

Interviewer: My name is ***. I'm here with ***. We are doing a writing development study exit interview and the date is May 6th, 2015. All right, ____, I've got a set of questions here but hopefully we can just have this as a conversation—

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: - and follow it where it goes. We always start by asking students to describe themselves as a writer.

Interviewee: There's a thing for that. My four years that I've really worked on and struggled with, that sort of thing. I think when I was younger I really identified as a writer, but around high school, I lost that as part of my identity and didn't feel like journalism instead. Then, again, it was back and forth, back and forth. I know I wanted to come into college focusing less on perhaps journalism, but more on writing and writing development and specifically, editing. I thought of the IRA Program and the Peer Consulting would probably be good for that. I think I wrote my essay in the Gateway course really struggling with that. It's like okay, am I a writer? I didn't feel like a writer at that time.

Interviewer: Uh-hum.

Interviewee: That was my first year, and throughout that I realized that my writing and my identity are really intertwined, but not in ways that I thought it would work. The way that I write and my relationship with writing is very indicative of my identity at the time, and how I'm feeling about that. It goes in and out, in and out—

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: - as far as comfort ability and how much I feel as though I have ownership over my own voice. I think throughout the program and throughout by now, I think I identify more as a write than I did before and It's still something that I'm working on, finding my voice, asserting my voice, and really claiming that as mine.

Interviewer: Great. It sounds to me like you are making a distinction between being a writer and being a journalist. Am I hearing that correctly?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you say a little bit more about the difference that you, as you conceive it?

Interviewee: I think when it came to me when I was doing a lot of journalism it felt more like puzzling. I would interview, and I had all these quotes, and then I would put it with lead and do that, it was like crafting that story, but it didn't feel like mine and I liked that at that time, I really, really enjoyed that. It was like, okay, I can puzzle it, it doesn't feel like mine, it feels like this other person's story.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Right?

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Whereas the writing now that I most enjoy and that I find most helpful are these personal narratives and these stories that I can create and that bridge has also lead to creative writing and trying to explore with that. It's still being very much of mine, but also its own story in and of itself.

Interviewer: Yeah. For you, the notion of a writer—

Interviewee: Uh-hum.

Interviewer: - connotes this personal message that you want to communicate.

Interviewee: I think so, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: That's how, yeah, where I feel more and less like a writer. It's like, Jamie, a writer; it feels like it has to come from me. I have to have things to say, I need to have thoughts and things about them. Whereas, if I were detached from the process, it doesn't feel as much like that, even though I am writing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: [Laughing].

Interviewer: It's not necessarily something that has been assigned necessarily is detached from you, but you can be more or less attached to things that have been assigned.

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay, got it. Okay, what would you—to what would you attribute the shift, the coming back to Jamie as a writer, or this more complex thinking about yourself as a writer then when you first entered?

Interviewee: I think it's been—I consider myself a very introspective person and I think a lot about me and my relationship, to my world to my relationship to other people in the way of things. I often don't, I don't know. I think part of that gets in the way of me asserting that to figure out what I need and what I can contribute—

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: - 'cuz I can see what everyone else does. I think there was a shift in my writing and ownership, because I think there was a shift in my ownership, of myself and empowerment to be who I am and write what I think is interesting. I do think Sweetland is a huge part of that, and in bringing—allowing me to write what I want to write, and encouraging me to do that rather than giving me assignment. I had to come up with something and I had to—it had to be from me, because I had to work with it for a whole semester on these different things. Yeah, I'd say empowerment mostly.

Interviewer: Okay. As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself going forward?

Interviewee: Right now I'm at the summer, *[laughing]* take a break, work for Sweetland, I really have so much love for Sweetland, but I would love, I think, I will pursue right after that is publishing and trying again to get detached, but like create other people's stories. I see my life as constantly revolving around wards in one way or another. I think I'd like to do that, but later I'd also love to teach writing. I really have love for the work that I've done with the Peer Consulting Program, and I love empowering other writers to find their voice and doing, again, this puzzling. I'm hoping that maybe within the summer or having a space outside of Academia, I'll be able to find my own voice in my own writing and empower myself to do that 'cuz that's one thing I struggle with, not writing when someone's not assigned to me.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, totally understandable.

Interviewee: *[Laughing]*.

Interviewer: As you think about your experiences at [University of Michigan], what would you say it means to write well?

Interviewee: For me, writing well means writing thoughtfully and really considering, really delving deep into it in a way that, through the process becomes unique. You're able to word 07:09 something because you understand it through your own identity in a totally different way.

I think I love things that are—I love to read things that are creative, out of the box that I can see the writer in the writing. That's most of the stuff I like to read. I

found that when I write, the thoughts I think I'm most proud of are the ones where I push myself into more uncomfortable waters where I've really pushed, I know I'm gonna do this, I know it's weird, but this is what I'm gonna do and those are the things I'm most proud of.

Interviewer: Okay. Are those things where you've pushed yourself stylistically or content wise?

Interviewee: A little bit of both.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think maybe more content. I'll give you an example. In my [English] class I wrote an investigative piece on poop *[laughing]* and its societal implications.

Interviewer: *[Laughing]* okay.

Interviewee: It was weird and I knew that from the start and I knew that people were gonna be like this is strange—

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: - but it did end up being very me, very thoughtful.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: There was another one in my investigative journalism class that was—when I wrote about my family in a way that I haven't written of them for a very honest, very intense more, but still try to be thoughtful and kind.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Those two specifically are ones that like, I did this right. I really wrote well, I thought through it, and it came together really well. I don't know if that's helpful?

Interviewer: Yeah, no that is.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is helpful, and I think about that first one, that Mary Roach approach to the—are you familiar with her stuff?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: She's fascinating. All of these gross out factors that have this incredible significance for it.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Yeah. What other level writing courses do you take? You said you took [English course]—

Interviewee: I took [Writing course]. I took a [Creative Writing course].

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. Who taught that?

Interviewee: [Instructor]—

Interviewer: Yup, I know who you're talking about.

Interviewee: [Laughing] okay.

Interviewer: I don't remember her last name either.

Interviewee: I'm trying to think.

Interviewer: You were an English major then?

Interviewee: I was an English major.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you take all of your upper level in the English department?

Interviewee: I took one upper level writing in Anthropology and then I took one for the Peer Consultant Program.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Which is a broader range, so I'm swimming in upper level writing [laughing].

Interviewer: Right, yeah, okay. It sounds like there's a few different kinds of upper level writing courses. Essay courses, the, I'm guessing that the Peer Tutor Program was a little more—

Interviewee: Research based on writing center stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. What effects did those experiences have on you as a writer?

Interviewee: I think most of those were some of the best classes that I've taken, and again, in different ways, pushed me out of the comfort zone in powerful ways. I then didn't particularly like the other class but I find that it was essentially a survey of so many important philosophers. I find that they're still there in the back of my mind and one of them ended up in my poop essay.

Interviewer: Yeah, of course, yeah.

Interviewee: The Peer Tutoring changed my life in so many ways as far as looking at writing and understanding writing. Both [Writing courses] really got me to think about journalism and writing log form personal pieces a lot differently and a lot better, more thoughtfully, more—I think I understood the form better and how to push an idea through something in a meaningful way. The [...] Creative Writing class I was nervous about when I started because I'm an artist and had a lot of socialistic training but I didn't have as much as I've liked to/probably should have as far as really bringing that out in the rest of my life. That led me to think about different things and I was able to do that creatively as the pieces that I'm proud of in that class as well.

Interviewer: Great, good, yeah. Did you take other writing courses outside of English other than the anthro class?

Interviewee: I don't think so. Those are the ones that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay. As you graduate, how confident do you feel at this point in your ability to write as an English major?

Interviewee: As an English major, it's interesting. I loved the English major but the writing I did there I feel like is not as transferrable or not immediately transferrable. Actually, I take a little bit of that back because I think plus reading is really, really important and that's a lot what I learned in English here. I think the writing instruction, they really harped on that and that's been really helpful. I use that a little bit for the Capstone and other things and I think it's helpful to look at something closely, look at the words and try to figure out what it's saying and what that means. It's hard, I don't know. It's hard to see immediate transferability.

Interviewer: Okay, in what ways? Let me make it a little more specific.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What did you have to do in those English papers that strikes you as being unique to English writing?

Interviewee: I think the close reading is huge.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I mean, other disciplines do that, but it's like all we had.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: We really, really went in depth in that. I think perhaps we had to just use this one primary source, and form an entire argument about that and try to think creatively about how we were going to do that and how—yeah, I think that's the biggest struggle, is to, you got all this, and you have a theory about it but then does that theory match what you have to say, and how much is your close reading and forming your theory and how much is your theory forming which quotes you choose *[laughing]* to present your argument so maybe that as well. Yeah, I think that's—

Interviewer: *[Laughing]* okay, that's fine. How often have you used skills or strategies that you learned in one writing course in other courses?

Interviewee: I think the close reading abilities and I still struggle with that. I think it's a hard thing to do, but I bring that everywhere and I think—I have such a hard time with this question 'cuz I feel like I've learned a lot of actually what I've learned about writing I've learned through tutoring *[laughing]*.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Say more about that.

Interviewee: Okay. Because of tutoring, structurally I approach every essay differently now, at least the second step. I still have to word vomit everything, and I think as you go keep going until then, but then I use the reverse outline like a crutch. It's just like here's what I have and let's look at it as though I'm looking at someone else's paper because I know that this needs to go here, and structure needs to become a lot more important to my process then it ever was before. I don't think I would have had that without really looking at other people's writing and trying to figure out, okay, what are you trying to say and how can we get you to say what you need to say.

Interviewer: Okay. How long have you been a peer tutor?

Interviewee: I think about three years.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Great. What impact has the Capstone Test had overall on your writing?

Interviewee: I think Capstone is an incredible opportunity to really craft and carve what I wanted to say, how I wanted to say it, and how this huge project, I've never had something that had some flimsy deadlines *[laughing]*—

Interviewer: *[Laughing]*.

Interviewee: - except for at the end. I know we had to work through here and trying to figure out how I was gonna set my own deadlines and how to do that was really difficult for me, and I had a really hard time with that. I was talking to [instructor] and I think that Capstone should have more deadlines, but I'm thinking it through here and I'm like that's part of the process or that's part of it. Teaching us how to start a project and finish it in a certain time without someone really leering over you and without that structure being built in. That has been huge and is incredibly helpful in any context. Again, this empowerment thing to know that I can do a project like this, that I can write about something that's off and different and not necessarily considered as much and find things to say about it and find things to make it still me. I think when I was struggling the most at the Capstone, is I thought at the beginning but I had to make it a research paper but I didn't want it to be a research paper so I was going back and forth like how am I gonna do this, and so I wasn't writing anything. I went to [instructor] and I was like I don't want it to be a research paper, but I don't know how to get in an out and he told me to write about it narratively. I was like, okay, that's something I could do and that ended up changing it a lot. In that I found that, again, I wanted to be more introspective with it. I wanted it to be about me *[laughing]* and how I see the world in this very specific way and how I think that's important.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That's what I found. It doesn't have to be what you think it has to be. It can be what you want it to be and learning how to figure out what that is.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. You've talked a lot about the Capstone Project. Were there other elements of the Capstone course that were significant for you?

Interviewee: The first essay I did about developmental was very powerful for me 'cuz I went through everything, and had everything and I was like, what am I seeing here? I realized that, this is what I've been talking about, but there's this confidence in my writing, and I could see it with the way that I wrote and how other voices work with that and so that was helpful to notice, to acknowledge and then to strive against. I think my Capstone does that and that also then formed the way not just the word 20:01 but everything else, but how my project ended up being. It's like I'm gonna do this even though I think I'm supposed to do this, like

I don't have to, I can make this my own. That was really powerful and free actually.

Interviewer: Good. Okay, can we actually look at your Capstone portfolio?

Interviewee: Yeah, sure.

Interviewer: I'm gonna let you drag through all of my keyboards and mouses over here.

Interviewee: [Pause 20:30 – 20:47]

Interviewer: I wasn't gonna say anything 'cuz I wondered if maybe that was intentional.

Interviewee: Yeah, no [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing] okay, tell me about the most memorable part of putting this project together?

Interviewee: Okay, I think in this probably the part I spent the most time with was specifically this, this kind of outlines my process, but I took a bunch of system thoughts and I graphed them.

Interviewer: [Laughing] how fun.

Interviewee: [Laughing].

Interviewer: How fun.

Interviewee: I figured out and re-pictured, and I was trying to understand why I liked what I like and then tried to understand why. That was originally and then what I ended up finding was that the way that I relate to thoughts, the way that I talk about them is just really indicative of what I value as a person in general so it turns out I still don't know the answer to the question why I like what I like, but I know that what I value comes across in such insignificant letters and I'm reacting to them as though they have more significance. I think I talk about, yeah, I say something a little about that there, but I don't like things that are too loud, and I don't like things that are too weak.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah.

Interviewee: It's a self-reflection more than anything and that's how I got through it.

Interviewer: How did you come to this project on thoughts?

Interviewee: I had a couple different—I was struggling with the topic for the longest time, and I thought about potentially writing about family and writing about writing and the fact that I was fresh off writing about my family and trying to figure out how ethical it is to write about those you love and not always paint them in the most positive light.

Interviewer:

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly. Then I thought typography is something that is so me and that I appreciate so much and that I'd like to figure that out as well. I'm sitting in [instructor]'s office hours and I'm trying to figure out what to do and he's like, "It sounds like it's either something you want to think something through, or do you want to figure something out?" This was something I could be more playful with as far as with design and something like that, so I found the playfulness and the fact that we could figure something out or work towards a goal and just think something through was how I came to it.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Does this font that you've used here, and we're on the Capstone Project page, what is this font that you've used for your name in the title?

Interviewee: That's my handwriting.

Interviewer: Oh, that's your handwriting.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, how fun!

Interviewee: I wrote all the headings in my handwriting and then scanned them in. I originally had them as normal stuff, but it didn't feel quite right and then I realized if I want this to be about my voice, putting my stamp on this and trying to see things through my point of view, then this could be a good way to unite everything.

Interviewer: Absolutely. You selected that. The question I was gonna ask you—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - I'll still ask you.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is this something that you like? Does this fit on your plane? Your Cartesian Planes, that's what they're called.

Interviewee: [Laughing] I think it does, and it's hard for me to do that as well because all of these are word 24:56 and they are so uniform. These letters are done and they're the same every time. What I'm most drawn to within this one is lettering. I like when things are a little imperfect. I can actually show you my tumbler, I have it in here and it's all pictures, in lettering specifically. I like that because I talk a lot about them. [Pause 25:35 – 25:46]

Interviewer: I see, yeah.

Interviewee: I like that kind where it's a little more—you can feel the artist behind it, you can feel the words. It's not as word 26:10 and I love that and because of that, this feels really important, actually because it brings that in a way that I wasn't necessarily able to. I was able to talk about it a little in here, but my project for sake of time and definition focused on these.

Interviewer: Focused on some things that are more stable.

Interviewee: Exactly, yeah.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense. Did you choose the font that you used in the site itself?

Interviewee: That I went off of, in default but I also picked a default that I liked [laughing] and that one does fit. It would probably be somewhere in here because it's not too soft and it's not too thin and I like word 27:00 specifically for web rather than I think Infoprint, I like Serus, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I didn't think about it as much as I could have put there was an internal like, this is good. I think I tried other themes and I tried other things, but I was like, no this is too thin this is too thick, this is too not right [laughing].

[...]

Interviewer: This is interesting. As the color changes, your perception of them changes as well, is that what I'm taking away from this?

Interviewee: The ways I'm categorizing them between The Sarah of Sandsera scripts and display.

Interviewer: I see, okay, so we can see that you prefer, well no, these Cartesian Planes don't necessarily tell us what you like.

Interviewee: Right, exactly.

Interviewer: They just tell us where they fit.

Interviewee: Uh-huh. I thought that maybe the reason for classification was like, oh, I can look in here and I go more in depth within each one so let's see—

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Interviewee: Different kinds of stuff.

Interviewer: Oh, my gosh!

Interviewee: I'm trying to figure out, are there ones that I like more than others? It just didn't work. I don't have strong preferences for any of these. It's just the way they're working, somehow it works so I was trying to figure that out but I know, for example, that I don't like engraved ones and I talk about that for a little bit. I was like, oh, I'll figure it out, I'll know why, but it ended up being more complicated than that.

Interviewer: Right, yeah. That's interesting because that's the first gut instinct is like, oh, you must like. I immediately went to, you must like, pretty idiosyncratic.

Interviewee: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: That is not actually what this is telling me. That may be the way I interpreted it, but that's not you're just telling me where things fit.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's really interesting. What kind of a story did you want this website, this Capstone Project to tell?

Interviewee: The portfolio specifically, the whole thing?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think what I wanted to focus on is again, asserting my voice and empowering myself to find my voice within everything else because that's what my writer's evolution talks about, and I think this has a similar vein where it's like, okay, I'm gonna figure out what I like and I don't care as much about—I mean, some theory helps to ground, but I'm gonna tell my story of how we claim to love letters, and why they mean what they mean to me and I'm gonna try and read my—some choices I made in eighth grade and I'm gonna read my eighth grade assignment, and then I'm gonna try to understand what that means logically and try to figure that out and then I'm gonna do this experiment. I think the focus on primary sources, the focus on esthetic which is just so personal in general, was

a way for me to be like, I'm gonna take some time for myself and I'm gonna do the opposite of what I've done through the rest of—before these four years. Rely on other people's words and to inform my theories and really come up with one of my own.

Interviewer: We don't have time to read the whole thing, but I'm curious what it was about eighth grade that made that stand out as the point of comparison?

Interviewee: Let me show you. I had these. Around eighth grade I printed out a bunch of quotes and I put different fonts in them. I scanned them in so I have them all.

Interviewer: Oh, I love it.

Interviewee: I'm trying to figure out, I had these, I clearly made these choices 'cuz they weren't all in one font. They were all different kinds of fonts and I really have different things, and I'm trying to figure, okay, back peddled, what was I reacting to? Why did I choose these fonts? What I do remember about this is that I was like, okay, this quote and this font made me work together. They pair together so I was trying to figure out, several years later, what I was linking in my eighth year old brain. Each one of these goes in and I found that they're all very gendered.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting, yeah.

Interviewee: Which was interesting because I didn't think I knew that or was reacting to that explicitly when I was in eighth grade, but they're all pretty gendered, and the color choices reflect that so it's again, another assertion of how other things affect me and then trying to figure out, okay. I don't like most of these now *[laughing]*.

Interviewer: *[Laughing]*.

Interviewee: Then trying to figure out why that is and different things like that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think mostly it's just this time period because that's the primary source I had *[laughing]*.

Interviewer: Right, yeah, no. That's great, I love it. Let's move from the Capstone Project itself to your artifacts here.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about the process of choosing artifacts.

Interviewee: That was difficult. These are all from the upper level writing. I just ended up with different ones. These three were creative writing pieces that I wrote in the Eclectic Group. I was proud of them for different reasons, and they had different varying levels of whose voice I was using. I think I was using my own personal experience, but I was writing in third person so it was detached in some way, but somehow that made me able to get further into it. I was writing about something that you hadn't experienced, hadn't really—I'd only read about so I developed a persona and again, there's a detach there and in perfect word 33:56 I utilized [individual], and I was writing an extra scene into paradise. I was using the voices and the characters that she'd already created and creating more. That felt really tied to this idea of whose voices I'm using, whose voices I'm privileging and how I'm doing that, especially in a creative way.

Then these two are the ones I brought up before, your family and word 34:27. It's me and I go, I just go and there's other voices in here. I have a lot of theoretical framework and I use a lot in my group essay. It comes off as so gregariously me 'cuz I'm just going on this topic that not a lot of people had written about or have thoughts about, and then your family has all alive dialogue and different things, but it's through my lens and even though it's not about me and in different way it's definitely my story. I see this as a transition, as different ways in which I bend and use other voices to really tell my own story so that's what I was trying to get off with that.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Do you think putting together the eportfolio had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: I think so. I wish I had more time with it 'cuz it's not as clean as id like it, but—

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Interviewee: The writing, specifically [laughing]. I think I did an okay job with design and stuff 'cuz that's also important to me through that and I just ran out of time, but I thought out typography, specifically and four different ways and how to create four different things and do that and it was nice to get an advantage point through a lot of different methods. I think it was really helpful to think of this whole thing even though my Capstone Project is its own thing. It's very connected to the themes and how I'm experiencing the world at this time and the story I want to create. Building that ark, I think, was really, really helpful as me as a writer and then adjusting each one as to make it fit.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. What you've learned from the reflective writing in the eportfolio?

Interviewee: Again, I think it all helped me understand me even more and it totally framed everything that I wrote afterwards. I didn't do as much process reflections and stuff like that because I ran out of time and I was through the content, but I'm thinking specifically about the evolution essay and trying to figure out, okay, this is how I feel about what I've written and this is why I've written what I've written and this is how I can move forward. The annotative bibliographies, too. Why did I write this piece and how is it important in my narrative that I'm trying to communicate through this.

Interviewer: Uh-hum, yeah. You see your writer's evolution piece as very connected to the larger project?

Interviewee: I do, I do.

Interviewer: Good.

Interviewee: That project, absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay. Obviously you're working with the minor, the development of the minor, as people who are involved in that process as faculty who are working on the development of the minor, what would you like us to learn from your portfolio that could help us help other writers?

Interviewee: Interesting. Are you talking specifically, how can we develop tools or what should we learn? Sorry, can you—

Interviewer: Here's the question, I'll let you read the question.

Interviewee: Which one?

Interviewer: This first one, 14.

Interviewee: Writing development, hum.

Interviewer: I'm sensing we could go both ways.

Interviewee: Yeah *[laughing]*.

Interviewer: We could talk tools, we could talk concepts, maybe a little bit of both, if you have any.

Interviewee: Writing development. I'm not really sure right now.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think, as far as tools, I've talked with [instructor] a little bit in my interview to be a Capstone student at the time, and he mentioned a project that we might work on that's like in the tool area where we have to forego the gateway in Capstone, we have to create a website and in between those, people forget how to use them. Developing tools for that I think would be really, really fun to do. I think as far as more broadly, I don't know. Right now, I think we're doing a really good job. As much as I like hated that we were basically no deadlines, I think that was really important. It was helpful to realize, at the end, be like, okay no, this is how a real project sees itself through.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: Like not in college and that's a harmful lesson to learn, and one I wouldn't have learned anywhere else. I love the focus on looking back at your own writing and trying to understand how you relate to writing in a way that's not a wire write essay because we do a lot of those, but I also think that's important at the Gateway stage.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think probably, for mine though, that's—I'm getting away from the question.

Interviewer: I think another way of asking this question would be, as you've talked to people in your class, what is unique to your project? What is the unique inside about writing development that we might gain from yours as opposed to some of the other folks that you taught class with?

Interviewee: Okay. I think mine is a focus on this self-empowerment, and I think that other people's may too, but that's the core of mine, I think. I do think that's what Sweetland does pretty well, but that's a focus on that, even perhaps more strongly. This giving that ownership, this is yours, you can do what you want to do, we're here to assist, but you have to come up with it yourself. We're not giving you a topic because you can do this and you should and because of that, you'll create something that's really important to you. I think perhaps, maybe stressing that more could be helpful 'cuz I take everything pretty seriously [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing].

Interviewee: For me, I really saw this as an opportunity to create something that I would be proud of but I think that may have been the case for everyone. Maybe for me, hey this is your thing and that's scary, but that is also an opportunity to work with you and really go for the bull here. Don't settle on something that you're gonna be less than happy with.

Interviewer: Okay. You brought up the Gateway.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You had mentioned it a couple of times. How would you compare this project, this e-portfolio to your Gateway portfolio?

Interviewee: I was gonna say it's more self-contained but it's not because my Gateway also has a bunch of themes that are running through. My Gateway's more structured I think. This is my first draft, second draft, third draft, this is first draft, look at my evolution process whereas this is more artifacts and I think this tells my story more accurately in more thoughtful mood, more comprehensively in a way that isn't as obvious. I think that has pros and cons, but it feels more like a grown-up version of my Gateway, even though they have pretty similar themes.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. You've talked a little bit about loving, working as a working peer tutor.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What have your experiences been working with other writers in the minor?

Interviewee: In the minor?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Similar. Okay, the Gateway—no, for the Capstone. The Gateway I forget how we did this, but for the Capstone, I think a lot of us just ran out of time to really look at each other words. When we were working together, we were working with big ideas 'cuz that made sense at that level. That's the thing I think I've gotten much better at because of the Peer Consultant Program, trying to figure out those macro level and how it can be helpful and ask the questions that as a reader, this is why I don't understand. These are always right or not quite with you so that was helpful. I found it was difficult to get content, how is my writing when everyone is so focused on their huge project. A lot of content in direction based stuff I got from [instructor] rather than my peers.

Interviewer: Sure. How does your overall experience in Capstone compare to the overall experience in the Gateway?

Interviewee: The Capstone was a thousand times more stressful [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing] you are not the first person to tell me that.

Interviewee: It was good and I think in an important way. The Gateway to me was this eye-opening experience in the fact that wow, you want to hear what I want to right about and oh, I can really come up with my own ideas, but it was structured in a very controlled way which I really appreciated ‘cuz it was like, okay, you’re gonna turn this in, but you can keep revising all the way through, but this is the deadline when you have to have a rough draft and I loved that because I love revising. The first part is always the first draft and so without that, this was more all-encompassing. Whereas I think with the Gateway, I was like, okay this is done, but I’m gonna need to work on it again. Okay, this is done and I’m gonna need to work on it again and step back. It was like this vortex of like, I need work on this, I need to work on this, I need to tweak this, I need to tweak that, and I think for the past, the two weeks up until, it was constant whereas I think it was a couple days up until the portfolio was due. It was like, oh, these are the things I have to tweak. I’m sorry, I forgot what the question was *[laughing]*.

Interviewer: I was talking about overall experience.

Interviewee: Overall.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think they both do a really good job, especially at the stage that they’re at because you need that structure at the beginning, and I think even though we don’t realize that we’re able to do this, we can and we should. I think as a class, the Gateway classes always become closer, that is what I’ve heard, but that was definitely the case. Our Gateway class is a close-knit environment. I think we looked more at each other’s writing, specifically and gave that writing feedback because that’s also all we knew how to do.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: They were smaller, more contained. We could look at an essay rather than certain pages *[laughing]* and then we were all—there was a comradery in our class, but it was more because everyone was drowning a little bit.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: You’re just treading and keeping each other up so that was—and yeah, and it was interesting because [instructor], too, had a totally different demeanor each class. You could tell that this was serious.

Interviewer: You had him for the whole class.

Interviewee: Yeah, and there was a lot more weight on this whereas the first was like, okay, let’s dabble, let’s break the structure of the normal academic and really

swim around and this is like, okay, now you've done that, let's see what you can do with it.

Interviewer: Yeah, got it. You used a lot of reflective writing in both classes.

Interviewee: Correct.

Interviewer: How would you talk about the value of reflection at this point in your writing career?

Interviewee: It's so important for me because it helps me realize what I think and why I think because I have gut, emotional reactions to most things, but I rarely get the chance to figure out what and why and so that was again, sort of that impulse was what drove my Capstone project, but it also drives all my reflective writing. Okay, why am I thinking this? Dive deeper, really understand and I think that's helpful as a writer but as a person, you question your assumptions and try to figure out why you think the way you think and what other things are influencing that even though you don't realize.

Interviewer: Sure. Two questions.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Actually three. Do you use reflective writing on your own?

Interviewee: I journal.

Interviewer: You journal.

Interviewee: Uh-huh, kind of sporadically, but I also went on [a literature program] so that actually helped to jump start that.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewee: That's still really important to me. I have anxiety, and so that helps me work through that as well. It's been less frequent when I have to do other writing, but it's so important to me, I think to write. If I'm stuck and I don't know why I feel the way I feel, to stop feeling that way, I need to write through that.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. Have you had to do any reflective writing in any other classes?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay, that doesn't shock me.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's interesting, I have a friend who is higher up in the psych department because she does a bunch of—she graduated as a psych major. I really enjoy psych, but the one's I've taken are the big ones and it's interesting because she's done a lot of reflective writing through that in the 400 levels, but I haven't touched that.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, and all of my other ones that are like this are formulaic.

Interviewer: Okay. Then the last question is, has this reflection process given you any new ways to talk about your writing?

Interviewee: I think absolutely. I think the biggest example of that is when I write. I think I wrote a first one for [Writing course] and then I wrote another one for, the next semester, for the Gateway, and it went from there to there. It was like, oh, I'm still focusing but by the end of the semester, I had a more clear way to understand my writing and that was totally through reflection, and it took a whole semester of that. I think I never would have realized—I realized it a little bit, but that this confident gap existed had I not sat and sifted through it and tried to figure out, okay, why do I use this language? What's up with that? I think absolutely, 100 percent for me.

Interviewer: The last couple of questions, the Weiner's as you know, are relatively new.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Are there any suggestions you would have for the instructors or the administrators of the program?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think. I really enjoy it. I think it's set up really well. I thought it was very thoughtfully constructed, and I've gained so much from it. I wish a little bit that we had more contact with our cohort or something like that 'cuz you'll only see that at Gateway and Capstone but at the same time, I like how we go outside for a little bit. I thought that experience was valuable, but the clout of that was we don't form a tight bond to anyone except for the two people in our classes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's how I'll be thinking about that this summer and how can we facilitate a more social experience within the program.

Interviewer: Okay. What do you think professors should know about teaching writing to undergraduates?

Interviewee: I think writing is so, so important and again, I think Sweetland does a really good job at it just knowing that it's theirs and you're helping to facilitate that. Sweetland does a really good job at this, but I wish other professors knew. There's like not one good way to write *[laughing]* and that, learning that was really, really powerful to me, and so what I would tell any professor or if I were to teach, I'd put that at the forefront, constantly remind myself that there's only one way to write and that it's hard. It's hard every single time for people who are good at it and that's part of it and that's okay, but to recognize that quicker.

Interviewer: Right, yup.

Interviewee: *[Laughing]*.

Interviewer: Great. Anything else about this job that you would like on record here?

Interviewee: No. I think we've talked through most of it.

Interviewer: Great. Well, thank you so much for your insight.

Interviewee: No, thank you so much.

[End of Audio]