Guidance for writing reflective learning statements for your MPH e-Portfolio

As with any new process we want to ensure we are using our formative evaluation processes to look for areas of program improvement (a skill set we hope you also appreciate as trained health education professionals). Upon reviewing the draft versions of the current second year MPH portfolios, the graduate faculty determined additional guidance in the purpose, tone, and structure of how to write an effective reflective statement would help you in the final stages of your e-Portfolio development. A commonly observed trait is that the reflections were nice overviews of how one might see each competency, but were missing the element of reflection. Below are provided the current instructions given in the handbook and rubric followed by some expanded guidance that we believe you will find useful to improve and hone your reflective statements.

Current guidelines given in MPH e-Portfolio handbook and e-Portfolio rubric:

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- Reflect on what you’re accomplishing in your MPH academic program and in your career. The e-Portfolio should not just be a litany of facts, but must show evidence of critical thinking. Without the reflective element, portfolios are merely an enhanced electronic resume, web page, or a digital scrapbook. Self-reflection and synthesis across courses and experiences are required to turn your e-Portfolio into evidence of deeper learning.

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a. Reflective Statement
   The reflective statement should be a reflection on your own understanding of a particular competency—what it is, how it’s used, and its role/value in the field. The statement should illustrate your personal understanding of a competency and perhaps your deeper philosophy of that competency. For instance, if community participation drives your program planning work, use this space as an opportunity to describe that belief, how it applies to program planning and what its value is to public health. Keep in mind that this section should be brief. A single very well written paragraph can be quite effective.

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Social Ecological Framework

a. Reflective Statement
   The reflective statement should be a personal reflection on your own understanding of application of the social ecological framework.

Culminating Internship Experience:

a. Brief Reflection. Please reflect on the following questions:
   i. How did your project meet the objectives of the Internship course?
   ii. What challenges emerged in this project?
   iii. What is the value/benefit of the project to the field of public health?

From e-Portfolio Rubric:

Reflective Statement. The reflective statement should provide an illustration of personal growth and understanding of the competency; including, What is it, how is it used and its role/value in the field, a deeper personal philosophy and should articulate the individuals goals for expanding their understanding of that competency.
Expanded guidance for honing your reflective statements:

The MPH e-Portfolio is not only an assessment portfolio that contains a collection of artifacts demonstrating learning, it is also an opportunity for expanding your self-awareness through focused reflections highlighting your personal and professional growth. The reflection component of the portfolio is where you have the opportunity to reveal how and why you have changed as a result of your studies and experiences in the program. A well-written reflection should illustrate your critical thinking skills and your ability to make connections between what we learn in the classroom with what we see in our professional experiences and everyday lives.

What are some of the elements that make for a good reflective statement? Use the following list of prompts to help you think about, reflect on, and elaborate on your learning in various areas of your portfolio.

Reflective prompts; Does your reflective statement achieve at least 2-3 of the following criteria:
- Briefly describe the project/assignment/artifact/competency?
- Provide description, analysis, critical judgment and synthesis relative to your learning goals in the area?
- Give insights into your experience and thinking?
- Illustrate how you handled an opportunity or situation? (What challenged you? How did you meet the challenge?)
- Reveal anything about your decision making process? (Would you do things differently?)
- Demonstrate your ability to link coursework to professional practice?
- Discuss how the competency is related to your mission and career goals?
- Give examples that illustrate your views, growth or goals? (What have you discovered about yourself as a learner and professional?)

Editing prompts:
- Is the reflective statement clear and concise?
- Does it reflect the artifact and experience presented?
- Does it reveal not only facts but also represent your attitudes, views and growth goals?
- Does it demonstrate and exemplify your professional worth to others?

As an example of reflective learning statements, take a look at this person's portfolio http://igormocorro.myefolio.com/ (Because this is our first year, all of the examples are from another university, and their requirements are slightly different than ours). In this example, take a look under his reflection for evaluation. Igor accomplishes talking about how he views evaluation as well as how he also relates it to his own experience and takes ownership of these ideas. It is possible to "see" Igor in this reflection. He could have even gone a little deeper with details and an additional sentence or two to talk about how he would have approached the task differently in the future. Within his statement we can see his critical thinking skills and ability to make connections between what was learn in the classroom with what we see in professional experiences.