

Dossier Observations: A Reflection Paper

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Doctoral Dossier

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In accordance with the *ISDT Doctoral Dossier Handbook*, this reflection paper analyzes five prior doctoral dossiers to inspire the refinement of my own professional identity and address specific feedback about my dossier draft (Department of Library Science & Technology, 2025). While each dossier demonstrated commitment, effort, and growth, clear differences emerged in how effectively candidates articulated their professional identities, integrated scholarship with practice, and framed evidence to demonstrate impact. By evaluating the work of Chew (2024), Bui (2020), Ramirez (2021), Hatton (2021), and Ramirez (2025), I have shifted my perspective of the doctoral dossier from a retrospective collection of artifacts to a curated professional argument. This reflective synthesis focuses on modeling the critical inquiry and evidence-based impact that are promoted as required for successful candidacy. The candidates listed in Table 1 provided the empirical basis for this reflection, representing a range of scholar-practitioner trajectories that similarly align with my own.

Table 1

Summary of Prior Candidate Dossier Strengths Observed and Aligned with Growth Areas

Candidate	Primary Strength Observed	Key Lesson for My Growth
Chew (2024)	Real-world instructional implementation	Further need for explicit narrative synthesis
Bui (2020)	High theoretical rigor and research focus	Avoidance of abstraction and further need for balance
E. Ramirez (2021)	Seamless integration of design and service	Modeling “hub” projects for greater impact
Hatton (2021)	Authentic workplace contributions	Transitioning from student to scholar-expert
A. Ramirez (2025)	Evaluation-driven evidence of impact	Documentation of “competencies in progress”

Observation of Strengths and Weaknesses of Dossiers

Dossier 1: Raymond Chew

The first dossier presented a strong practitioner-oriented profile grounded in extensive professional experience and applied instructional design work. One of its most notable strengths

was the clarity of Chew's career trajectory and professional focus. Chew (2024) effectively communicated a background spanning multiple industries (chemical, oil and gas, and information technology) and roles, which helped contextualize his interest in career and technical education, adult learning, and technology integration. This background gave credibility to his goals and demonstrated progression toward engagement in instructional design.

The learning design evidence section in Chew's (2024) dossier reflected real-world instructional projects, curriculum development, and the use of emerging technologies in authentic educational contexts. His contributions to LETE 1303 and LETE 2303, demonstrated applied competence and practical impact, which made his expertise feel grounded and relevant within his emphasis on "growth mindset" for online learning. The inclusion of diverse media and documentation surrounding these artifacts supported the credibility of his work and tied back to the connective writing around each artifact. However, the artifacts presented in the learning design section focused on the planning and design of learning but lacked evidence of the evaluation of each solution presented.

Despite the strength of applied work, Chew's dossier showed inconsistencies in synthesis and integration. While Chew's (2024) candidate statement clearly articulated professional goals and focus areas, those themes were not consistently and explicitly referenced or reinforced in the connective content throughout evidence sections. As a result, the reader often had to infer connections between his stated identity and the artifacts he presented. His dossier included strong individual pieces of work, but it did not always explain how those pieces collectively demonstrated growth, specialization, or an evolving scholarly trajectory. An example of this is where he introduced a literature review in the following way:

This artifact covers literature review annotations for a Qualitative Methodology course paper as part of the doctoral program. The artifact expanded my competencies with the review process of related research literature relevant to my research topic. (Chew, 2024)

Chew did not tie this introduction of the review back to the research skills and strengths that he presented earlier in the section's introduction. Overall, the first dossier illustrated how real-world instructional design experience can be presented in a doctoral dossier, while demonstrating the importance of connecting evidence back to professional identity and scholarly direction.

Dossier 2: Ngoc Van Bui

The second dossier presented a profile that was strongly grounded in research and theoretical framing. One of its primary strengths was the clarity of Bui's scholarly focus, particularly in artificial intelligence in education and systems-oriented approaches to learning design. Bui (2020) demonstrated familiarity with scholarly frameworks and positioned their work within broader academic conversations, which contributed to a clear research-oriented professional identity. Theoretical grounding and conceptual framing around Trigwell's dimensions of scholarship were consistently present, especially in the scholarship section, signaling an emerging academic voice and a strong orientation toward research. Their scholarship artifacts reinforced this identity. Two conference presentations, three research proposals, and two literature reviews among many supplementary artifacts demonstrated Bui's ability to engage with theory, synthesize research, design studies, and present research findings grounded in explainable AI and learning performance. These artifacts showed doctoral-level intellectual rigor, a clear trajectory toward more advanced research work, and were connected to other evidence across each competency.

This strength in the scholarship competency revealed an imbalance in artifact strength across the dossier. Compared to the research section, Bui's (2020) quantity and quality of learning design and service evidence appeared less robust. While learning design artifacts were presented as grounded in systems thinking and explainable AI, they functioned as examples that supported scholarly evidence rather than a cohesive competency of a learning design. Several pieces of learning design evidence were ambiguous contributions to group work. The evaluative artifacts presented examined the performance of an LMS versus the performance of

other design evidence presented. However, Bui's course design artifacts often connected with scholarly evidence. Where service activities were described, they lacked the same level of detail and impact as seen in the scholarship section.

As a result, Bui's (2020) dossier read as heavily research-focused, with weaknesses in design and service. The level of abstraction in their dossier's presentation required the reader to translate and connect theoretical elements to specific artifacts. The extended theoretical framing sometimes made the dossier intellectually strong but less immediately accessible. Overall, the second dossier illustrated the strengths of a clearly articulated research identity and strong theoretical grounding, while highlighting the importance of balance and integration across competencies. It demonstrated that scholarly rigor alone is not sufficient.

Dossier 3: Elyse Ramirez

The third dossier presented the most well-rounded and fully integrated professional profile among the dossiers reviewed. One of its greatest strengths was the clarity and authenticity of Elyse Ramirez's professional identity. Ramirez (2021) grounded her work in a personal and professional narrative that connected her background, values, and institutional role to goals and growth in instructional design, faculty development, and student success. This narrative was not confined to the candidate statement, it was reinforced consistently through the evidence presented across scholarship, learning design, and service. This created a cohesive and credible professional trajectory across her dossier. It told her story as a growing and developing scholar-practitioner.

The learning design section was particularly strong in Ramirez's (2021) dossier. The Innovation Academy project demonstrated courses and program design, as well as implementation, evaluation, and faculty development outcomes (Ramirez, 2021). Her inclusion of survey data and participant feedback provided concrete evidence of effectiveness, moving the work beyond description into measurable impact. This level of evaluation and documentation made Ramirez's design contributions highly persuasive and clearly aligned with

doctoral-level expectations. Scholarship in her dossier was also well integrated with practice. Research proposals and conference presentations emerged directly from instructional design challenges and faculty development work, illustrating a design-based research mindset. Rather than treating scholarship as separate from practice, Ramirez used her professional context as a site for inquiry, which strengthened the reader's sense of an emerging scholar-practitioner identity. Much of the scholarship clearly demonstrated methodological awareness, theoretical grounding, and a trajectory toward more sustained scholarly contribution. Ramirez's service further reinforced this integrated profile. Faculty mentorship, instructional consultations, and facilitation of professional development initiatives extended her design expertise into meaningful institutional service. These activities were not peripheral; they were directly tied to her learning design philosophy and scholarly interests. As a result, her dossier presented a strong example of how scholarship, design, and service can function as mutually reinforcing components of a unified professional role.

The primary limitation of Ramirez's (2021) dossier was the length and extent of the evidence and connective content. The quantity of quality content made the dossier challenging to consume in a concise manner. Further refinement of what she includes could concisely present a stronger narrative of her professional competencies. Overall, the third dossier illustrated how a dossier can effectively demonstrate a scholar-practitioner identity through real institutional impact, evaluated instructional design, and research that grows directly from professional practice. It served as the clearest model of integration among dossiers reviewed.

Dossier 4: Stephen Hatton

The fourth dossier reflected a candidate amidst a professional and scholarly transition. Hatton (2021) presented a clear interest in improving online and distance learning environments but at a more developmental level of evidence compared to others. One of the key strengths that Hatton presented was the clarity of problem space that motivated his work. Hatton consistently referenced the challenges associated with emergency remote instruction and

student preparedness, grounding his interests in a timely and relevant educational issue at the time. This thematic focus appeared across scholarship, learning design, and service, creating a recognizable through-line around supporting learners in digital contexts.

Evidence in Hatton's (2021) dossier revealed meaningful workplace contributions that strengthened the practical dimension of his dossier. Training materials and guides developed for use in testing or institutional support environments were not merely hypothetical coursework artifacts but were implemented and used by colleagues. Institutional documentation confirming participation in initiatives such as a website review committee further demonstrated authentic service and collaboration within Hatton's professional context. These artifacts helped establish that he was already contributing to instructional and technological improvement within his workplace, rather than only studying these issues from an academic or theoretical lens. The scholarship section showed growing competence in research design and evaluation. The research proposals evolved to clearly articulate research questions, literature grounding, and methodological planning, demonstrating that Hatton was developing skills needed to conduct empirical research. These artifacts showed promise and emerging scholarly direction, even though most remained at the proposal or course-based stage.

Despite these strengths, Hatton's (2021) professional identity presented in his candidate statement felt more aspirational than fully established. Hatton frequently described goals of gaining experience or moving into instructional design roles, which suggested a trajectory in progress rather than a consolidated professional identity. This developmental positioning was not inherently problematic, but it made the dossier feel less like a presentation of established expertise and more like documentation of preparation for future roles. Integration across scholarship, learning design, and service was present at the artifact level but was not consistently synthesized in surrounding connective narratives. Hatton's projects often related to similar themes, but his dossier did not always clearly explain how they collectively represented a unified professional approach. Overall, the fourth dossier illustrated a candidate with strong

motivation, growing research competence, and authentic workplace contributions, while also highlighting the importance of framing evidence in ways that communicate a mature professional identity and clearly integrated doctoral-level practice.

Dossier 5: Arlene Ramirez

The fifth dossier presented a strong scholar-practitioner trajectory grounded in professional experience within the hospitality industry, higher education, and instructional design. One of Ramirez's (2025) most notable strengths was her clarity in connecting prior industry leadership experience to current academic and instructional goals. Ramirez's focus on professional development, workforce learning, and experiential education in hospitality provided a consistent thematic thread that linked her professional identity, learning design work, and scholarly interests. This grounding in a specific professional context made her goals and project feel purposeful and well aligned.

Ramirez (2025) demonstrated full responsibility for designing and teaching a university-level course in hospitality project management, with clear alignment among learning objectives, activities, and assessments. Course evaluation data showed high student ratings in areas such as instructional clarity, engagement, and overall teaching effectiveness, providing concrete evidence of positive instructional impact. Her inclusion of student feedback alongside formal evaluation scores further suggested a reflective approach to course improvement. These elements moved learning design evidence beyond description into demonstrated effectiveness. Scholarship in Ramirez's dossier also showed meaningful development. Literature reviews engaged deeply with theories such as connectivism and explored their application to professional onboarding and workforce learning, demonstrating theoretical grounding. A qualitative narrative inquiry study proposal, focused on furloughed hospitality workers, illustrated her ability to conduct applied research addressing real industry challenges. These projects indicated an emerging research identity that was both theoretically informed and closely connected to her professional context. While much of Ramirez's scholarship was still in early

stages, the alignment between research topics and professional practice strengthened the credibility of her scholarly trajectory. Her service evidence extended beyond professional memberships to include documented institutional contributions. Participation in a university assessment committee demonstrated engagement with academic quality assurance processes, and feedback from institutional effectiveness staff highlighted the quality and rigor of her assessment reporting. These activities showed that Ramirez was contributing not only within her classroom and discipline, but also to broader institutional improvement efforts.

The primary limitation of Ramirez's (2025) dossier was that, despite strong alignment and integration across domains, her dossier could have more clearly identified one or two "signature" projects that embodied and integrated all three areas. Additionally, while her scholarship was developing in promising directions, evidence of independent dissemination or a sustained research program was still emerging. Overall, the fifth dossier illustrated how Ramirez effectively built a doctoral profile around her clearly defined professional domain, demonstrated instructional impact with evaluation data, and developed scholarship that grows directly from practice. It serves as a strong example of an applied scholar-practitioner trajectory with growing academic and institutional contributions.

Summary of Cross-Dossier Patterns

Examining the five dossiers revealed patterns that clarified both effective practices and common limitations in doctoral-level dossier development. These patterns clarified expectations, sharpening my understanding of how professional identity, evidence of impact, and integration of competencies work together to create a compelling doctoral dossier.

Professional Identity

Stronger dossiers demonstrated a cohesive professional identity that extended beyond the candidate statement and was reinforced across connective content, introductions, and narratives in all sections. These candidates consistently tied their background, professional roles, scholarly interests, and future goals to the artifacts they presented. Their identities were

visible not only in what they said about themselves, but in how they described the kinds of projects they pursued, the problems they studied, and the ways they served their institutions or communities. In contrast, weaker dossiers often articulated a clear identity in the opening statement but did not consistently revisit or reinforce that identity in later sections or artifact descriptions. Artifacts were relevant, but the connection to the candidate's stated focus or trajectory was sometimes left for interpretation. This pattern revealed that a doctoral dossier must function as a sustained narrative of professional development, not just an introductory statement followed by disconnected evidence.

Evidence of Impact

The difference between documenting activity and demonstrating impact became another pattern that emerged. Stronger dossiers included evidence where projects and work was implemented, evaluated, and used to inform future improvement. Examples such as course evaluation data, survey results from faculty development programs, and institutional documentation of program effectiveness helped show the real-world impact of their contributions through instructional design and scholarly efforts. Dossiers that relied primarily on coursework artifacts or conceptual proposals, without clear evidence of implementation or outcomes, felt more developmental. Even when projects were well designed, the absence of documented impact made it harder to assess the candidate's competency and broader significance within the field. Doctoral-level expectations appear to extend beyond demonstrating competence into demonstrating influence and contribution.

Integration Across Scholarship, Learning Design, and Service Competencies

Integration emerged as another key differentiator. In stronger dossiers, scholarship, learning design, and service were interconnected. Instructional projects often served as sites for research, research informed design decisions, and activities extended into faculty support or institutional initiatives. These "hub" or "signature" projects made the candidate's work feel cohesive and strategically aligned with a unified professional role. In weaker dossiers, the three

competencies were frequently presented in parallel rather than as interdependent competencies of practice. While each section contained relevant work, the relationships among them were not clearly explained. As a result, weaker dossiers could feel like three separate portfolios rather than a single integrated professional argument. This pattern reinforced that integration must be present in evidence and explicitly articulated in the narrative.

Application of Cross-Dossier Patterns to Dossier Draft Feedback

Cross-dossier patterns from my observations have direct implications on how I will refine my dossier. This section layers dossier observation insights over feedback received from the ISDT dossier committee. This applied synthesis of observation uses a “feedback-observation-action” (FOA) model to effectively demonstrate how my observations will help inform resolution of the most significant gaps in my draft dossier prior to final submission.

Professional Identity and Growth Narrative

Most of the feedback received from the dossier committee indicated that introductions and evidence descriptions in my scholarship, learning design, and service sections lacked acknowledgement of “competencies still in progress” and a clear plan to acquire them. Ramirez (2025) and Hatton (2021) exemplified “developmental” trajectory, effectively framing their dossiers as a bridge toward future expertise rather than a final destination. Across all five observed dossiers, stronger dossiers strategically acknowledged limitations as part of a professional development narrative. They used contextual introductions, reflective commentary, and synthesis statements to explain why evidence mattered and how it demonstrated growth or specialization. These candidates did not assume the significance of their work was self-evident, they guided the reader through their reasoning and evolution.

In my revised dossier, I plan to adjust the knowledge and expertise section of my candidate statement and competency introductions to reference skill-gaps and growth plans. Including plans to acquire additional skills for scholarship, learning design, and service in the candidate statement will help shift my dossier from documentation to an articulation of my

development. Then, by explicitly connecting evidence back to my goals, focus areas, and evolving knowledge and skills trajectory, I will strengthen the through-line of my professional identity and professional development competencies. Incorporating additional synthesis statements and cross-references for evidence will help the reader comprehend how individual evidence contributes to a more coherent professional narrative and growth plan. Additionally, this reflection confirmed my confidence in my dossier's visual organization and navigational clarity. When dossier presentations lacked contextual structure and connective affordances it was difficult to interpret evidence. It's clear to me that strong presentational elements are a meaningful performance support for integration, reader comprehension, and access.

Modeling Deeper Synthesis in Scholarship

My literature review *SAM vs. Dick & Carey* lacked clear synthesis across sources and connections to broader disciplinary conversations. This artifact was written early in my doctoral studies and exemplifies a gap in my development; however, it's not currently positioned in this way within the dossier. Bui (2020) demonstrated how to position individual artifacts within broader systems-oriented frameworks, though sometimes at the cost of accessibility. Ramirez (2021) used research proposals to address immediate instructional design challenges, showing a design-based research mindset. I plan to rewrite the artifact's introduction and description to model my evolved understanding of the dossier and the level of synthesis expected by the committee. Revising the description for this artifact is an opportunity to demonstrate how artifact introductions can be used to support the connective narrative with other sections across the dossier. These concrete revision strategies, informed by my observations, should sharpen the articulation of my journey and explain how evidence contributes to my ongoing development as a scholar-practitioner.

Conclusion

The dossier observation process provided a valuable opportunity to critically examine how doctoral candidates present their professional identities, scholarly contributions, and

instructional design expertise. Reviewing other dossiers reshaped how I understand the purpose and expectations of a doctoral dossier. When I began developing my dossier, I saw it as a space to document competencies and accomplishments. Now I see the dossier as a curated argument, one that demonstrates a coherent identity, integrated contributions, meaningful impact within the field, and professional growth. I have gained a clearer understanding of the elements that distinguish stronger dossiers from those that are still developing. A cohesive professional identity, evidence of real-world impact, integration across scholarship, learning design, and service, and thoughtful narrative synthesis contribute to a compelling and credible doctoral-level dossier presentation. Equally important, this process prompted me to reflect on how I will approach resolving gaps within my own dossier. The insights gained from these observations will guide how I refine the integration, synthesis, and presentation of my own evidence, ensuring that my dossier clearly communicates who I am as a scholar-practitioner, how my work contributes in meaningful and interconnected ways to the field, and how I'm continuing to develop professionally over time. Overall, reviewing prior dossiers clarified expectations and strengthened my readiness to meet them. This reflection marks an important step in my development, from merely documenting my experiences to intentionally presenting my professional identity and future growth.

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