

Interviewer: Okay, I'm \*\*\* and I'm interviewing \*\*\* on Friday, April 26th. We're at the Sweetland Writing Center, and \*\*\*, thank you for coming down and congratulations again—

Interviewee: Thanks.

Interviewer: - on graduating, yeah. Just to give you an overview of the questions for this round of interviews, we'll start with a couple general questions about how you see yourself as a writer. These probably will sound familiar to your earlier interview. We'll talk a little bit about any upper level writing classes you took outside of the minor. Then, we'll talk about your experience in the Capstone course, comparing it to the Gateway course. We'll look at your portfolio.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Just starting very generally, here we are at the end. How would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would say I'm a diverse writer, but I've also learned to find the style that I like for writing. I've catered every assignment to my own interests. That really became possible with the Capstone course when we got to choose our own projects. I went back and saw what writing I've liked from other classes and did that for that project.

Interviewer: Okay, and when you say diverse, how do you think of that?

Interviewee: I guess I can mold my style to any different venue or audience and purpose for what I'm writing. If it's a research academic paper, I know to be more formal in tone and to cite studies. If I'm doing a creative, non-fiction piece, I can put my voice into more and have my personality show through.

Interviewer: That's great. Thinking about to four years or more, when you first arrived here—

Interviewee: Four, yeah.

Interviewer: Congratulations.

Interviewee: Yep.

Interviewer: If you think back to when you first came to the [University of Michigan], how would you think you've changed as a writer over the last four years?

Interviewee: I guess I wasn't as confident as a writer when I first started. I was used to a structure from high school; so a thesis and the three value paragraphs and a conclusion. It was that was it. I didn't wanna get away from that when I was comfortable with.

Then, in my [English] course, we tried out new things. That wasn't really my favorite class, and I don't think my writing developed that greatly in that course. Since then, once I've done more communications papers and different English classes, I think I've, as the years have gone on, and I've done also outside work for internships, that has helped me grow as a writer.

Interviewer: I was gonna say, do you think it's the idea of those other classes or the other experiences that made you more confident because you began my saying you weren't sure you were that confident as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. I also think through internships that I've had published work online and in print. I think that's really helped me see that, "Wow, I'm actually a good writer." Just to see that stuff and know that people were hiring me to do writing work for them. That was really cool.

Interviewer: I'm sure, and the process of going through publication working with your editors or the folks on the job probably shifts your view of it. I think so. As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: My goals are to continue writing. I always like to highlight my writing skills whenever I'm applying for jobs. I'd like to do marketing or PR, and both of those involve a lot of writing. Press releases, pitching to the media, making presentations, and then, like internal communications with the company. I feel like writing will be a strong thing in whatever I end up doing.

Interviewer: In that setting, how do you talk about yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would say organized, detail oriented, trying to sell a product in some instances. You've gotta figure out, as I mentioned before, how to best connect to the audience, and relate what you have to their interest.

Then, the diversity comes into play because there'll be different platforms and different audiences that you're trying to speak to. That would be helpful if I'd had work doing different forms before.

Interviewer: That's great. Thinking about your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan] and across classes, and you started in this direction just a few moments ago, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: For here, I think most of the academic papers, to write well means to follow the rubric and the guidelines. In certain instances, I feel like for the communications academic research papers, they have a very strict set. Although it's different than in high school, and that is the structure isn't as defined. However, they say, "You must cite the literature of eight different authors. You must do this," and that prevents creativity from shining through in writing.

However, for something like the Capstone project, when we had no guidelines really, it was just do a project, and then we kind of molded our own rubric and our own guidelines. We were the ones who defined what it meant to write well, which was cool.

Interviewer: In that different setting then, when you didn't have as specific an assignment or guidelines, how did you interpret what it meant to do that project well?

Interviewee: I guess getting your full point across. Also, they always emphasize developing a story. You need an arc to whatever you're doing. Then, also what I struggle the most with is the "so what" of your writing. You need to take it to a further level and what does this mean? You're not just writing about whatever it is on the surface, but what's the deeper meaning or purpose of what you're doing.

Interviewer: Right. That makes sense. The next few questions are about any upper level writing classes you took outside of the Capstone course, which we'll talk about in a minute. Were there upper writing level courses?

Interviewee: I took some communications ones, and I think psychology. It's hard to remember everything that applied.

Interviewer: Okay, and they were writing specific?

Interviewee: Yeah, upper level writing.

Interviewer: Okay, can you talk a little about your experience in those courses?

Interviewee: Yeah, the psychology one was, well, I'm not sure if this applied, but we did a writing paper. It was, we had to do a research study and conduct it. I've actually done multiple papers like that for different classes. You have the methods, the procedure, conclusion. I don't, since I don't like research, I'm not sure that that was—it was boring for me and time consuming and not really fun to do. I've heard a lot of the classes here make people do those papers.

Then, I've also done—so just the research, you pick a point. You're trying to prove your point. I don't recall if this was for upper level either, but I've done, it's on my portfolio, [name of portfolio].

Interviewer: That's interesting. Is that in the psychology course or in communications—

Interviewee: That was in communications course, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting.

Interviewee: That was a research paper, too, but I got to pick my own topic and everything. That was cool. It wasn't just based on a study that a researcher had already done. It was me developing what I would wanna do.

Interviewer: Interesting. Do you think that the effect of the writing of those classes influenced you as a writer in any broader way? Do they shift your view of writing or your sense of style, approach?

Interviewee: Not really. I feel like my first few years in college, it was more, "This is what you're writing. This is what you have to do." As I've gotten my junior and senior, mostly senior year, I've been able—all of my papers from my classes have been a lot more fun.

I'm doing a journalism piece in a communications class and then, the Capstone project. I don't know. I wouldn't say they really molded me as a writer, but it's just cool to compare and contrast what I'm getting to write about this year, whereas what I had to write about in the other courses.

Interviewer: When you're talking about other courses, are you thinking about the entry level [English course], or?

Interviewee: That one and just also the communications—

Interviewer: Earlier communic—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

Interviewee: Cuz I would say those are the big writing classes that I've had. There's a lot of writing in communications.

Interviewer: Okay, this next question actually picks up that. Your concentration area is communications—

Interviewee: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: - just to reiterate. The question is did you take writing courses in your concentration? You already addressed that.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: The question is whether that affected the writing you do in your concentration? I think the question is trying to get at this idea of having writing courses in communications, did that influence how you see yourself in that world or in that profession?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I would say the communications program is very research based here, not very real world applicable. A lot of the writing they're having us do is just the

research type stuff. Whereas I would have like to see some PR, more journalism incorporated, more marketing, which I've taken classes through the business school. I've gotten a different type of writing there.

It's more presentation based. We got to put together a campaign plans book, which is very impressive to people, when I'm applying for jobs. That writing was actually really cool, better than the communications writing I would say.

Interviewer: In some ways, that influenced your thinking about the field you're interested in and maybe more so than the writing actually in the concentration?

Interviewee: Yeah, cause I could actually see a direct relation between what I was writing there, and how that could help me in the future. I think thinking about your future, your career plans, is always on the mind somehow.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: When you don't see a purpose for the assignments, it's—I don't think you put as much, your heart, or passion, or time, or energy into it.

Interviewer: As you're graduating, how confident do you feel writing in your concentration area, whether from those courses at Ross [school of business at the University of Michigan], or the more research style?

Interviewee: I feel very confident mostly due to internships though, not necessarily what I've learned here. I guess the Ross courses would have been the most helpful out of what I've done here. Then, I've done blogging, social media writing, which is very, very valuable for what I wanna go into so I—

Interviewer: Through the internships or independently?

Interviewee: Through the internships, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, and what internship work were you doing?

Interviewee: A lot of them were college magazines online—

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: - and I've done writing, different articles. I've had to interview people. Then, the marketing side has come in. You have to market your post and use social media. I've also done newsletter writing; so that stuff has all been good.

I feel like if I wouldn't have done any of these internships during college, I wouldn't have been as marketable for a job, just due to the courses.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Last question is this area is also thinking about the writing classes specifically. The question is how often you use skills or strategies from these writing classes in other courses?

Interviewee: The one skill that I've actually picked up in the Gateway course was self-reflective comments. That's just writing, going through your paper and putting, inserting a comment and writing a question you have or something that you're not sure if it's working. That's just really, really helped me to define where I'm struggling in my papers.

Then, also if I have a peer or a professor look at my paper, I know exactly what areas I want them to address; so that's been really helpful.

Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting. That's something that hasn't been assigned in other courses—

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: - but you've carried that over?

Interviewee: I've used that, yeah, in other classes, so anytime I write a paper. I hadn't done that prior to the Gateway course. Now, I'll go through cuz sometimes it's hard when you're just reading over. You're not really sure what you wanna change, but then I'll read it and say, "Oh, does that make sense," or, "Is this the proper word to use," and just, I'll put about 20 to 30 comments in a paper and just go back through and address those.

Interviewer: That's great. The next few questions are about the writing and particularly, the Capstone course actually. Did you just finish it this semester?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, great. The question is broad to begin with. It's what impact the minor Capstone course had overall in your writing?

Interviewee: The freedom to write what I want and also, since there weren't guidelines, it was just sometimes I like a set guideline just cuz that's how we've been trained here at U of M [University of Michigan], to follow order. It just made me figure out that I had to do things for myself, which I think will be helpful as I graduate because they may not give me direction for every project. I may have to just pick something and go with it, even if I'm not certain that that's how they would have done it.

Interviewer: No, that's a fair point. Do you think that that freedom has shifted your thinking about yourself as a writer in any way, the freedom to make those choices?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. Also, I'm doing a personal memoir. It's creative non-fiction. I decided to do that due to an English course I took last semester. It was one of the requirements for the minor. I think that's really changed me, too, cuz I've always

thought to write a book someday. I think that style was very different from even the blogging I've done or the, I don't know, social media posting. That just made me think a little differently, and that was fun.

Interviewer: That's interesting. What was the English course?

Interviewee: It was [English course] I believe, [...]. It was personal narrative.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah, we probably should talk about that for a minute cuz my guess is that will count as one of those upper level writing courses.

Interviewee: Yeah, that probably is.

Interviewer: Okay, and what were your experiences there where you began this work on the creative non-fiction?

Interviewee: Well, we had to do three essays—

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: - three personal narratives: one about a person, one about a place, and one about a fear. As I was writing those, I just learned the methods of creative non-fiction: the dialogue, the direct scene, and all of that. If I hadn't taken that course, I would have never thought to do the memoir in the Capstone class.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: I really enjoyed that writing style; so I decided to that for my Capstone project.

Interviewer: That's great. This is related to that. The last question in this section is about what effect the experience of the project has had on your sense of yourself as a writer. You're starting to talk about that, just as choice to do creative non-fiction, right?

Interviewee: It's opened up my eyes just to—it's therapeutic to do creative non-fiction. I always am telling people about my life, my life story. I feel like it's fun to write those down. Then, as I mentioned before, I have this plan to write a book. I feel like if I end up doing marketing or PR, I could do work on a book as a hobby on the side, and take some of the stories I wrote about in this memoir, and expand upon them, and make it into a longer book.

Interviewer: Yeah, no, that's a great idea. Why don't we take a look at the portfolio? Now I'm excited to see it. It sounds great.

Interviewee: [inaudible 0:15:32]

Interviewer: I'll need you to pull it up, but let me get outta my—so let me. Sorry it's so tight. Do you have room to work here?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I think so. I hope it shows up because I always—it just pops up on my browser.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Can you walk me through just a little of what I'm looking at?

Interviewee: Yeah, how do I scroll down on this, just that?

Interviewer: Yeah, sure.

Interviewee: Okay. This is the homepage and I wanted to open it up, introducing who I am, and what my portfolio's about; so people know how to read it. I chose the [color] because that's my personality and [title of portfolio] is actually what my Gateway one was called as well.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It just kinda—

Interviewer: When you reference, this is just for people listening to the transcript later, but when you reference [title of portfolio], that's the title of your portfolio page.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Right. Yep. Okay, and then here's my About section. I just wanted to make it fun, the basics, best traits, experience. When I'm not writing, this is just getting to know more aside from just my writing. Then, I included [personal information], things that are important to me, just so they could see into my life.

Then, I have [personal social media page], which is, I play on words, Twitter feed, since I do a lot of social media work. I chose a couple stories to highlight. They scroll back and forth with an image. It's a little slow, and then you can also arrow through. I really liked how this looked. I thought it looked professional and cool.

Then, here on the [personal social media page], you'll see a blurb of each thing and a small, and then you click to continue. This is just all of the reading or the writing pieces.

Interviewer: These are your assembled portfolio pieces?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: As we're looking at this, can you talk just a bit about what was the most memorable aspect of putting the portfolio together?

Interviewee: Memorable? I don't know if I have anything that's memorable. I guess it was very, very time consuming, and figuring out how I was gonna do it. Let me just tell



you this real quick. All the writings here, however, if you wanna see just the academic writing, you click Academic Writing. It's a lot more organized and easier to see. Then, this is more about the academic writing. Then, you can view the pieces from there.

I guess it was cool just to put everything together and you get to pick and choose what pieces to include. I noticed a theme between each of 'em. I mentioned some of my papers I wrote about the media industry. Like in the communications papers, what is the magazine like? What's the future of the tablet market? Then, I also have professional writing articles from actual online magazines. I'm tying together my academic work and my outside of schoolwork—

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: - which is really cool. Yeah, and so I have professional. Then, I also choose, I did multimedia work for a bunch of classes here. I figured I would highlight those. I've had to create websites. I think is probably my 20th WordPress [content management system] blog I've made. Whereas most of the kids in our class were hating portfolios and not into it, I was like, "This is my thing. I could get paid to make portfolios. This is what I do." I think it was a different experience for me, than most of the kids in the class just cuz they haven't had the outside internship and WordPress work that I've had.

Interviewer: Did you have particular goals for the portfolio, or did you imagine a use for it beyond the classroom course?

Interviewee: Yeah, I originally had thought I'm gonna make this for employers. However, I don't know if you wanna see it? I made one over the summer. I completely revamped my Gateway portfolio.

Interviewer: Oh, sure, yeah.

Interviewee: I intended on using this for my Capstone. I thought, "Okay, I've got my work done. I've done it." It's similar. There's some things I've translated over from that one to this one, but this one is more focused on my career goals. Whereas the other one, so it has—it does have academic writing, social media, but this is just set up differently, whereas the Capstone one is specific. The reflection element, I didn't really wanna include in my professional one—

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: - that much so I ended up making two different ones just so their purposes were more specific. Cuz I saw that it was hard to incorporate whatever the Capstone portfolio needed, and keep it specific for what I would want an employer to see. I have two, which similar, but this one I guess I would say is a little bit more professional.

Interviewer: This other—

Interviewee: This other one—

Interviewer: - ended up being the Capstone is a little more personal.

Interviewee: Yeah, more personal, more fun, and also shows more of my writing cuz that's what was required I guess, but yeah. Certain things so I made a—my brother has a beer pong table business. I made a website for that, and that's something I'm not sure an employer might wanna see, but I included that—

Interviewer: Or maybe.

Interviewee: Maybe, actually they might think it's cool, but so I included that on here.

Interviewer: That's great. You talked a moment ago about your own comfort creating, working with new media, working with—especially setting up blogs, that you've done it a lot. As you were assembling this, were there certain design elements or aspects of the fact it was in digital form that helped you think about, “Okay, I want the reader to have this experience”?

Interviewee: Well, I knew, so for the writing feed thing, I knew I wanted the scrolling, and I would have hoped to have that on my home page with my about, but since there's things with WordPress [content management system], they just can't do unless you pay for it.

Interviewer: Oh, right.

Interviewee: Also, I knew I wanted [color], cuz that's who I am, but this [color], it wouldn't let me change. Then, if you change your theme too far along, your whole portfolio gets messed up. I figured I'll just stick with that. Then, I would have liked the font to be larger here, but you learn that there's restrictions to the different platforms you're using. To get away from that I decided to do the bold intros in [color], presenting what each thing is, just to keep with the theme and color scheme.

Interviewer: Thinking about a little bit about the artifacts you ended up assembling to this, and that was one of the terms you used in the class, am I correct?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Did you notice any relationships among those artifacts as you were assembling? Did you start noticing patterns?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I mentioned that earlier. Academic Writing, I have a communications piece about—[name of piece]. This one was all about the tablet magazine industry. Then, you can see that translating into my real world work. I've chosen to include an article I've written for an actual magazine, [title of magazine].

There's a relationship between that, and then also there's a lot of creative non-fiction pieces that I decided to use.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: I used a piece from that English class, [English course], [title of English paper]. Then, I realized that even though I wasn't too proud of it, my [English course], [title of different English paper], this was a creative non-fiction piece about cooking. Then, I actually have an entire section in my memoir that's about how I'm not a very good cook. I did end up seeing a relationship between what I chose to write about and what I had in there.

Interviewer: Are those relationships you would expect the reader to also notice based on the way you've assembled?

Interviewee: I'm hoping so, yeah. I also may have mentioned it a little bit in my homepage. I describe, yeah, I—cuz they said they guide the reader, which I do think is helpful cuz these are overwhelming. I don't think people would be looking at everything if they just came to my site.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure. The next question is about whether you think just a creation of this portfolio has had effect on your writing overall?

Interviewee: I think so cuz it's forced me to see what's most important, what I need to highlight. For the writing feed, how I have a little blurb on each thing, that's the takeaway. This is supposed to draw the reader in, like, "Okay, what is this about? If you care more about it after reading this, then you'll go on to read it." This is something I've learned through various internships. You have to pick out a headline or a teaser to get people to continue reading, or the Twitter, the short blurb, and see if people wanna keep reading.

Interviewer: I did wanna ask about the reflective writing. I see that we're just kinda scrolling through here. I don't have to pull it out particular, but one of the questions is what did you learn specifically from the reflective aspect of composing this?

Interviewee: I guess it's interesting cuz sometimes you'll just do an assignment. Turn it in. You won't think about it, and the reflection forces you to see who you are as a writer and what kind of writing style you have.

I guess I do see a relationship between what I do, and I don't know if I can pinpoint that. I guess the words that I tend to use, the sentence structures I use are similar. That's just as you write, you get comfortable with a certain style and you stick with that.

Interviewer: You feel like you're noticing it more—

Interviewee: Through the reflections.

Interviewer: - the reflections?

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say. Then, I chose reflective pieces that I had done in other classes. That was just interesting to see how I reflect on it, cuz it helped me see what I worked on differently now so if I would have redone the project or had more time or something like that.

Interviewer: Thinking a little more broadly about the minor generally. Of course, you know it's a relatively new program at [the University of Michigan]. Some of the questions are for the folks administering it. How can we make it better? What should we be thinking about? Still thinking about the portfolio, are there aspects of this that you think a program administrator looking at this could learn about writing development from looking at the kind of work students are assembling?

Interviewee: I guess looking at our introduction to our portfolios. That would be helpful. Also—

Interviewer: Because of guiding?

Interviewee: Yeah, guiding and seeing what we pinpoint as most important would be helpful for them to view.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Also, these are all very different. I'm assuming cuz whatever people are choosing to look at, but I guess just noticing the different artifacts we choose. I think even the reflection or the little introductions we've done to our pieces could help them see how we think about writing and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, that point about choice is interesting. I think there's, I'm sure, something to take away just by the varied choices, the themes that they're gonna see develop.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Good. Thinking a bit about the minor more broadly still, the next few questions are interested in your thinking about from the Gateway class to the Capstone class. The question is how did your experiences in the Capstone course compare to the experiences in the Gateway course?

Interviewee: They were similar. However, in the Capstone course, we basically did work days every day, which was very valuable when you're in five different classes, internships, extracurriculars. You really don't have time to be doing, putting all this effort into these projects outside of the classroom.

I think that was very valuable in a really smart choice that they ended up changing the Capstone to being a workday. That way we could also ask for help if we were, either from our peers or a teacher if we were sitting there, and we were struggling on something.

Interviewer: You mentioned a change; so did the class start with a different format?

Interviewee: Yeah, we originally, he had assigned us readings, and we would do the readings outside of class, blog about them, and discuss the readings in class. That only lasted for a couple weeks. Then, I don't know, one of the students suggested the workdays. He ended up making the readings optional. I don't know. There was just a whole transformation.

However, we had a point system. I'm not sure if you're familiar with that or the people hearing this are. I had never seen a point system; so that was a little different. I wouldn't necessarily recommend it.

Interviewer: This was for your final evaluation, points?

Interviewee: This was for the entire class, so for, yeah. I guess there's not an A, B, C based on quality of work. It was more we got points based on word count. You needed, if you wanted an A, you needed, I think it was 3,000 or over points. If you wanted a B, it was this amount. You got points for working on your project, your portfolio, reflection, and then there are also mini assignments that you could do.

His idea was for the mini assignments to help us with our portfolio and our project, but they didn't necessarily fit. I found myself doing a random mini assignment just so I could get those points, which wasn't very beneficial to me. I don't know and I feel like I'm not sure. I think it's all on word count, not on quality of writing, which is a little different. That's not how most, how you're graded in most courses. It'll be interesting to see how the points play out, but I wouldn't recommend doing that again. Also—

Interviewer: Because?

Interviewee: Because I think we should be graded for our quality and our talents as a writer and not just, "Okay, I wrote 3,000—

Interviewer: For doing it.

Interviewee: - words today. I did this assignment. I don't care about how good it was. It's just this many words." Also, if they are going to stick with the points, it needs to be a lot more organized and a lot more structured, because there was this long list of points on the syllabus. Then, it said points here.

You didn't know how many points was worth what. None of us kept track throughout the year. Then, at the end, we had to go through all of our writing and try to figure out what

this fit with. It just wasn't clear at all, the guidelines. If you're gonna do that, it needs to be a lot more centralized. This is how you do points, and every week you add them up, and you all have the same spreadsheet.

Interviewer: So people can see where they're at.

Interviewee: Yeah, more streamlined, yeah.

Interviewer: I think that'll be helpful feedback for them.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Still thinking about just writing experiences in those two courses, were there other things that stood out? You talked a bit about how they were structured.

Interviewee: We did a lot more mini writing things in the Gateway course, where we would read, talk about the reading. Then, there we had our remediation and a repurposing, which was really interesting. I had never done anything like that.

We took a piece of writing. Then, we did it for a new purpose. I took an academic paper, and turned it into a magazine article since that was what I like. Then, a remediation, so a new form of media; so I took that piece and turned it into a website, which I'm not sure I included on here, but I don't know if you wanna take a look at it.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It's pretty cool. Yeah, that was really fun. So I guess we had more projects that we've done in this one, than we've done in the other.

Interviewer: More projects in the Gateway?

Interviewee: In the Capstone.

Interviewer: In the Capstone, I'm sorry.

Interviewee: Because we had three papers, whereas in this one, we only had the one main project, which—

Interviewer: The remediation or repurposing?

Interviewee: I can't find it, but anyways it was a website that I created based on the paper.

Interviewer: One of the questions was what differences you see between the Gateway and Capstone portfolios. You've talked a bit about that there was more—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - work done in the Capstone.

Interviewee: Yes, so I guess this essentially was my—well, no, it was all different. I deleted it, and it's disappeared now.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Interviewee: Since I had still had a lot of experience with WordPress [content management system] even in the Gateway—

Interviewer: At that point.

Interviewee: - course at that point, yeah, so I took what I've learned from other viewing other websites, working on other websites. I incorporated what I thought was cool. I always like to do tabs on the top so I kept that the same.

I guess I don't recall—I guess they didn't have as many strict things so I just included a bunch more work in that one; whereas for the Capstone portfolio, there's less work. I had to be more selective about what I was putting on there.

Also, there's more—well, I did the reflection differently. In the Gateway course I did reflection as comments. I pretended like I was an outside reader and I commented, but I didn't really like that. I'd like to see actual people commenting; so I ended up doing a whole reflection element. It's actually been interesting. People are viewing my portfolio, or I'm getting emails about people liking certain posts on this writing portfolio, which is interesting cuz random people are searching it I guess and finding me.

Interviewer: That's good.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: A question about working with other writers, so across the minor: what were your experiences like working with other students?

Interviewee: I thought it was really fun. We did peer workshops a couple times. We would email each other our papers, read them. I would do the comments for them, like I do for my own papers. Then, we would discuss the work and it was just fun to see how different everyone's projects were.

Then, there was one girl that I worked with a few times who was also doing a creative non-fiction piece. We played ideas off of each other. It was nice to pair up with people who were doing similar things and different. You could help each other and then also it's just—it's interesting to see what other writers are doing.

Interviewer: Was that true in both classes? Was it structured similarly?

Interviewee: Yeah, that was very true in both classes. I feel like we got closer in the Gateway course with our groups because we would sit with them every week and not as much individual work time, more workshopping and group work time. We really got to know each other's projects.

It was cool to see how they got better from the start of the semester to the end in the Gateway course. Whereas, this course, we're switching up, and I haven't seen a project from start to finish.

Interviewer: Okay, did you find that the peer workshops helped your own writing, gave you feedback that was useful?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Some of them did. I think it just depends on how much people are gonna do, but certain students really took the time to write me effective critiques, and I took that into consideration when I was reworking my essays. That was really helpful.

Interviewer: A question about reflective writing, obviously both classes emphasize it in various forms, and the question is how would you describe with this kind of reflection or reflective writing? I know you talked about this a bit in reference that you even still use it in other kinds of writing.

Interviewee: Yes, I would say the self-reflective comments are my main form cuz sometimes I am like, "Okay, this essay's done. I don't wanna reflect on it. What's the point? It's already turned in."

I think in-process reflection is more beneficial to me, reflecting as I'm writing. That helps me to improve as a writer. Whereas, the reflection afterward is just, "Okay. Here's this. Maybe next time, when you're writing, try doing this a little differently." I do notice when I reflect that I don't do a whole lot of—well, I do brainstorming, but not a whole lot of outlining, which sometimes I've noticed. It might be more beneficial because I have to sometimes make an outline out of a draft. I mean it's kind of a backwards step. I've learned through reflection that it might be helpful to do that outline, and then the draft.

Interviewer: [inaudible 0:36:47] Has the reflection given you a new way to think or talk about your own writing, language that maybe you—

Interviewee: Look at it.

Interviewer: - wouldn't have applied before?

Interviewee: Let's see. Well, this was actually really cool. This was one of the mini assignments that I did find helpful.

Interviewer: It was from Gateway or?



Interviewee: This is Capstone. It was to draw out your writing process. For visual learners, and I'm really creative; so I thought this was fun. I guess this helped me to see how I write. This was very helpful to me. I don't know if there's any new words, but then we had to discuss what our picture was like and see, three people liked it. Random people are liking my posts.

Interviewer: Those are not classmates?

Interviewee: Those are not, no. They're just people that are into writing portfolios I guess. Yeah, so that was just one instance.

Interviewer: It really does, the portfolio looks really good. It looks great. Just a couple questions left about feedback for the folks running the minor, the writing minor. Obviously, it's still relatively new. Are there suggestions you would have for the instructors or administrators as they're thinking about what it should like, be like, feel like?

Interviewee: Well, I already discussed the point thing a lot.

Interviewer: Right, and that's the evaluation system that was just for the Capstone.

Interviewee: Yes, mm-hmm. We did something else different for the Gateway. I don't recall. It wasn't traditional either, but I would say streamline the two so it's the same grading in each so you're—

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: - I don't know; so you know what you're doing. Then, my suggestion for the Capstone course, we were brainstorming at one meeting last year, was to have people find a professional in the field they're interested in. Be their mentor through writing. For example, now it's marketing. Originally, it was journalism for me. I had that to do, to find a magazine editor or writer to be my mentor all throughout the writing minor.

I would use them, maybe they could give me some projects to work on. They could give feedback. Then, if someone's interested in law, they could have a lawyer be their mentor. That would be a way, since we're all very different, and we all have different interests and career plans. That would be a cool way of helping think about our future since that's pretty important.

Interviewer: That was something that your classmates discussed or it was discussed more formally.

Interviewee: I don't know if it was every discussed more formally. I had just voiced that at one meeting at one point. Then, I never went to the other meetings to develop the

Capstone course. I don't know if people had talked about it, but I think that would be really cool to do.

Then, reading assignments, I mean I guess it's hard because everyone is so different with what they're doing. The workday, I think, is a valuable use of time, but maybe doing some more readings and group discussion. The type of reading I did in my [English course] was the best reading I've done in college at all. It was—

Interviewer: Can you describe it?

Interviewee: - creative non-fiction pieces from magazines. They were all very fun, easy to read, cuz most of the time when I do reading for communications, you skim through it. You hate doing it. It's way too long. I don't know. Maybe that's just the type of reading I like to do, but—

Interviewer: In the creative non-fiction class, [English course], were they using those as models to look at the writing choices because there's—

Interviewee: I'm assuming so, yeah, but we would discuss the readings in class, like what they've used, what we think about them. We would just have an open dialogue about the writing. Maybe I mean I guess this extra work for people, they might not wanna do it.

If I wanted to do creative non-fiction, I would maybe at the beginning of the year, pick out five readings I wanted to do. Then, I would do my own blog posts about them, just to get more writing cuz I don't—I mean just cuz I have had so much portfolio experience, I didn't learn a whole lot in the Capstone course that I didn't already know.

Interviewer: Right. Right. That's a fair point, I think, to raise.

Interviewee: Yeah, and we did have some workshops with the WordPress [content management system] people, but I ended up teaching them things. Then, I would ask for help, and they would come over. Then, I'd be the one figuring it out before them. It's just a way to figure out different learning levels and different experiences with new media cuz you wanna bring something new to each student I would say. Maybe that mentor program would help with that.

Interviewer: That's interesting cuz the technology, some people are very comfortable, but some are not.

Interviewee: Some are not, yeah.

Interviewer: Right, and I think sometimes there's this assumption that because you're young, you just know it, but as you've found, not all classmates were as comfortable.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Other feedback? Anything else that you can think about?

Interviewee: When you think writing minor, more writing in the classroom. Aside from just the projects, I don't know if they could do little writing, like in class writing.

Interviewer: Smaller scale assignments?

Interviewee: Yeah, smaller scale and I would definitely say in class, cuz if people, you make them do it outside of the class, they're not gonna do it, or they're gonna just run through it. Maybe in class writing and peer feedback on the little writing assignments you do.

Then, maybe have some more guest speakers that are professional writers or that have been published. I've found that really effective in other courses I've taken. When we have, sometimes you get sick of listening to your professor all day—

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: - so when you have outside people come in, it's more interesting and more engaging.

Interviewer: Good. The last one, question's even broader. What do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: It's a tricky one. I guess they should get—so we had required office hours only a couple times. I would say make more office hours required because—

Interviewer: You're thinking here across your—

Interviewee: - across the whole minor because it's easier to give people direction on their writing and feedback on a one-on-one setting. Whereas, in class you can go up and ask questions, but it's more difficult. I think just more progress and check-ins through-out the whole writing minor would have been helpful cuz they can say--and maybe bring in some past writing to show your professor and have them—

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: - take the time to look at multiple. See if they can find something that you're struggling on and something that you're doing really well; so they can give you that feedback. I guess it would be hard to teach writing cuz you just have to write. I can't really, I don't know, but yeah, I guess more teaching and more talking about their own experiences with writing.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: Just maybe little tips on how to be a better writer cuz I know we're all into short sentences. If they maybe gave us a list at the beginning of the term, like "20 Ways to be a Great Writer," and just things they've learned from their own experiences, could be helpful.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: I know some students do struggle with grammar and simple things like that. Even international students, they don't have as much background with that—

Interviewer: True.

Interviewee: - so maybe take a couple days, one day a week to talk about grammar, and stylistic elements, and just writing choices.

Interviewer: You think students would be receptive to that?

Interviewee: It depends on the student. For someone who's really good with grammar and stuff, they're gonna hate it. They're gonna be like, "This is kindergarten work," but for those who need more help, that would be very good to do.

I know for journalism there's a lot of AP [grammar and usage guide] style involved, and that's something that they don't teach here at all. I don't know how they'd work that in, but AP style is something that PR, business world, journalism. Maybe take a day and do a workshop on AP style or something like that.

Interviewer: Or just different style manuals generally—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - so sort of awareness that they do shift pretty dramatically.

Interviewee: Yeah, that would be helpful.

Interviewer: Even just moving from MLA to APA, let alone Chicago [formatting and style guides] or AP.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's an interesting thought.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Any other comments about the minor, about writing instruction?

Interviewee: I mean I think it was a really fun minor, but I think it—just cuz we're so used to structure, it needs to be more. It kinda seemed like a free for all at times—

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Interviewee: - I think it's cool that I have the minor and the portfolio was really fun to do, but as I said, I don't see that I learned a whole lot that I wouldn't—I mean, I guess I took—it forced me to take certain courses that I wouldn't have taken. Like [English course] that I keep mentioning, I probably would've never taken that. I would've taken more communications classes. That was a way of doing that.

However, when I joined the minor, so my main thing was journalism at first, I intended on growing as a journalist. I guess it switched to PR/Marketing, but I wouldn't say that I learned a whole lot about PR or Marketing writing. I think that was their idea was to be like if you wanna be a lawyer, we'll help you with these legal documents. If you wanna be, I don't know, whatever; so just some way of making you take away a little something more from the minor.

Interviewer: That's an interesting thought, especially as you raised the idea of this mentor idea because if the final project is that open-ended, the question is how the guidance works probably for, if someone wants to do legal writing versus magazine writing. Those are pretty—those look quite different—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - and so that idea of is there another resource to tap for that help is a really interesting idea.

Interviewee: Yeah, that'll bring it all together.

Interviewer: Anything else at all?

Interviewee: One other things that I didn't mention, outside reader that we needed to have for grading our portfolio—

Interviewer: Oh, right, right.

Interviewee: - and people had mentioned maybe getting that outside reader in the Gateway course, and having them be another guiding force as you progress. Because for me, I had asked like five teachers. I'm still not sure if the one's doing it. I think she said yes, but it's very unclear. It's hard because it woulda been nice to know, like build that relationship with someone in your concentration early on because—

Interviewer: Interesting—

Interviewee: - because

Interviewer: Because the Gateway course did not have that requirement—

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: - but now this one did.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - and then that person would have seen your earlier work.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, cuz they're like this is coming outta nowhere—

Interviewer: What is this thing?

Interviewee: - what's a writing minor? Yeah, so, mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Some of that may, just as the program becomes better known will probably shift, but that's a really thoughtful suggestion.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. People still don't know about the writing minor. I was talking to one of my friends the other day, and she's like, "Oh, you mean creative writing?" I'm like, "No, it's the writing minor." She's really interested in this stuff, but she's going into her senior year so she, I don't think will be able to apply.

I guess getting more outreach and word of mouth and more marketing towards the minor would be helpful. Then, I would suggest doing—I know syllabuses always change, but, "Here's what we're doing." Setting it up up front so people aren't wondering what are we gonna do every day. How is this minor working? Giving them a clear guideline of what's going on. I know that may change, but—

Interviewer: In each class you mean or for the program, like this?

Interviewee: I would say both. For the program, there was this thing that we needed to do artifacts, and there was this whole online system. It was a huge hassle, an extra step that I constantly put on my to-do list. I constantly put off and we didn't even end up needing to do it. It was like hours spent on it that were wasted hours, and it was supposed to be more helpful for us picking artifacts for our portfolio. However, there's way easier ways of doing that—

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: - cuz they wanted us to document what style it was, do a whole blurb on what it was about and it as just, “Wow, this is really not cool.” I don’t think they’re making people do that anymore, but just things like that.

It was on the guidelines so I assumed I had to do it in order to pass the minor. Then, this year when I came to the Capstone, they decided, “Oh, you actually don’t have to do that.” Just check in with people. If you’re changing requirements, make sure you have a guideline of what’s happening and what they should look forward to, what they should be working on, stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: These are all really useful suggestions. I think they’re going to appreciate it and we certainly appreciate that you’re willing to take time when you have a lot of other things on your mind, too, to talk about it. I’m gonna—well, I’m gonna shut this off.

[End of Audio]