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April 25, 2010  
Reflective Essay  
Senior Portfolio

When I began college at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2005 I was scared. I wasn't sure what to expect of my first college class and not knowing what would be expected of me was even scarier. I entered school majoring in the Hotel College. A program which is one of the best in the country and second only to Cornell; this fact being a sore spot for the students and teachers alike. Almost immediately I found out the only thing to be frightened of was the high probability of dying of sheer boredom. My first year of school was filled with introductory courses about economics, business, tourism, and marketing. The teachers were highly qualified, the classes were filled to capacity, and I hated every minute of every class.

My dislike for classes caught me off guard as I thought I had made the right decision about my major and this unhappiness left me feeling lost. Learning about the dominate industry of the city I loved should have been exciting but I found myself daydreaming in class on the days I even bothered to show up. I can vividly recall the packed auditorium that my tourism class was held in and taking a test about the complexities of wine and food pairing and the process of calculating convention floor space. The exam was open book, open notes, and prepared by our travel agent instructor. I dropped the class the next day. Confused about my college experience, I thought about taking some time off of school until I figured out what to do, since business and tourism was obviously not my niche.

Fortunately, I decided to finish out the remainder of my semester and make a

decision over the summer about how to precede. I made this decision based, in part, on not wanting to disappoint my mother. I was the first to go to college and quitting would have broken her heart. There was also one bright spot on my schedule that semester, a required English literature class taught by a poet, Dr. Joshua Kryah, or Prof. K as he preferred to be called. While it was only by dumb luck that I was assigned this class with this teacher; it changed everything. I felt engaged in his class. We read Ibsen, Moliere, Brecht, Melville, Beckett, Akhmatova and Soyinka. I remember every poem, short story, and play in detail. He made class interesting. This class became my lifesaver that I clung to while I tried to avoid being pulled under by Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand." I had always loved to read but I had never thought that I could go to school simply to read literature.

The next semester I changed my major to English and felt a huge weight lift off of my chest. Despite my interest in the subject, being an English major has been challenging. I've learned to read between the lines. There is symbolism and subtext that I never would have known to look for without my education at both UNLV and Texas Wesleyan University. I've learned that being an English major means joining a conversation about ideas, hopes, dreams, and heartache. Politics, history, and religion are also integral to studying literature. No matter how closely I read a text in preparation for class there is never a time when I leave that class without learning something I would not have thought of on my own.

Even though I love my major, I still have stumbled throughout my college career. I lost focus off and on which caused some of my classes to suffer but also taught me accountability. Transferring schools when I was entering my senior year was also a

learning experience. Going from a large university that had over 30,000 students to one that had around 3,000 was an academic culture shock. Even though the English Department at UNLV was one of the smaller departments, it still had dozens of professors and upper-level class offerings each semester. Texas Wesleyan, on the other hand, has an extremely small faculty and offers only a handful of upper-division classes each term. This shift was had both advantages and disadvantages. Small class sizes forced me to be more vocal in class discussions and allowed me to get to know the faculty better than I had at my previous school. The lack of class options were disappointing though, and my senior status from my last school forced a lot of classes to be waived while still leaving me with a set number of credits that had to be completed here at Wesleyan. Thankfully my advisor, Dr. Battles, worked with me through marathon advising sessions to get me on the path for graduation.

I feel like I have come a long way from that scared freshman to the confident college senior that I am today. I still suffer from lack of focus on occasion but now as a new mother I have someone to motivate me to work harder and do better both in and out of academics. Changing my major to English was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Choosing to transfer to Texas Wesleyan was also beneficial for my personal growth. The small school environment has made me become more active in my classes and more engaged in my studies. Preparing this portfolio has been bittersweet. Looking back over previous work and being able to see how I have grown as a writer and an interpreter of literature is rewarding. I am sad, and scared, to think of having to step out of the academic exploration and enter the "real world." Hopefully my professional life will be even more rewarding than my academic life has been these past years.