

*Interviewer:* Okay. My name is \*\*\*. I am here with \*\*\*. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

*Interviewee:* Yup.

*Interviewer:* Okay. It is December 16, 2014. We are going to be doing the exit interview.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Tell us a little bit—we're gonna start with some general questions—just about your own perceptions about yourself as a writer. Tell me a little bit about how you would describe yourself as a writer.

*Interviewee:* I think I would describe myself more as a journalistic writer than anything else. I do some creative writing, but I work for the yearbook here. Most of what I do is closer to journalism than any kind of creative writing. Yeah, that's pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Great. How would you as a journalistic writer—what role does writing play in your life?

*Interviewee:* I'm actually going to grad school for journalism.

*Interviewer:* Oh, congratulations!

*Interviewee:* So—thanks—I'm looking to turn that into a career. I found that after four years I enjoy it a lot. I feel like it could actually take me somewhere, rather than my experiences with creative writing.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah, yeah. Would you say that your perception of yourself as a writer has changed over the time you've been here?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I definitely came in thinking I was more of a creative writer than journalistic. I ended up working for the yearbook as more of a fluke than anything. I just got an email and applied on a whim. Then with time I just found that I didn't enjoy creative writing as much as I did journalistic.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, so you applied on a whim but you stayed?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Yeah, it ended up—it's like a small, 30 person staff.

*Interviewer:* Oh, nice.

*Interviewee:* I like that more than working for [local Ann Arbor newspaper] with—I don't even know how many people are on that staff. I ended up really enjoying doing the writing and the research that goes in to what we write.

*Interviewer:* What are the primary things that you do write in the yearbook?

*Interviewee:* A lot. I've covered basically everything in the last four years. We do all the sports on campus, clubs, schools, dorms, and then some features that include professors, alumni, things like that.

*Interviewer:* I was gonna say, what is the finished product of the yearbook here. I don't think I've ever seen a Michigan yearbook.

*Interviewee:* This year it's 384 pages. Usually we're at 368, but yeah, it ends up being each spread has a story. Then three to four pictures usually.

*Interviewer:* How do decisions get—I'm just like—

*Interviewee:* Yeah, no that's fine. *[Laughing]*

*Interviewer:* - wild curiosity. How do decisions get made about what gets a spread?

*Interviewee:* We have a standard layout for what goes in every year. So it's sports and clubs and everything go in every year. Alumni and professors and things happening in Ann Arbor, we generally pick as a staff every year at the beginning of the year to figure out. We have certain spreads that are set aside for whatever we want to do. We decide as a staff and take a poll of what professors people really enjoyed and if anyone knows alumni. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Very cool, very cool. I know that this is maybe a little—maybe a little emotional, I don't know.

*Interviewee:* *[Laughing]*

*Interviewer:* I'm curious if you could talk to me a little about your experiences with the creative writing that made you go "ehh, not so much"?

*Interviewee:* I think it's just the lack of research and direction that I feel like I have with creative writing. I don't feel like I have as much of a process when it comes to that. It's more just like I write what I'm thinking about or what I'm feeling. It doesn't necessarily ever take shape. It doesn't go anywhere because I'm not sure how to edit it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. It hasn't been hard to let go of?

[...]

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I haven't been particularly attached to it at all. I write children's literature.

*Interviewer:* Cool.

*Interviewee:* I can do the 500 words or less creative writing kinda thing.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing]

*Interviewee:* Because that I feel like is easier to back and edit and reorder if I need to.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool. Cool. You have been at U of M [University of Michigan] from the beginning?

*Interviewee:* Yup.

*Interviewer:* Let's talk a little bit about the Capstone course that you took. [Writing course]. Tell me about that course.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. It was actually my favorite course here. Yeah, because I just felt like I had a lotta freedom to do what I wanted to do and what I wanted to write about but also a good amount of guidance if I needed it. It was always there if I needed to talk to anybody in Sweetland. I had [instructor] as a professor so she was always there and always available. I just liked to finally get to do something that I cared about.

*Interviewer:* Right. So what was the topic of the nature of the course?

*Interviewee:* The course as a whole?

*Interviewer:* Yeah?

*Interviewee:* You have these three main assignments that are due by the end of the semester. So there's developmental essay—which is basically a written version of this kinda thing. You're your Capstone project which we each got to decide and

develop on our own. Then the e-portfolio which combines all of them online along with a couple other requirements to show your development as a writer. The Capstone project I think takes up the most time, for sure.

*Interviewer:* Oh, [cross talk 06:29], yeah.

*Interviewer:* The rest of them were also super useful. It's always nice after four years to be able to reflect on where you were and where you are now and actually look at your writing to see how it changed. We had to cite our own writing in that piece.

*Interviewer:* Oh, okay. That's kinda cool. What did you do as your Capstone?

*Interviewee:* I actually made a 30 page magazine—

*Interviewer:* Cool.

*Interviewee:* - for the Humane Society here. I am a volunteer dog walker. I did stories on myths about pit bulls, black cat myths, I did some staff profiles there—what else—declawing your cat. There are just a bunch of different articles in there mainly about things that people usually don't understand about shelter animals.

*Interviewer:* Right. Did that involve research?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. It was a lotta research about the specific topics. Then I did a lot of interviews with other volunteers with the shelter. Some of them had been there for as long as me—like a year. Some of them had been there for 10 or 15. Also the staff was super helpful because most of them have worked elsewhere, too, so they had a lot to say about animals they've encountered in different places and how it's similar no matter what shelter you go to.

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think the research is always the most fun for me. 'Cause I like getting to see everybody else's perspectives and getting to put that together into one piece.

*Interviewer:* Cool. Very cool. Do you feel like the Capstone course had any impact on your writing process?

*Interviewee:* I think it did because doing a 30 page magazine in a semester by myself—'cause I designed and took the photos, too—took a lot of planning and a lot of not procrastinating. I think that helped me get more of a process to my writing—like more of actually scheduling, editing it, and scheduling writing in. Whereas usually I would just write it and edit it the night before it was due kinda thing. This definitely forced me to plan and take advantage of the time I had.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Did you have any experience with the design process before—

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Actually this year [involved with the] yearbook. So my job is more design than writing. So, yeah, I have a decent amount of experience with the design.

*Interviewer:* That's very helpful.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. [*Laughing*]

*Interviewer:* I love it. We talked a little bit about process. Did this shape at all your sense of yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I think it made me realize what I enjoy writing about and that when I actually write about something I enjoy it usually comes out better. Obviously I like doing it more. I think there's just a difference between reading something that I had to write for class and reading something that I cared about. You can hear the difference in my voice.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. This may be a really hard question, but I'm curious, how would you characterize that difference?

*Interviewee:* I think there's just more—I guess there's more of me in the things that I care about. Like if I'm reading a paper I had to write for another class, I think I have a harder time making my own voice come through. But when I'm writing about dogs or something like that, it definitely sounds like me. There's definitely a sort of passion there.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah. Absolutely. I think we have covered that. Let's talk a little bit about the sort of writing courses that you've taken and how all of this fits with the writing that you've done across the university.

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* What do you think, now that you're almost done—

*Interviewee:* It's scary.

*Interviewer:* [*Laughing*] What do you think it means to write well?

*Interviewee:* That's a hard question.

*Interviewer:* It is. It's a really hard question.

*Interviewee:* I think to write well, it means that you take your writing seriously even if it's something that you don't necessarily care about. I've definitely had classes where I'm writing essays about books that I didn't really like or didn't really care about. There's still a way to write well about that as long as you give it as much attention as something that you did care about. Obviously like I said the writing comes out differently, but you can give the same care and attention to what you're writing even if it's not something that necessarily interests you. 'Cause with all the English classes that I've taken, there've definitely been some that are really dated to me, and I didn't really care about what I was reading. Like some of the Shakespeare plays just never really interested me.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing]

*Interviewee:* I still did well on those essays, because I took them as seriously as anything else I was writing.

*Interviewer:* Cool. Obviously as an English major a lot of your courses involve significant amounts of writing. Did you have specifically designated upper level requirement courses that you took?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, yeah. I did the [upper level English course]. Then I think it was [American Culture course], which was a Hawaiian Literature Seminar.

*Interviewer:* That's kinda cool.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think there were eight people in my class.

*Interviewer:* That's really nice.

*Interviewee:* It was very cool.

*Interviewer:* Did either of those shape how you think about writing or how you understand yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, more [upper level English course] because that was creative nonfiction. So it was kind of a combination of the creative and the journalistic side of my writing. I found that I still didn't enjoy that as much as just like a straight journalistic piece. We had three main pieces again, and I think I struggled to combine the creative with the nonfiction. That just taught me what I didn't necessarily like to write about. Yeah. [Laughing]

*Interviewer:* Do you make use of—or do you make use of anything you took out of either of those two classes in other writing environments?

*Interviewee:* [Literature course] was a lotta research for me since I didn't know what—I didn't know a lot about Hawaiian Literature going in. I didn't even know it had its own separate genre.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing]

*Interviewee:* So that was a lot of research and a lot of reading which I think any kind of research always helps me because having to look up all the stuff and then figure out how to put it into a coherent piece is always something that's helpful regardless of what class you're writing for.

*Interviewer:* Absolutely. Are there any other writing courses you've taken that you feel like are worth commenting on?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, [English course]. [Title of course]. It was a class of like 30 people, but it was really nice to be able to focus on writing that would help me apply for grads or apply for internships. So it helped me to be able to rework my resume and rework my cover letter and actually focus on that as part of a requirement for the semester. Because it made it a lot less stressful to have to do it outside of courses and not get as much feedback on it necessarily. That one was super helpful. There was a lot of peer review. The professor was always ready for questions and contact.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Again, just speaking from my experience, because I've taught that course a few times, I think it's really—the transfer skills out of that class are really, really visible.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, yeah it's definitely useful. And it's helped a lot, even now.

*Interviewer:* That's great. I'm really glad to hear that. Has it helped—I'm sorry—I am such a—

*Interviewee:* No, it's fine.

*Interviewer:* - my brain just goes everywhere. Has it helped you with any writing that wasn't applicationy kind of writing?

*Interviewee:* I mean, it's helped me with emails, I guess—

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewee:* - writing more professional emails, which is good as [position in Yearbook] since that's mainly what I do all the time.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing]

*Interviewee:* I think besides that most of it was just applications and well-written cover letters.

*Interviewer:* Did you take any writing outside of your main concentrations?

*Interviewee:* I took some history courses that had a decent amount of essays. I can't even think of the course number.

*Interviewer:* So they weren't necessarily explicitly writing courses—

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* - but you did a lot of writing in them.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Did you feel like those were—did your writing skills from the English transfer into History?

*Interviewee:* I think for the sentence level and organization they did. Besides that it was a very different voice because it was so research based. There was no room for any kind of opinion or really necessarily a lot of analysis. It was more just reporting what I read. That was about it. That was kind of a weird thing. I think the last time I took a history course I was a sophomore so it's been awhile.

*Interviewer:* It felt to you like a much stronger reporting orientation than a...

*Interviewee:* Yeah, yeah.

*Interviewer:* Just to clarify then, how is that different from journalism?

*Interviewee:* The way that the history courses were it was literally just to show that you could do research, I felt. This is hard. [Laughing] Journalism—what I do for yearbook—is a little more I get to say what I observed as well. Like what was going on during an event kind of thing. Even if I can't give an opinion, there's still a little bit more of me and my voice in it then necessarily like the research I was doing for the history courses.

*Interviewer:* Right. Let me talk this back to you and you tell me if I'm hearing you correctly.

*Interviewee:* Okay.



*Interviewer:* Simply by nature of the fact that you are talking about a primary experience, right—there’s some interpretation and analysis going on just because you’re the one who’s filtering it. As opposed to saying, “So and so says this, and so and so says this, and so and so says that.”

*Interviewee:* Right.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Great. Let’s talk a little bit about your portfolio. [...].

[...]

*Interviewer:* Okay. Nice. The question asks for the most memorable experience with regard to the e-portfolio.

*Interviewee:* I think probably having to figure out how to divide the sections—the headers—which it ends up looking really simple with the freshman, sophomore, junior, senior. I wasn’t sure that’s how I wanted to organize it at first. It ended up being the best way for me to show my progression as a writer. It was surprisingly linear.

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, reading through everything, you could see the progression through the years rather than one specific class when I was a sophomore necessarily changed my writing and then you don’t see it for another year. You can see the progression year by year. That’s how I ended up having to decide it. That was definitely probably the hardest part.

*Interviewer:* Really interesting. What were some of the other organizational strategies you toyed with?

*Interviewee:* I have under each section my yearbook work, so there was gonna be a separate section for professional research-based essays and more creative. As I looked at it there was a lot less creative stuff in general. Having it organized like that didn’t really show any kind of progression at all. It just kind of divided everything into neat, little categories.

*Interviewer:* Okay, okay. Your goal really was then to talk about a progression—

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* - as opposed—is that the explicit assignment?

*Interviewee:* At this point I don’t remember what the explicit assignment was. I think so. I think it was supposed to be a type of artifact to show who you were as

a writer. So the progression showed me in—me changing. I feel like that's me as a writer.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, cool. Cool. You just used this word artifact. It comes up here, too. It's not a word that I'm familiar, but I know that it gets tossed around in the minor a lot. Can you tell me a little bit about your understanding of what artifact means?

*Interviewee:* I think it just means a finished piece of writing.

*Interviewer:* Okay, got it. Tell me a little bit about the design process then. So we've talked about the organization of the text. What choices did you make about the design?

*Interviewee:* I used Wix [website creator] because it was the easiest. It was a lot of easier than using WordPress [content management system] because that's what I used Gateway portfolio. I didn't feel like I had a lotta freedom over how I organized things. This layout, I just kinda liked all the little blurbs at the bottom to kind of give a little bit about me before anybody even got in to my writing. Yeah, so this layout just ended up standing out to me because it was simple but also gave me enough little sections that I could work with.

*Interviewer:* Right. Yeah, it's a nice visual. It's clean.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Yeah, I was looking for the clean for sure.

*Interviewer:* Cool, cool. Did you notice as you—so obviously one of the relationships that you saw between these pieces of writing that you put in here was the growth—the explicit, linear growth. Were there other connections between the artifacts that you put in here?

*Interviewee:* I think mainly what I said earlier—that you could tell when I cared about a piece and when I didn't necessarily—like cared about the topic—and when I didn't necessarily feel anything for the topic because my writing changed. There just wasn't my voice I felt like. That was probably the other main connection that I saw between any of the pieces. You could really tell even if it was something like that I wouldn't seem to care about. I didn't end up including the piece in this, but I took a class on Milton and *Paradise Lost*. So I really cared about that, which is weird because I don't usually like literature that's necessarily that old. I don't really connect with it.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] Pre-seventeen hundred.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* You never know what you're gonna like though, right?

*Interviewee:* Right, so that one even shows as much passion as the writing that I did for my magazine. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* That's cool. Did you put in anything in the portfolio that you didn't care about?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so.

*Interviewer:* You would say that everything in here has that voice that you would call your voice?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Okay.

*Interviewee:* I'm trying to think. I guess the one that I didn't necessarily feel like was my voice was the very first one from my—it was [Lloyd Hall Scholars Program course]. 'Cause it was my writer self-interview so I included that because it showed where I started. Then the developmental essay from this semester showed where I finished. That writer self-interview doesn't sound like me at all. It sounds more like how I wrote in high school. That wasn't something I necessarily wanted to write as a freshman because I didn't really know who I was as a writer. I felt like what I was saying was just like because I had to do the assignment. You could see that in the writing.

*Interviewer:* There are elements of it—there are a few complex elements that I'm hearing you talk about there. One is your actual level of interest. One is the sort of like—that was probably me but that was an earlier version of me that I don't necessarily recognize anymore.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. It's definitely—

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] Yeah, I know how that goes. Do you think that putting this together had any impact on your writing?

*Interviewee:* I don't know right now because I did it so recently.

*Interviewer:* I was gonna say, you're really close to it, huh? Ahh.

*Interviewee:* I haven't really been able to do much other writing since I finished it because it was the very end of the semester. I honestly don't know.

*Interviewer:* Okay, fair enough. Time is important. You can just marinate on these things. What would you say you learned from putting together—you said

it's great to reflect. What would you say you learned from the reflective component of the work?

*Interviewer:* I think I learned mainly how I grew and how much you can grow without realizing it. It's not like I go back and look at all of my stuff at the end of every semester, and I'm, "Oh, this changed. I can see it." I think I just learned how much growth can happen even in four years. Four years seems like a long time, but it's really not.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] It's really not.

*Interviewer:* No. [Laughing]

*Interviewer:* In some ways this is like a time lapse capsule of what's happened for you.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, and you don't realize the little things that change. My writing has changed a lot since I was a freshman.

*Interviewer:* Can you name how it's changed?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I used a lot of passive voice freshman and sophomore year—like a lot. I don't know how I got away with that. Like I'm not sure—

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] Spoken like a true journalist.

*Interviewee:* Then I think my voice just starts to come through more as I hafta write more. In high school you just write what you have to write to get into college basically. You can just see my voice developing more as the years go on.

[...]

*Interviewee:* This is a piece that I wrote for yearbook [...].

*Interviewer:* Oh my gosh.

*Interviewee:* - [...]. A decent part of it is quotes. I don't even know how to describe my voice. I guess it just feels like something I would have written and not necessarily someone else. There are certain elements—or certain organizations—like the way I've got the little intro sentence and then a quote. Not necessarily everyone does that. There are definitely people who do it. It's just a way that I guess I know it's me that's writing it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, 'cause that's a consistent choice that you've made in each paragraph to have a sort of introductory sentence or two and then a couple of quotes occasionally—and I'm describing all of this for the interview—

occasionally with a framing “he said she said” thrown in to make sure the reader knows where we’re at in the middle of those quotes. Yeah.

[...]

*Interviewer:* That’s neat. It’s partly structural. It’s partly in the elements of this interview that really felt important to you.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* It’s content in addition to the actual structure of the writing. Okay. That’s really fun to think about and toy with. What do you think—what would you like—let’s go back to your portfolio here. Let’s say we were going to go to a meeting of Sweetland administrators—the people who are in charge of the minor program—and talk to them about the process of putting together a portfolio. What would you like them to take away from your experience?

*Interviewee:* It looks like something that’s really simple to put together, but it took probably as much time as it took for me to organize and put together my project which was a decent amount of time. I think it kinda gets put on the backburner because the Capstone project is so important. I think it needs just as much attention and emphasis as the project. Otherwise it just falls to the wayside, and I don’t think it gets as much attention as it needs.

*Interviewer:* What would you do structurally in the Capstone course to make sure that future students know that?

*Interviewee:* I think I would probably suggest having—because it meets two days a week—I think I would suggest having one day devoted to the Capstone project. Like once you get through the first intro part of the course—one of those days devoted to your Capstone project and the other one devoted to the portfolio. I feel like a lot of it ended up being focused on what we could do to make our projects better and peer review of the projects more than the portfolio.

*Interviewer:* Have you seen any other people’s portfolios? Or talked with others about—

*Interviewee:* I haven’t recently. I saw a couple during the semester but they weren’t finished and weren’t close to being finished, so no.

*Interviewer:* Was there guidance on how to choose a platform?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, we talked about it at the beginning of the semester. It was more so a classroom discussion kind of thing because we’d all done the Gateway Portfolio. Some people used WordPress—more people used WordPress than not. Whoever knew about Wix used Wix.

*Interviewer:* Oh, that's interesting.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I had no idea that Wix even existed. I think talking about that as a group and the pros of Wix and how hard WordPress was to use. I think most people used Wix. I don't think I saw any WordPress ones from the ones I saw.

*Interviewer:* Interesting. Does Wix give you templates the way WordPress does?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. There are a bunch of different templates. It gives you a lot more freedom as to what you can add and delete. The blurbs that are down at the bottom—I deleted a couple because I didn't need them. Whereas WordPress, in order for me to do something like, I would have had to do some coding, and I don't even know simple coding. This made it a lot easier for somebody who was just trying to use it for writing and not someone who doesn't have coding skills.  
[Laughing]

*Interviewer:* The header here is all built in and then these guys are built in. What about this section right here in the middle with “[title of section]” and then this little red circle?

*Interviewee:* It came like that. It didn't have those words necessarily. I don't remember what it said.

*Interviewer:* But it was like a title and a—

*Interviewee:* Yeah, and then some little information in there. So that was built in, too. There are other things in the editing area where you can—I could have changed that to something else or to a picture. There's a lot more freedom and flexibility in what you have.

*Interviewer:* If I'm hearing you correctly then—and again, please correct me if I'm wrong—is that you found a template that fit—even though you have the design experience—rather than doing the work of designing—you found a template that fit your sensibility and rolled with it?

*Interviewee:* Yes. Yes. There was so much work going into the writing and everything that was being put onto the portfolio that I didn't necessarily feel like I should be spending my time designing a whole, new page if it already gave me templates.

*Interviewer:* That worked for you?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* In a selfish question—again, because I’m doing that today and praying that the Sweetland researchers will forgive me—do you feel like putting together the e-portfolio is any different than maybe aggregating all of this in a notebook and handing it in?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I actually did that for another one of my classes this semester—my English course. I had to put together a physical portfolio. I feel like this is way easier to see the changes and see the reflection on each piece. The physical one I turned in I wrote a two to three page reflective piece. On this I have a little intro blurb that’s kind of reflective. It’s a little snippet of my developmental essay more than anything. I feel like it’s easier to see the changes as you go then something that’s physically in front of you with not necessarily reflection on every piece. My two to three page thing was a reflection on the whole portfolio. It wasn’t necessarily focused on every piece.

*Interviewer:* That’s really insightful and hugely helpful actually. I’ve actually just been literally toying with that question. What is the difference? It’s great to hear you—I think that’s actually a fantastic justification that online we’re used to getting little blurbs and then going in and looking at the whole thing. Whereas we just don’t—short of abstract and academic paper we don’t do that in print. Great. Thank you, Sweetland researchers for indulging me. Let’s then move on to the last portion here and think about the Gateway course. How did the experience of the Capstone compare to the experience of the Gateway?

*Interviewee:* I feel like the Gateway was more me getting to feel out what kind of writer I was because you do the remediation and reworking of a piece you already did. Whereas going into the Capstone it was just, “What do you like to do? What do you like to write about? Now do it.” The Gateway was kinda like, “Oh, feel around a little bit. See if you like the original piece better than what you ended up writing. Or the remediation, if you liked that better.” I think that was the biggest difference.

*Interviewer:* What has been your experience of working with other writers in the minor?

*Interviewee:* It’s actually been really good and really useful. For English classes we don’t necessarily do peer review a lot. If you want your peers your to review it, you have to reach out and find somebody that’ll trade papers with you, whereas a lot of both the Gateway and the Capstone was reviewing and working in small groups and then doing a full class review. Everybody’s super honest, too. I think they know the value of critique whereas in other courses people don’t necessarily do that because they don’t realize how much it helps. I think they feel like they’re insulting you more than anything when they’re giving you advice. That’s not the case. You’re asking for a reason. I think everybody in the Sweetland Minor realizes that. There’s never any hard feelings or anything like that. I think that’s good. *[Laughing]*

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] Absolutely. You're like, "No, please, [cross talk 40:34] and critique me!"

*Interviewee:* Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* We've talked about this a little bit—but maybe to just sort of synthesize—how would you describe the big differences between the Gateway and the e-portfolio Capstone that you put together?

*Interviewee:* I don't even really remember what I put on my Gateway. It was all the projects I know. I didn't really feel like there was a sense of wholeness, I guess, on my Gateway. It was just kind of like the requirements and then some yearbook pieces and my resume. It was just a place for me to put samples of my work pretty much. There was nothing really telling necessarily about me on there. You could have read into it, I guess. There was nothing explicitly being, "Oh, these are the decisions I made, and this is why I did it," whereas the Capstone portfolio has a lot of that.

*Interviewer:* When did you put together the Gateway? Was that your second year?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Okay. The next set of questions are reflection about the reflective process. We're going super meta here. Reflection obviously is a key part of this whole process. How would you describe your experience with reflective writing?

*Interviewee:* It's been pretty good so far. I haven't done a lot of it outside of the Capstone course. I think the Capstone course has been—I did some of it for my English course this semester for that portfolio but that was about it. I think it's been helpful though—to see how I've really changed and what there's still room to work on, too. Where I'm lacking or where I'm not really applying myself necessarily. It's been a really helpful thing as much as nobody really likes going back and seeing what mistakes they made. They also make sure you focus on what you did well, too, which I think is helpful. Usually, looking back, you just see what you messed up on. If you're forced to focus on what you think you did well, it helps make it a little easier to look back.

*Interviewer:* Right. Definitely. Are there any new—when you say, "Okay, these are the things I'm good at, and these are the areas for growth,"—can you sort of flush those two things about a little bit for me?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Well the things I'm good at are definitely integrating my research with my own writing. That's just gotten better over time since I've had to do it in most of my courses and for my job. Then things I can work on are definitely making sure I always apply myself. That's just not something that



necessarily always happens in classes that I'm like, "Ohh, it's only a couple credits." Or it doesn't really affect my major, I guess. That still happens, too, today as much as I would like it not to. That's definitely something that I could work on.

*Interviewer:* The more deadlines you get, the faster they come, the harder that can become, too, yeah. Did you learn anything that surprised you in that reflective process?

*Interviewee:* I think learning actually how well I managed to put my research and the quotes I found in with my own writing and merge the two was surprising. With yearbook—which is where I do most of that—we have a lotta stories for deadline. I just kind of write it and quickly look over it, and then send it to the copy editors. That's about it. It just happens so naturally for me now I think that I didn't even notice that I was doing it well. Looking back and being able to see that was cool.

*Interviewer:* That's great. Yeah, that's really cool. Did the reflective component feel like it fits at all with your journalistic writing? Would those be two things you would ever put together?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I think because it's so focused on being like, "how did you change throughout the years?" It's more focused on me whereas all of my journalistic writing is focused on something else. They don't really feel like they mesh very well.

*Interviewer:* So you don't envision yourself necessarily carrying that reflective component into say grad school?

*Interviewee:* No. Probably not. Not written reflection at least. I would definitely go back and see how I've changed throughout the year that I'm in grad school. I do know how helpful it is. I don't know that I would necessarily write something like the developmental essay again as a whole. I might go through and make a list of like, "here's what changed, and here's where I can still improve," but I don't think I'd necessarily write a whole piece again.

*Interviewer:* Right. Yeah. I'm just trying to envision—I feel like that would be something you would do if you ever aggregated your reporting into a book or—

*Interviewee:* Yeah, there'd definitely be [cross talk 46:43].

*Interviewer:* - a portfolio when you decided to move from one paper to another or something.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, that'd probably be the only time it'd be useful. It'd be useful to myself to look back but not necessarily to write a full piece on it.

*Interviewer:* The minor is still pretty new. Any suggestions that you'd have for the folks running the program?

*Interviewer:* I think they're doing pretty well. The requirements for writing on the blog and meeting with a Sweetland advisor once a month aren't really enforced. I don't know necessarily writing on the blog once a month is necessarily useful—for some people it's useful—but for others I feel like some of the posts on there are just because it's for requirements. I think enforcing the meeting with the Sweetland advisor once a month would be super useful. I met with my advisor once a month just because I really liked—I like the people at Sweetland, and it's helpful to me.

*Interviewer:* Right. They're great.

*Interviewee:* I know people who don't make use of that. I think having that enforced would help anyone in the program. Anyone you talk to here is always helpful. I don't think people necessarily take advantage of that. I think making it required for minors would force them to do that and to improve more.

*Interviewer:* What would you like professors to know about teaching writing to undergrads?

*Interviewee:* I think just making themselves available for helping students is super important. Even if all of your students don't take advantage of it—having them know that you're there is helpful in and of itself. You know you have that resource there, and if you're super open and you're willing to Google chat or meet whenever—not at unrealistic hours obviously—just as long as you make it known to your students that you're a resource for them, I think that's always really helpful.

*Interviewer:* Has this prompted anything that we haven't talked about or anything that you wanna make sure we know about your experience?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. Just that it was a good one.

*Interviewer:* Good!

*Interviewee:* I am glad I decided to apply for the minor and did that. Even though it's a fairly new minor, it's really well run. There's always gonna be things that can be improved, especially with something new. Even though it's new it was super helpful. I feel like that's a general consensus. I haven't met anyone in the minor that regretted declaring the minor.

*Interviewer:* [Laughing] That's good.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. *[Laughing]* Even though the Capstone was really hard, and we were all definitely feelin' it. Everyone still really enjoyed it.

*Interviewer:* Great. Good! Well I'm so glad it's been a good experience for you. Thanks for sharing your thoughts and sharing your work with us.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, no problem.

*Interviewer:* Awesome. Okay. [...].

*[End of Audio]*