

Interviewer: Thank you ***. I'm here with ***. It's April 28th, 2014. This is ***. ***, thank you again for meeting with me today.

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely.

[...]

Interviewer: That's fantastic. We are going to have sort of a casual conversation about your writing experiences here at . We'll start with some basic questions about writing and how you see yourself as a writer. Then we'll move into talking about the writing classes you've taken here at . We'll talk in particular about the minor courses and the portfolio for the minor. We'll do a little bit of talking about the Gateway course as well. That's pretty much it. It shouldn't take anymore than hour, probably less.

We'll look at your portfolio too when we get there. The first question is pretty general. How do you describe or how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: It's general, but it's so hard.

Interviewer: [Laughing] I know, it's a big—it's kind of a really broad question isn't it?

Interviewee: It's like the big question, yeah. I guess I would describe myself as—so writing wise, I write to explore. I write to find answers. I never feel like I start with what I'm looking for or have kind of the end in mind. I don't even know what the end is. I think that for me writing in classes, academic and elsewhere is very kind of a journey.

I need to be able to see or I need to be able to come to a place that I wasn't at at the beginning. I kind of make some type of evolution or a journey. Very exploratory. Very curious and inquisitive and those kind of things. I don't think I ever really know what I'm doing going in. I've never been the structure, stick to the guidelines, which has been good and bad.

In some cases good because some people are looking for that. Some people encourage that and bad. I'm not good with rubrics and things like that. I want to be able to manipulate words and how I'm writing in that way, exploratory I guess would maybe—the one word.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's really interesting. How would you have described yourself as a writer when you started here in as a freshman?

Interviewee: Yeah. When I started I think that—I think I was a confident writer. I had a lot of people in high school that said, “*** you’re a strong writer. You’re gonna be a writer.” I had those kind of teacher influences in my life encouraging that. I wrote for a—my town newspaper for one year. It was a little columny, hear from the students sort of thing. I tried to tell these stories within our school system to—at the community—

Interviewer: Where are you from?

Interviewee: I’m from [...], so a little town in northern [...]. It was a great experience. It was hard cuz you’re writing for the public and people are looking at your words everyday. It’s not an easy thing. I had a lot of people that said, “***, you’re a good writer. ***, you can write. You should write. You should write. You should take the summer.”

I was definitely confident coming in. I also think that maybe over confident, maybe I wasn’t sure—I had done really well in the things that were put in front of me in high school and those kind of tasks. I hadn’t done deeper stuff. I hadn’t been challenged I guess in other ways with writing. I had to breakdown a sentence. You have to have here and say, “What is that word actually doing?” What are you trying to get—could you use a different modifier because this one really isn’t saying what you want to say?” I wasn’t as detail oriented like that.

I think I was confident, and maybe over confident. I think I was humbled my first—maybe my first writing class and realized that there were people and professors and students out there that were really stretching to write. I was just like, “Oh, I’m good at writing, so I can do it.” I wasn’t really stretching to be more exploratory I guess, if that connects back to.

Interviewer: As you’re graduating then what are your goals for yourself as a writer moving forward?

Interviewee: I’m graduating with a sport management degree. I have the writing minor. I want to write about sports.

Interviewer: Oh, how interesting.

Interviewee: I wanna use—it’s been a really good balance actually. All of my classes are—and my concentration is very business oriented. You’re thinking strategically in that way and I want to—I got the minor originally cuz I really like to write, and I thought this could be useful in whatever major I did decide.

I wanna use my writing minor and writing in general to be able to tell sports stories and be able to tell ‘em in—we’re overcoming things. We’re pushing past doubt and there’s all these sports clichés you can throw in with all of those stories. I want to be able to tell sports stories in still a very literary story-telling

way. Again, not a rubric, cookie cutter, this is how you tell a good fuzzy story that people are gonna enjoy.

I wanna be able to do it differently. That kind of ties right into Sweetland with different modes and different mediums and how do you use things to really get your message across. Yeah, I wanna use it to tell—I wanna use writing to tell sports stories. I want to do that in a creative and different way. I don't want to be kind of just a PR writer. There will always be releases, and you have to put out releases for things. I do want to—I wanna do it in more of a creative way. I think that gets me excited about writing in the future.

Interviewer: How interesting. As you're thinking then about moving into writing and these different spaces and sort of looking back at your writing experiences here at the , here's another big question. What do you think it means to write well? What does good writing look like?

Interviewee: I think good writing is personal. I say personal because I think two option, academic and professional writing and all those things are important. No matter what, I am *** and whoever's writing, you are who you are first. I think the conversations we're having in writing need to begin by being personal and being by some type of element that way and then go into whatever tone we want to set. I think good writing and writing well is being personal first.

I also think it is—I don't know, I think it's more than considering your audience. I think I sometimes—your question, “Who is your audience and why are you writing it this way?” I want my message to be my message no matter what audience it goes to. I guess it being personal, it being my message, I have to do that in a way that relates to those audiences.

I think writing well you find ways to make sure your message is still true or whatever idea or concept or complex thing you're trying to explain is at its core still you and still what you're thinking and still what you're trying to get across to whatever people you're trying to explain it to. If that makes sense?

Interviewer: It makes perfect sense.

Interviewee: I think too often—I mean I do it, we all do it. It's hard, cuz all the sudden your words and your meaning and the thing that you're trying—you are trying to create is shaped and cut in half just because it needs to go to these people. Or it needs to—your message needs to be heard by this individual. I still want to be true to who I am and who—and what I'm trying to get across. I think that—as common as that sounds, is writing well.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense, makes a lot of sense. Which of the upper level writing courses have you taken? This might be hard to remember. I know a lot of our minors take many of—

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I've taken—obviously all the normal English's. I took [English course], which is argumentation, [title of course], [English course]. I took [upper level English course], which I think is [title of course]. Then I took two courses inside my major that I got petitioned to be my upper level requirements inside my major in sport management to apply for the minor. I could take those courses and get them to fulfill that requirement.

One was a business communications class. It was a lot of memos, a lot of long reports, a lot of documents that you would do in the business world. Another one was an introduction to sport management class where we did a lot of case analysis. You would get a company or you would get a team. There would be an ethical issue or something. You had to write a case for it. They were more in depth in things. That also applied for an upper level requirement. [Title of course] for sure and argumentation within English, English Department I took as upper level.

Interviewer: In those courses what were your experiences like?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it varied with the individual that I had as a professor. I think all of them were really good. I really enjoyed all of them. [Title of course]—so outside of my major, [title of course] and English was one that—again, essays and formats; I'm fine with those things. I don't run from those things, even though on the inside I kind of am. I'm like, "Yes."

Interviewer: [Laughing] You'll do 'em.

Interviewee: I'll do 'em. I was kind of hesitant going to that class thinking, "Oh, they're just gonna be—I'm gonna have to write a research one and there's gonna be different elements, and I'm not looking forward to this." My professor in that class just did a really good job of making it more than just the essay. You were creating this thing, this artifact. You're making this meaning that had implications and had cause and had all of those things for you and for whatever you were writing about.

It was more than the end product of the actual essay. It's like the idea—it was about constructing the actual thing itself. She did a really good job of bringing in pieces and readings that were really compelling and really challenging. It wasn't that, "Hey, look at this example and mold yourself to this." It was, "People do it this way, and this is unconventional and it's okay to be like this." It's also okay to do it this way and have structure and make sure your audience knows exactly what you're doing in that way.

There was variation and there was really interesting topics, and I just think she did a good job of bringing out—it's not all about structure in essay. It's about what you're doing with that and how you're using it in your writing.

Interviewer: Had you been exposed to those kinds of unconventional formats before?

Interviewee: I don't think so. I think maybe I had and I wasn't aware that this is something that is still considered good writing. This is still considered writing well. This is still something that is held to a big standard. Maybe I have, but I guess in my mind, I guess my eyes weren't open to it. I just didn't realize that that was something that was—this crazy thing with this guy that went to this concert. He told this whole story of him and the experience in this concert. That's good writing. That's writing well. That's something you can do in different spaces and it's acceptable I guess.

Interviewer: Do you still make use of what you've learned in those courses in your writing now? It sounds like this idea of being unconventional in your format is part of what you're trying to do now?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. I've seen those examples. A lot of those upper level requirements—I mean they're not giving you—they're not entry level, so they're not giving you foundations. They're giving you kind of avenues to pick of, "Hey, this is okay and this is okay too, and you can use that." I think it gives you a lot of confidence as a writer.

I think taking those courses tells you that it's okay to be this way and that way cuz there's not one right way. It's kind of how you're getting there and how you're speaking and how you're actually getting your message across. Now, absolutely, I think bottom line, I think it's a confidence thing that it's okay to make a mistake on this, this and this because you have come from here. You have made this evolution. That in itself—be proud of that. Don't rip yourself up.

I think—obviously writing you're always—you're critical of yourself and people are critical of you. There's never a, "This is perfect," which is kind of how it all goes. It's hard. It's hard to get to that place and to be okay with having a little failure along the way.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is hard. It's very hard. Have you taken any other writing courses?

Interviewee: Besides that, not that I could think of, no.

Interviewer: Okay. You mentioned that you had petitioned to take those two courses as the writing courses in your concentration. What do you feel like you sort of took from those classes or maybe the way that—I guess the question on the paper says, "Have these courses affected the writing you do in your concentration?"

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: It sounds to me when you're talking about your goals for writing in your sort of field that you're taking what you've learned in your other courses and sort of applying that into your concentration. I guess what I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about is how the more conventional ways you learned about writing in your concentration, I guess are playing out in your experiences, does that make sense?

Interviewee: Yeah—no, it does. You're right though. I'm taking the unconventional outside of my major and being like, "Oh, I'm gonna fuse these." I still think that the structured writing classes and those basic forms. I think those are at the base of everything I'm doing anyways. I think that I was confident in that. I am confident in doing those things.

In those ways I think taking those other courses and taking the courses within my major, that was very business and structure and long report and short report and this is how you need to write these memos. I think that is so super valuable. I think it is something that I wanna have in the job market. I wanna make sure that I am able to do.

By no means am I awesome at any of those structured things or any of the unconventional things. I think taking those classes and taking the classes within my major that were very rudimentary, I think they still—yeah, I think they still gave me a perspective of you do this pretty well, but you're not quite—your research isn't quite there in this aspect. I think no matter what you're still pulling things from different ways, but a lot of thing inside my major.

Then [title of course], which was very—you gotta have an argument. You gotta have this. You gotta have a thesis. You gotta make sure you do this and this and this. I think I wasn't super strong in making sure I was picking the right research and I was picking the right things to back up what I was saying. I was doing it in a compelling way. You can still have that unconventional free flowing whatever.

I think you can still have that in those structured pieces. I guess taking those two kinds of classes let me fuse those things too. I think you do it in a way that really solidifies your research and really solidifies your argument. Using those two things together I think is important. It has taken those two separate kinds of things makes sense, doesn't make sense, but it works the way it does together in my two areas of interest.

Interviewer: Yeah. It sounds like you're pulling those two things together in a really interesting way. How have you used the skills or strategies you've learned in your writing classes in other courses?

Interviewee: A lot of those business classes or the sports minded things, I think a lot of it is—it's full of people and professors, and the like that are good at the business memos and are good at those things and think that's the only way to tell a story or that's the only way to get something across. I think taking the other classes and being able to have these experiences and these weird forms of podcasts and blogs and all these weird stuff in Sweetland and knowing those things are out there, I think that has—I brought a ton of that into my sport business type classes.

Where we have group presentations—way too many group presentations. We have lots of group presentations that you're trying to sell something or you're pitching something. Or you get this prompt and you have to create your data, and you have to make sure that the data backs up the ad campaign or whatever. I think being able to use different types of modes and being able to do certain things in Sweetland and being exposed to all these things, I've tried to bring all of that over into sport management.

I think that's been a huge thing for me. I'm the girl in groups that can make the videos and that can create the graphics and can do that stuff because I've had to do it in other ways. I think Sweetland and other classes towards the minor in general and towards writing in general, I think has exposed me to those things. It's like a versatility thing. I can do that stuff, and I know that we can get the same ad message across with this video or with this graphic way better.

Someone's gonna respond to that. Our professor is gonna say, and the people we're pitching to are gonna say that this was really compelling because it's done in a different way, but it's getting the same message across. I think writing is words and writing is language and writing is meaning and all that stuff. I think you can use it beyond all of that, beyond the structure and the—lots of verbiage and things like that. It's getting whatever your idea is across in a way, I guess, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Has that been pretty well received by the people in your presentation?

Interviewee: It has. At first, no. At first it was like, "No, this doesn't really make sense." I think once when I say, "Oh, we should do this or we should pitch it like this and we should use this video or this graphic or this interactive thing with our argument inside of it," and why that's important. I'm trying to explain that this is gonna work. I think at first no, because not everyone—I mean it's a lot of business things. They're like, "No, we need to have pamphlets and fliers and business cards.

All that stuff is important too, but I am the advocate of the crazy things. I think the crazy kind of gets their attention more. I guess once I've done it one time in a group with a class with a lot of my peers they're like, "Oh yeah, that was good.

We should do”—I think afterwards, after we pitched it once, or my first presentation I guess, I think it’s worked a lot better after that.

Interviewer: Yeah, people are more receptive.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were your professors fairly receptive to it?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think at first they were a lot—they were way more than people in my groups. People in my groups are trying to trust me with all this stuff. The professors are like, “Well I mean it sounds cool if you can do.” I think they were—I mean I had all these grand aspirations of, “Oh, we can do it this way and this way and then maybe people will start doing it too. Maybe our professor will start offering these other components and you can do these projects in other modes.” That quite hasn’t happened.

I think there is, and I think they see the value in it. We have had—we went on a study abroad trip to my sophomore year. We did a video thing when we came back. Kinesiology and sport management showed it to everybody. It was like a very—like, “Oh, we can use these different things to show our experiences to alumni, to donors, things like that.” I think that was a big thing.

I mean there’s a lot of older professors, a lot of research based professors in my department. Research based in that we’re looking at kinetic things and moving and movement, it’s very that related. That’s what valued in sports management and kinesiology and all of that. Yeah, I think we can be better. I think they have, but they haven’t. I think they have accepted, but they haven’t I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it hasn’t been picked up as much as you had hoped?

Interviewee: No, no.

Interviewer: Maybe eventually. They’ll get there, we hope. Thinking a little bit about the Capstone Course, the [Writing] course, which I guess you’ve just now finished.

Interviewee: Yeah, crazy.

Interviewer: What impact has that course had on your writing in general?

Interviewee: My Capstone Course, I think beyond the work in the class—all of this affects my writing, but obviously the work in the class has affected my writing. The people in the class were crazy right, like very different. There was music majors and business school people and psychology people and engineers. It

was a really good group across campus. I was a sport management person, completely different than everyone else. There was a couple English majors.

The way that we kind of were put in the situation and we're taking this Capstone class, and it's a lot of work. It's a lot of resting and revising and repeating and all of that stuff. It was cool that the group was so different and we brought so many different perspectives to the table. I think that was really valuable for my Sweetland Capstone experience as a whole.

I also think that—so I think that affected my writing and then that gave me new perspectives to look at things differently. My project—which I'm sure we're gonna talk about. My project ended up being way in a completely different mode and displayed way differently because a girl that was like—she plays the bass. She's in the music school. She's like, "Oh, I've done this before and you should try this."

It was very kind of push and shove kind of revision. I think that if I didn't have people in the class like that being like, "You should maybe think about this. This would be cool. This would be interesting." I had people that thought like me and were doing the same things as me and were just kind of—not dry, but just kinda doing the thing and going through the motions, my work itself would have been a lot different.

I think my writing and me intellectually as a whole I think was pushed forward because of the people and the different array of measures and backgrounds I guess. That was really cool.

Interviewer: Sounds like you had some really good experiences with the other writers in your course.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Did you have those kinds of experiences all the way through the minor or did that really just sort of happen in the Capstone class?

Interviewee: We had it too in the—we had it in the Gateway course. It's like you start—yeah, you start at the Gateway course and you're taking all these other requirements. You see some of these people in other upper level requirements to complete the minor. You spend a lot of time in the Gateway and the Capstone class. The Gateway, sort of, there was different people and it was a different group. It was a good group.

Even this one was just so very bizarre in a really great way. I don't know, very bizarre people, but great bizarre. Very so much different than what I'm doing and what I'm doing every day and what I'm thinking every day. They had different perspective. It really came to a new level in the Capstone class. The Gateway

class, I think that it happened and there was cool people and there was different, again, people and people from different majors. Yeah, I don't know, the Gateway was crazy, bizarre, really great, but crazy bizarre people.

Interviewer: You mean bizarre from just random places with—

Interviewee: Yeah, from random places. From really interesting backgrounds, just like where they had come and where their families were and what they were doing on campus. We had a girl that was in art design. Part of her project was making these cool movable pieces. She was creating these garments that you put on your body that have electricity with them. She was writing a narrative along with—

Interviewer: That's crazy.

Interviewee: I know. There's that. The girl that played the bass was doing a big, like story timeline of her bass evolution. Her final recital, which was a huge deal for her graduation was the day before the project in Capstone was due. That was her final piece. There was a political science kid that wrote about these two mentors in his life. It was just very cool.

Interviewer: That's very cool.

Interviewee: Very different. Obviously our revision and actual class time was interesting in that people had way different opinions. People were so encouraging in their different opinions. They weren't, "This is the way it should be and you guys are nuts cuz this is what I think." Maybe I'm just very naïve to the whole thing, but I was just like, "I appreciate all of this difference." The group of people I think really made the experience for me, I guess.

Interviewer: That's really cool. That sounds like a really, really interesting experience. Did you have experience like that in any of your other courses where you had such a—

Interviewee: Oh, that's a good question—

Interviewer: - interesting and broad range of experiences and perspectives and projects and that you were able to really—it sounds like you really learned a lot from your peers?

Interviewee: I don't think so. I'm trying to think classes I've taken. Definitely things inside my major, absolutely not. I feel like those are the same people or they feel like the same people for the four years. That community kind of stays together. I think maybe that's the case in my major or other majors. Your community stays together and you do your thing. There's not a lot of reach outside, so I don't think so.

I think I have a ton of respect for people inside my major and out. I think people work really hard and people have stories and people have things they're going through. In the Capstone class I was like, "Oh, these people are so challenging." What they're doing is so different than what I'm doing. What they're doing is very cool in their way, and what can I do to take my project or take what I'm doing to a different level.

No, I don't think at all I had an experience that was the same. Again, I think it's just based on individuals in the class, the people that make up the minor basically. I know they accept—Sweetland accepts from all across campus. I think for me that's what adds to my whole experience, cuz I don't get to interact with those people. I would have never met the people in the art school or the music school, so that was very cool.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. It sounds like the Capstone Project itself was a place where you really were able to learn from other people with other perspectives and expertise in different areas than you had. I'm wondering if you could talk a little more about the effect that the experience of making the Capstone project has had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: [Laughing] Yeah. The project, aside from the portfolio that was kind of all encompassing. The project was really hard. Was really hard in that it—it was supposed to be a semester long project. It started as kind of this investigation into a student athlete's relationship with a coach. I was really curious about what that relationship is like. What is it about a coach or what is it about a student athlete or was it about their connection that sustains for four or five years, and that student athlete wants to fight and fight and fight for that coach.

I think too—just my experience working in athletics and doing this through my college career I'm like, "What is it about this person that they gravitate towards this coach? What's the dynamic like inside a coaching staff," and things like that. It was just this big question about relationships. I didn't know what that was gonna look like

I first thought it was gonna be interviews and I was gonna do a video kinda thing of exploring this and show it visually. As the semester went along I started having this conversation with the people that I wanted to focus on. It kind of evolved from the relationship to who we are as an organization and who we are as people. Why that drives a recruit or drives a student athlete or draws an individual to support us. This is a fan or a donor or whatever.

I'm asking all these questions. I'm like, "I don't know what this is gonna look like." This is not where it started. All of that is this doubt like what am I doing? How am I gonna get this to actually make into something? Then you start writing and you do your thing. You're like, "Hopefully this turns into something okay." I

got into it and the coach that I was working closely with he was like, “***, what are you actually using this for?”

Cuz I approached him like, “Hey, I’m doing this project. I’m gonna pick your brain about things every so often. I would love if I could talk to this person, have access to this.” I kind of explained it to him, like, “Well, it’s kinda changed.” Then he was like, “Let me—can I help? Can I be the—can I talk and you write? Can this be something that I can possibly use as a representation of who we are as a program and who we are as people that you can obviously use for your project, but that I can kind of—cuz this is all—I’ve never sat down and articulated this. I’ve never sat down and down this before, so maybe this can help me grow as a professional and grow as a coach. Maybe this is something that I can look at.” I was like, “You are making this so complicated.”

Interviewer: How interesting that he had such an investment in the project.

Interviewee: He jumped in and he talked and I wrote. It turned out really great. It turned out how—not how I thought it was going to, but I’m happy with kind of the end product. The process itself was difficult because there was so much uncertainty of what is this gonna turn into? I don’t know what this is gonna be. That was probably the beauty of the whole thing.

Again, there’s no requirement that you have to make a website or you have to make a book or you have to write a novella, like you have to do all these things. It’s whatever you want to make it, which sucks and is great at the same time. We wrote and we made this—basically this book-esque thing that really explained who the wrestling team was and who they were as people and what they valued and how they operated day by day basically.

The words in the document itself, just word process was his now. That was his, but I’m still—I felt like I still needed to make something that I was gonna be happy with, physical for the project. I had been saying all semester, “I wanna hold something.” I feel like I need something to be an artifact itself. I need something tangible. It was either gonna be the portfolio or this project, and it turned out to be the project.

I took all that writing, the word process stuff and I put ‘em on really rough pages. I made a book, like a thing you can hold. I scanned ‘em in and then put it in my portfolio. It basically—as crazy as it—a lot of it was his words and me kind of constructing this story with him. The way it was presented and the meaning that I was trying to get out of it was very much me. I wanted the form and the physical aspect and the rough pages to be how I wanted to see it.

Yeah, it was really complicated and really kind of loop-de-doo. I think it was something that was hard and should have been hard. It was supposed to be hard, and it was. It was something that—it was a complete evolution from what we

started with. There's nothing to do with what I started with at the beginning. It was surprising and a good thing that he was kind of invested in what we were doing. I got to have kind of the physical artifact that I—

Interviewer: The tangible thing you wanted?

Interviewee: Yeah, that I was saying at the beginning. I was like, "Oh, I just need to do something where I can hold it." That came to fruition, so that was a good thing.

Interviewer: It's cool. Did it end up being—it sounds like he wanted something he could use to sort of represent his wrestling program. Did it end up being something he felt like he could use?

Interviewee: Yes, it did. My physical version was—well obviously like in the word process version, we cleaned his up and put his in a book. Now it's on all their desks. It's something that they're using as, "This is who we are and this is what we value." The coach that I worked closely with and one of the other assistants, they just kinda sat with me in these meetings and in these brief times.

We were like, "Okay, so this is a story." They just kind of told stories. Like, "This is what we do everyday. This one time when I was a student athlete I really liked this, and I think this is important for our program." I recorded all the interviews. I kind of constructed the manual itself. It's something that they're happy with and using. I was like, "I don't know how this happened. I don't know how this happened from the beginning."

Interviewer: How interesting. Wow. It sounds like a really interesting project. Actually the next thing I'd like us to do is take a look at the ePortfolio, not necessarily the tangible artifact, but the ePortfolio. Let me get you a window here and get the internet rolling. If you could pull it up for us.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Beautiful. Oh, that's nice. Who's the picture of there?

Interviewee: Those are my [relatives].

Interviewer: Oh, how cool.

Interviewee: Yeah, I get into it in my little opening mini essay. The whole portfolio itself is supposed to be around these stories and the importance that I think storytelling is. The photo is—it stays on every page, but the photo is—they always said, "Oh, we tell these stories, but it's not about the storyteller or the story, it's whoever's listening. You ***, you listening to all our stories, that's

what's important in all these narratives," it's whose actually listening to them. That's how I kind of framed the entire thing.

Interviewer: Oh, how interesting.

Interviewee: I did my story. Then I talked about telling stories and why I think that's important. My project was in create Hulu. Then I had other pieces in my actual.

Interviewer: What was your goal for this portfolio, what kind of story were you trying to tell?

Interviewee: I think it came up this way. I'm not sure how it came up. To me, so focusing on this threat of storytelling and why that's important and the fact that I think storytelling is important. I was telling stories about everybody else. This was a portfolio about me, about other people's stories. I know it sounds crazy and it sounds like—my whole opening thing is I need to tell the stories of other people. These are the people that have changed me and affected me.

I wanted the whole portfolio itself to be, yes, it's a reflection of me, but those people that I'm telling the stories of, they are the reflection of me. Those are the people that have helped me and changed me. Their stories are the stories that I value and I think are important, and that is a reflection of me.

The only part about me is the My Story, where I have a little paragraph about things. Like who I am and things that I value. It's very much about other people. I wanted those people to be a reflection of me within the portfolio itself, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: That makes sense. It does. It does. As you were designing this portfolio, how did you design it to get across that narrative to your audience?

Interviewee: I wanted it really clean and really simple. I wanted, not like script detects, but I didn't want anything blocked or dark or things like that. I wanted to go very white. All the photos are black and white, like an oldy kind of book sort of thing. The way I set each piece, so if I was including pieces outside of the project or whatever, I did a little context of why this story was important to me and then I gave a takeaway. I still wanted some reflection in that this—these stories were of other people and why is that important.

My project was just called [title of project]. I basically told the story of this—we wrote it together and it started off as this thing and it turned into this. That's why I called it [title of project]. Cuz it wasn't me. It wasn't him. It wasn't the program. It was everyone kind of contributing to it. That's when—then I had a takeaway for that. Then I had all of my pages scanned in.

Interviewer: Is this what his book looks like too?

Interviewee: No, his is a profess—like a block N and a nice header and a professional book. This is the representation that I—

Interviewer: That you wanted for yourself—

Interviewee: - that I wanted, yeah. I guess designing it, yeah, I wanted it to be clean. I wanted it to be lots of white space, but not a lot of blocky things. I wanted to set it up in a way that you had context to the story. That kind of gave you an avenue to understand why I was telling what I was telling.

Me telling the story about other people, that was the, for you from me. My story is just this tiny little, this is who I am. It's not that important, but it is important because these people are a reflection of me. I wanted to keep it simple. I didn't include a ton of pieces. I included blogs and other things. I wanted it to be simple, but very clean I guess.

Interviewer: Did you notice any relationships among your artifacts as you were pulling this portfolio together?

Interviewee: The whole storytelling thread, I think I kind of knew from the start and had my whole college career that that was something that was important to me and stories are important, and then I say all those things all the time. People, I guess, and the fact that other people have important stories, just as important as my stories, I think that was a thread throughout.

My why I write, which was part of the minor was I write to just tell the story. My developmental essay, talking about my evolution through my writing process basically in college. That was about the—I told a story about swinging and why that relates to my development. Then this was about a guy [name of individual] and this was his story. It's just, I guess stories and the importance of people's stories and the power of people's stories on me, I guess was a thread that I—I only picked things that I thought reflected that throughout.

Interviewer: Do you think that creating this ePortfolio has had an effect on you as a writer or on your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. I think cementing something, like we were always hesitant to show our professor drafts or—cuz this is you. This is supposed to be a reflection of you. I think it was—

Interviewer: It's harder to do isn't it?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's a lot harder to do. I think it kind of forces you to be happy with—I mean things aren't perfect there either. Be happy with who you are as a

writer and the way you're representing yourself because you're making—all these decisions you're making are to reflect who you are. It was difficult in that you had to make decisions to show who you were.

Decisions about you—I can make a portfolio for someone else. I'd be like, "This is so pretty." That doesn't mean as much as making one for you.

Interviewer: Right, right. What did you learn from the reflective writing in the portfolio?

Interviewee: The reflecting writing, obviously we all know or we all say reflecting writing is very important. It is important, but I think I learned from the reflective writing that I don't have to have an ending, I guess. I said that at the beginning of my Capstone class. I've had professors that are like, "****, you get to the end and you try to give us this big conclusion and this big ending to something, but you haven't really earned the ending in the argument. Or you haven't really got there in the paper. Or the essay hasn't—you haven't built it enough that you can really give us the ending and it all makes sense."

It's okay if you don't have an ending. Sometimes I think I need to force an ending or I need to create something. I think the reflective writing in setting these things up, so getting the context and saying what I'm taking away from them and my process of it. Even the why I write and developmental things are very reflective.

I don't have to have an ending. The whole you've come—you started here and you're now here is enough. You don't have to have this bookend of a conclusion.

Interviewer: I was wondering if you could say a little bit about what you think that people who are interesting in writing development, so people like the program administrators at Sweetland, people like me who teach writing and research writing, could learn about writing development from your portfolio?

Interviewee: Hmm, that's a good question. What could you learn about writing development? I think maybe—it might sound a little cliché, but writing development I think starts with the person, and I think too often times in academic writing you are making sure you are developing. There's lots of like, "You gotta be moving forward. You have to be making your arguments more complex as you go through your courses. You have to get to that place."

Yes, that's important. My ideas, and my ideas in that [upper level English course] class when I had no idea that it was okay to write this way and these topics, these controversial topics in culture and otherwise they—people can make a meaning and can give you an idea about this topic. I think me, intellectually ***, have come extremely far. My writing has come really far. I think it started with me. It started with me as a person.

You as a person have to understand that it's important to develop and it's important to evolve and it's important to grow. It's more than just the writing. It's my opinion and my idea. I will give you my opinion now. I will tell you my ideas. I will tell you why idea is important and why it's backed up by A, B and C. Because I think I can sit and I can write about it.

I feel like I as a person can tell you that this is important because my writing has developed and because my—I don't know, intellectual capacity to actually form these ideas and to sit down and write them has evolved. I think beyond writing development, I think it's human development, as weird as that is.

Interviewer: No, it makes perfect sense to me, makes perfect sense. As we're thinking about that development, let's think back to the Gateway course. I was wondering if you could reflect on how your experience in the Capstone course compares to your experiences in the Gateway course?

Interviewee: My experiences in the gateway—I liked my Gateway course a lot. I guess the main thing experience wise is the format of both courses. The people obviously in both were great. The people in my Gateway course were a little more similar, and people in my Capstone were different, so more personality and more diversity I guess in that way.

The way it was set up and the work we did and the way we went about that work with the professor, I think was different. In the Gateway it was more you had to take something, you had to remediate it and you had to do all these steps to it. There was more assignment'y, kind of in that way. Whereas in the Capstone it was very free. You had to hit lots of deadlines and you had to do lots of reviews and peer reviews and all of those things.

I don't think I wasted time in the Gateway. I wasn't wasting my time doing little assignments. The Capstone felt like I could develop more, like I could push myself more because I wasn't worried about completing these tasks like the Gateway. I guess experience and work wise, just the way they were set up. The things you had to complete in the Gateway class, there was more little things you had to do.

In the Capstone, it was harder because there was this huge thing you had to do. You had to hit all these things along the way. It was—I don't know, it was more freeing to be able to actually develop.

Interviewer: Both the Gateway and the Capstone course emphasized reflective writing in different ways. How would you describe your experience with that reflection? I know we talked a little bit about how the components integrate into this portfolio. In general, how would you describe your experience with reflection in both Gateway and Capstone courses?

Interviewee: [Laughing] I think in the Gateway they push it on you a lot. Like, “Reflective writing is important.” You’re not really sure what reflective writing is when you first get in there because you’re like, “I’m just getting my feet wet in the Sweetland lingo.” Then you start hearing it more and more. You’re like, “Oh, I guess this is something I should be doing.” You’re not really sure if you’re doing it right, you’re reflecting right. Am I reflecting enough? Am I reflecting about me reflecting enough.

It’s hard to know what is happening cuz you’re just—you just feel like you’re talking a lot. You understand that it’s important in the Gateway class. In the Capstone, again, you have a lot more autonomy. You have a lot more independence in that it’s stressed that you should reflect and reflecting is important. I’m gonna reflect about what I need to reflect about. I think that in the Capstone it was a better experience with reflective writing.

I got more out of reflective writing because I did mini assignments or I did other things kind of branching off from my project and other essays because I knew I needed more time to think about this. I knew I needed to think about this, this and this. When you’re writing reflectively and you’re brainstorming these kinds of things, you get to your conclusion so much faster. You’re like, “Oh, I was thinking this, and I just didn’t know that this was something that need to happen.”

I think just the autonomy and knowing that you’re in the driver’s seat in the Capstone. I don’t know if I needed that or if that would have been beneficial in the Gateway. In the Gateway it was just like, “You have to have three pieces of reflective writing for each assignment and da-da-da-da. It’s important that reflective writing”—and it is important.

I just really didn’t get that I could use it. I got that I needed to do it and that it was gonna help understand me in some way, for me or for readers or for who. Yeah, I think I understood in the Capstone that I could use it, and it could help me step forward in whatever I was doing.

Interviewer: That sounds really important. Has this reflection given you new ways to talk about your writings or new concepts or terms?

Interviewee: [Laughing] Yeah, I think so. I think it put things into perspective more. You can articulate things better. Yeah, we make jokes all the time like we’re writing about writing about thinking about writing. Like you’re going and going, and we’re just joking about it. You feel like because you’ve gone through the steps and you have done those things, you know what your idea is. You know what you’re trying to go for. You know the way to get there.

Maybe part of the reflection is you don’t know what this means or you don’t know what your argument is trying to go for here. You branch off and you’re

doing your research in that area. Yeah, I think you just get better about knowing what you're talking about with the reflection.

Interviewer: Sounds really useful to me. I know you were mentioning a couple of things that were helpful and things that you weren't quite as certain about when they happened in the Gateway course.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: As you know the minor is still pretty new, relatively new.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Are there any suggestions you would have for instructors or administrators as we're thinking about the minor?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I think that—this isn't really an instruction, it's just a, "Yeah, yeah." The gamification of it all and the points and you get your grade based on the points. I think that's huge and really important and really beneficial for every student, because there's not this pressure over your head to perform in a certain way, so that you can achieve this letter grade. That I think is really good and a big addition.

That happened, I think when I—my Gateway course is the first time they implemented these points. That's how you kind of base your grade off of. Suggestions. I don't think so. I think things in the minor—in the Gateway course. They weren't bad by any means, I'm sure they were—I know they were useful and going through different steps of remediation or repurposing was important.

I just kind of wish that at the end of the Gateway course—and I'm not really sure, I don't have any ideas of how to do this. At the end of the Gateway course I felt like that this was—yes, this was useful for my writing and my development and I was taking steps forward in my writing development. This was useful in either my professional world or my career development or things like that.

Sometimes in the Gateway I felt like I was doing those assignments to—I was doing them for the minor and I was taking something and I was working with it over and over again, but I didn't have anything to show for it at the end. Sure, I've developed and I've become better. I can articulate things better. My reflective writing has helped me in that way.

Whereas in the Capstone class I feel like I have something to show for it. I have something that I'm really proud of. I have something that was very me driven, and each person, it had to be you driven. You developed, but you also felt like you had this thing or had something that was constructive for your career or life beyond these four years, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, makes perfect sense.

Interviewee: At the end of the Gateway I feel like I just didn't have something that I could be like, "Oh, I did all this for this." Yes, I've developed, but I've just kind of done this—not make believe—

Interviewer: You want something to show for it.

Interviewee: Yeah, the remediation thing, that I kind of felt like this little make believe thing that we're practicing. We're practicing on these assignments, and we haven't really done the thing yet. Which maybe the Capstone is set up to do the thing, and that's the way the evolution should go maybe. I just kinda felt like I needed something at the end—

Interviewer: You wanted something to show for it. That makes a lot of sense to me. That seems reasonable. More generally what do you think instructors or professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: [Laughing] Yeah, that's a loaded question too. I think that the way we teach writing or the way—it's hard to teach writing. I get it. It is hard to teach people how to write or to write well or all of those things. It should be more of—it's happened really well for me and with a couple different professors. I think it's, I guess, my only thing is I think it should be done by example. It should be done by—give me something that you think is good writing.

Give me a person or give me a piece of writing that this is good writing, and this is a really good example of how you develop this. I just had the one professor in the [title of course] that did that. Everybody else was like, "This is the structure. This is how you do it. You have to pick up a topic and then we'll revise." Well you're revising with—revision is important, I know that.

Beyond it all I want—yeah, I want inspiring things to read. I want inspiring things that are gonna inspire me to write well in my area or in a different area. Even if it's not—I mean we write all these medical things or this guy going into surgery, and he was just describing the surgery. It was very cool. It was very cool to read, and he was a really good writer and he had won a Nobel Peace Prize and he had been this huge doctor.

Give me those kind of stories or those kind of people that do write well and write powerful things, then I will kind of be able to go. I think examples and things like that are important. Whereas structure and giving me an A minus because I didn't follow this step is just discouraging. It's hard, I'm sure, at any university or any department to get around that.

Instead of being a subjective—I mean it's subjective no matter what way you look at it. Instead of being a totally subjective thing, give me a piece that you feel like is written really well in some form of something. I will be able to try to push my writing development, to get to a place where then I can create something that it's also well written.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. Do you have any other comments or anything else you'd like to add?

Interviewee: I don't think so, no. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you again so much.

Interviewee: Oh, you're welcome.

Interviewer: I really appreciate you meeting with me and sharing your experiences.

[End of Audio]