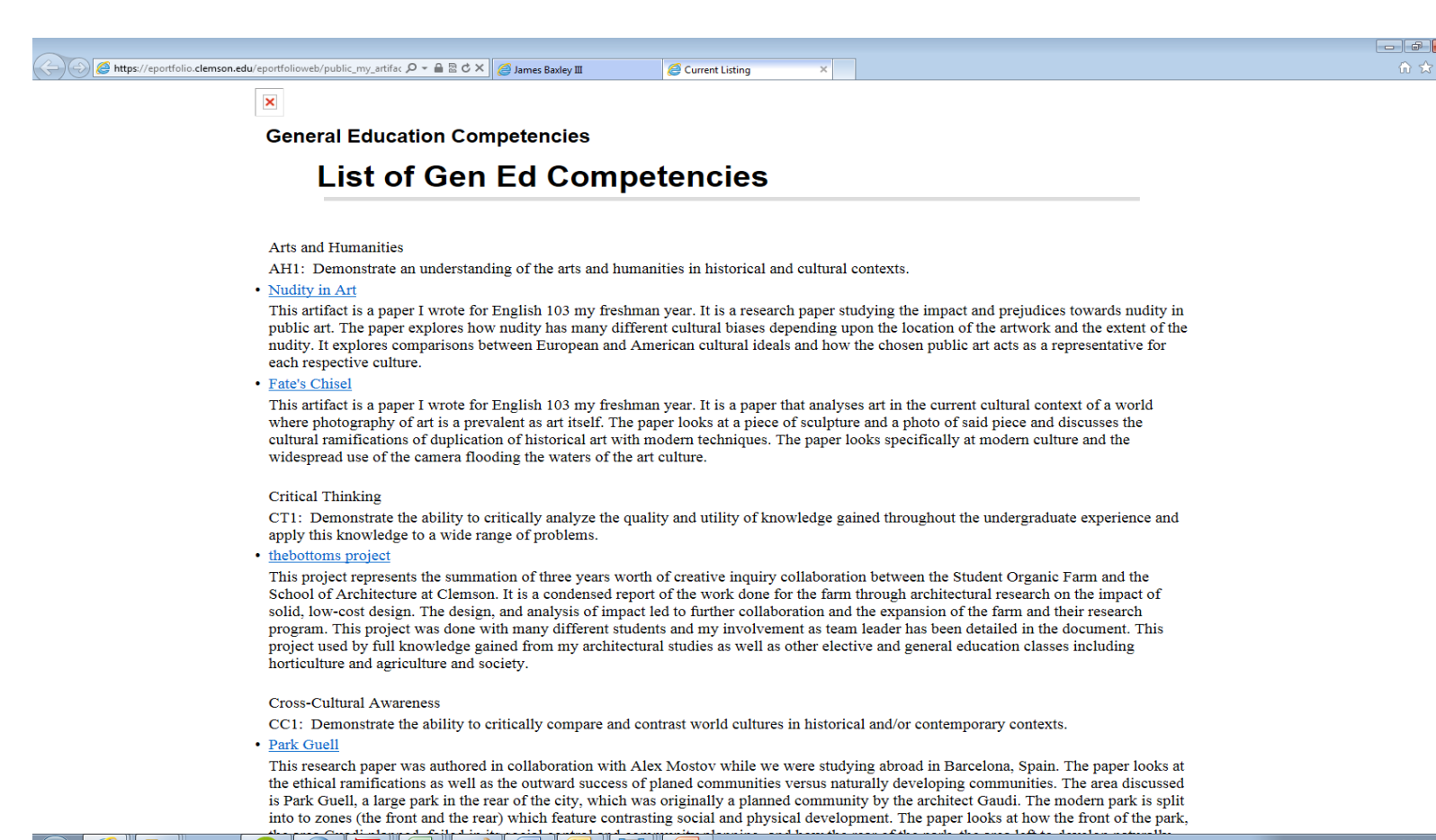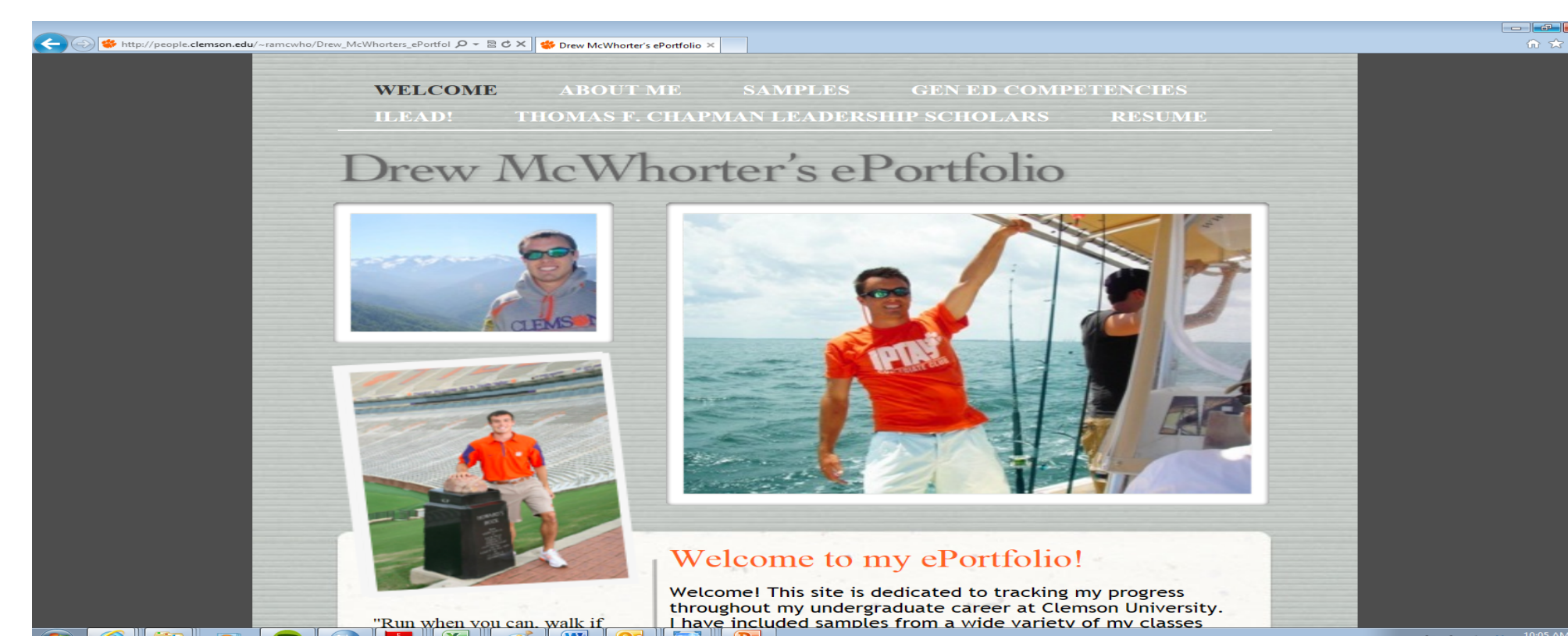
Method

Participants

Clemson University Undergraduate Students who had completed their ePortfolio (n=51)

Materials & Procedure

One on one interview consisting of 8-9 questions depending on the depth of the ePortfolio

Participants provided estimates of the objective measures of their ePortfolio.

Participants also rated the usefulness of the ePortfolio along five dimensions on a scale from 1-5 (1=not at all and 5=very much):

1. "understand general education"
2. "was useful"
3. "accurately displays capabilities"
4. "use in a job interview"
5. "how much value"

Figure 3

Results

Most students' ePortfolios featured the minimum number of artifacts and rationale statements for the eight competencies: 11 artifacts and 9.3 rationale statements on average.

Figure 3 represents the mean rating of values of the ePortfolios: the means were all low (between 1 and 2). There was a significantly higher rating for item 3 ("accurately displays capabilities") compared to the other four items. Participants with a major program ePortfolio rated the five questions regarding the values of the ePortfolio significantly higher (x=2.2) than the participants without (x=1.3) (p=.003).

Discussion

Results indicate that undergraduate students feel that the ePortfolio is not elaborate and not useful.

Students were somewhat more likely to agree that the ePortfolio accurately displayed their capabilities. Perhaps students feel that they put a lot of effort into their work, so putting major documents into one portfolio helps them display all that they have accomplished in their undergraduate career.

We are currently assessing underclassmen views to see if the senior results generalize to other students. Preliminary data suggests that freshman and sophomore students are more positive in their views than seniors.

It is important to note that students who had completed an ePortfolio for their major indicated that the undergraduate ePortfolio was more beneficial than those that did not. This finding suggests that ePortfolios can be effective.
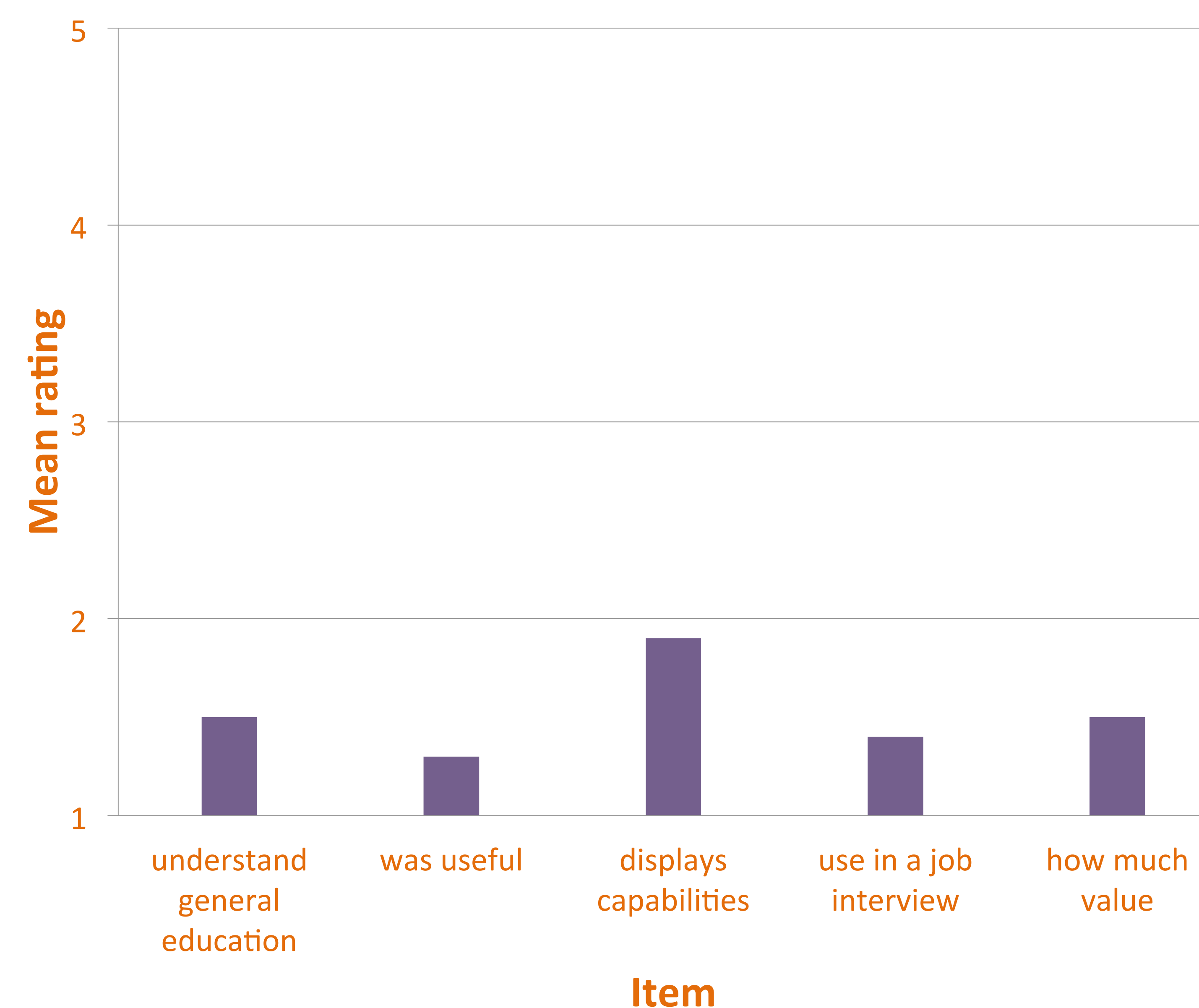
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