

Karen Warren

Louise Bown

English 2010

April 23, 2011

Final Portfolio

This semester I have learned a great deal. I have learned about the multiple genres in writing and the different processes for effectively communicating within them. I have learned how to work within groups to achieve a goal and how to accept as well as give criticism in a thoughtful way. I have learned how to research topics and cite sources. But the most difficult and important thing I learned is how to streamline my thoughts and put them on paper in a cohesive structure.

The Group

When our group first attempted to pick a topic there were a multitude of very good suggestions. Thankfully David Jungst took the lead and suggested we vote on the topics. While I was pulling for the upcoming election I was actually happy that College Education became the topic. It was something that impacted us all and there would not be heated or difficult debates surrounding it. I chose how the government is financially involved in higher education because it was something I knew very little about and I thought it would give me the opportunity to learn something while I was learning something.

The Report

The report was the first assignment and I was happy to dig into the research. I was not prepared for how much information was actually available. It seemed as if every magazine, newspaper and TV show had information concerning the government and higher education. I was overwhelmed. I was able to work through the mass of available information by choosing a research question and then creating a concept map. I chose to define the federal and state financial role in higher education and I created an outline from my concept map. From there the report flowed easily. The one thing I would have done differently is with my sources. I thought if I wrote everything it would be easy to then go back and match sources. This proved to be the longest part of the report. Thankfully, I learned this on the first assignment and did not repeat the mistake. Aside from learning a great deal about how our government assists higher education I thoroughly enjoyed the charts and graphs. I am also taking Computer Essentials this semester so it was nice to incorporate some of what I had learned into these assignments. I thought the peer review was very helpful. David Jungst suggested a couple of things that I completely agreed with. He stated that “There does not seem to be a conclusion section.” My conclusion was short and I had not noticed. Thanks to David I made adjustments to it. He made another great suggestion “In the section Distribution of State Assistance more info could be given about the recover and reinvestment act.” He was right and I did add a lot a great deal to this section.

The Position/Proposal

The position/proposal paper was my most difficult assignment. While I knew that I wanted the government to invest more in higher education I struggled with specifics. I felt like the federal government had been making progress and I was unsure if that might be enough. I decided I needed to research more and I ended up finding a lot of great information and statistics

on how higher education benefits communities. I did have a hard time presenting the opposition. I finally had to open my mind and extend my research and I do believe that I fairly presented the other side. Peer review again proved to be beneficial when Royce Spilker stated:” I would like to say that you might want to put more opinions into it especially in the proposal since it is where you do put your ideas in.” When I reviewed what he said I realized that my proposal read more like my report and I added a lot more of my opinions. The one change I made to the proposal that I had learned from writing my report was to keep track of my sources. While I wrote I tagged each source and in the end I saved myself a great deal of time by not having to go back through and try to match them. I won’t ever make that mistake again.

The Memoir

Much to my surprise the memoir genre proved to be my favorite and the writing I am most proud of. I was worried that my topic of the financial role of government in higher education would not fit into a memoir, a profile or a review. Then I remembered what ultimately gave me the final push to return to school and I knew that the memoir was the way to go. I loved writing it. It felt like I was telling a story to a friend and I even teared up at some of the memories. Including graphics or visuals was a little challenging but I realized that there were a couple of quotes that had pushed me back to school and including those made a lot of sense. The peer reviews just made me smile. Carrie Parker wrote that the purpose of my memoir was “to show that you are never too old to go back to school to earn your degree.” This was almost the opposite of what I felt I wrote but her words were motivational to me and I appreciated them.

Letter to Public Official

The final assignment gave us the choice to write a pamphlet, flyer, brochure, fact sheet, letter to public official or a poster. While I would have loved to use my new learned computer

skills on a pamphlet or brochure I felt like a letter to a public official fit my topic the best. I chose to write to President Obama because ultimately I had come to believe that the federal government could be doing more. I had so much information from my report and proposal so the research had basically been done. I did re-check my facts in case I had missed some recent changes. This was the first project that I had not included graphics or visuals and I did miss them. I thoroughly enjoyed making the assignments vibrant and eye-catching but I could not think of a way to incorporate anything into this quite serious letter.

Peer Review

Throughout our assignments peer review was a crucial element. I enjoyed reading the critiques that were given by my fellow students. However, I enjoyed more reading their papers and their thoughts. Often times it gave me the motivation to write more on my assignment. I tried very hard to be fair and honest when giving my reviews. While reviewing Carrier Parkers proposal I suggested: "Perhaps there could more about the cost of education and the debt it creates and the time lost working to learn." I also suggested to Parker Shaw in his brochure that "There are bullet points giving reasons why community college is the right place to go but it would be nice if they were backed up with some facts or stats or maybe details from where the information came from." I hope these suggestions helped them as much as the suggestions I received helped me.

Changes

The critiques from my professor concerning my writing were for the most part positive. She did point out my muddy paragraph concerning the Board of Regents in my report. There was so much information I was trying to put into one or two sentences. The professor was right and I hopefully fixed the section so everything makes sense. I made a couple of structural changes to

my citation page and double-spaced it as per my professor. In my memoir I discussed moving from California back to Utah and she was curious why I had moved. I had left it out because I couldn't remember either. I called my girlfriend who embarrassingly reminded me that it was for a boy. I reluctantly added that to the memoir because it needed to be explained.

Choices

In choosing the assignments for my final portfolio I wanted to include a good variety to show the different genres we had worked through. I ended up choosing the four I felt like I had done my best work on. Initially when I thought about what I would change I considered that maybe narrowing my topic would have made things easier. But after reflection I have learned so much about the government's role in higher education I wouldn't want to change a thing.