

In medias res: Integration & Disintegration in the First Semester

Selected Exemplars for Catalyst Project Student Reflective Essays

Question 1: Interests, Goals, Beliefs, General Outlook

Personal Growth

(1S) High school experiences during the past four years have had a profound influence on me. During this time I grew as a person, a worker and a student. I have also taken advantage of the opportunities to gain information and widen my bank of knowledge. One of the most important skills, which I continue to work on is decision-making.

(1F) My first semester has been very eventful. My major has changed, I have met many new people, tweaked my study habits and I feel more relaxed.

More Motivated

(2S) High school has influenced my interests, goals and beliefs, and general outlook in many ways. I've learned that life isn't that easy and isn't a joke. It has to be taken seriously because through high school there were many steps that needed to be taken. These steps help us succeed in life and will benefit us to the fullest. I've grown to love sports more and more each day and I've developed many goals. Just to become a teacher and live a successful life.

(2F) Adjusting was hard, but now I have accepted the changes and enjoy college more than the first week.

Less Motivated

(3S) All my experiences as a high school student have built me to be the person I am today. For example, if I went partying on the weekend and blew off studying or doing homework that meant my grades just decreased. This was not in my best interest and would cause my goals of going to a good college to become more unrealistic. In addition, although I believe to have fun and enjoy my time in high school, this causes my outlook to go to a good school to seem to me more unlikely.

(3F) Well, where do I begin? I came to Oswego as opposed to taking online courses because I thought I should actually be around people. More or less, this was a mistake. Seeing the people here and how they act has changed my outlook on college to less than what it was before. By this I mean, I can't believe all the alcohol and drug use in this place. My father told me, "Kids today who go to college are more serious, they won't act

that way.” What an eye opener. In this supposed place of higher learning, I find myself disgusted and disappointed.

No Change

(4S) My experience in high school has not really influenced me as much as I would have imagined. I say this because my major is still undeclared, so I have no idea what I want to do. In high school it’s basically the four main subjects, a language and a few minors, so I really wasn’t influenced by anything. I learned I basically just used the things I learned and absorbed it as knowledge.

(4F) Honestly, my goals and views have not really changed at all.

Learned Keys to Academic Success

(5S) In high school I was very involved, taking a heavy course load and participating in various organizations and academics. Engaging in all these activities with my peers showed me that I like to be around people, and I can work well under pressure. I learned several things about myself, like how I handle my time wisely and the fact that while I like to be social, I would rather work independently than in a group. These experiences have not given me specific goals, but helped me in shaping what I am and what I want out of college.

(5F) My experiences during this first semester at SUNY Oswego have helped me grow as a student. I have figured out how to manage my time effectively. This first semester has also allowed me to think about what career I wish to pursue. As an undeclared student I have taken all my classes seriously and really begun to focus on what interests me the most.

More Confident

(6S) My experiences as a student have influenced my interests because learning about new things in school has opened me up to new subjects and ideas. It has affected my goals because it made me want to work toward a greater education. School has made me believe that there is so much more out there to learn than what I think I know, and improved my outlook so that I don’t feel that things are that far out of my reach.

(6F) Coming to Oswego my general outlook on college was that it was going to be really hard. I realized now that it just required a lot of work ethic and if you did the work and went to class, then you would do just fine. In the beginning of the semester, I knew I was going to be a part of the baseball team but I didn’t realize how much time it would take up. So my interests were focused on baseball and that’s it.

Learned About my Interests

(7S) My freshman year of high school I wanted to be a dentist, after passing Earth Science I found I like meteorology more. I took a meteorology class to find it was not for me. Now I have set my eyes on being a pharmacist.

(7F) With the first semester coming to an end I still don't know what I want to do in the future but I was able to eliminate some things. This has been altered by classes, professors and talking to other students at Oswego. I am happy with how things are going here.

Question 2: Description of Assignments that are Integrative

Skills Transferred

(8S) In my math course, we had to do a power point presentation on an innovation of an invention or an invention from scratch while utilizing conic shapes. The skills used in doing this were public speaking, critical thinking and computer skills as well as working with a team, which I learned for the most part in various computer and English courses. The main method that I had to be comfortable with was public speaking and giving a presentation in front of my peers.

(8F) For philosophy 205, I had to write an analytical essay on an article that I received and defend a viewpoint. For this exercise, I needed to use my argument skills and writing techniques that I learned in English to be able to complete the paper. I had to read and understand the article so that I could know what to write about. I learned how to combine these skills better through this paper.

Academic Content Transferred

(9S) Debating in PIG (Participating in Government) we are given many topics throughout the course where we read facts to back our opinions or arguments. I used what I learned in psychology to argue about human minds. The same goes for debates in psychology. I'll use what I know about government or what's going on in the world to help my arguments.

(9F) I found that issues and topics in each of my classes seemed to correspond with each other in many ways. Each seemed to enhance the other. A paper I wrote for critical thinking in politics worked well as I was able to incorporate what I learned in history, chemistry, and sociology.

Personal Growth

(10S) A recent class I took was psychology. Psychology can not only be used in English or science, but I realized that everyday psychology is around us. I realized that everything I do deals with psychology. I now think differently about the people in my world and I credit myself more because I can understand better why I am who I am.

(10F) I learned to be more comfortable with my peers and that teamwork is important.

Used Skills Learned Outside of Class

(11S) I traveled to many countries growing up and that taught me useful things that were more important than what I learned in school.

(11F) I made a point to network with professors who I was told were experts in their fields.

No Transfer of Information

(12S) I really can't think of anything that I transferred from one class to another.

(12F) This doesn't apply to me. I have not had to relate classes to one another.

Question 3: Perceived Value of the Variety of Courses in College

Value for the Future

(13S) I see college a stock portfolio. If you do not keep your portfolio diverse, there is a good chance of failure, but if it is full of different parts, your chances of success skyrocket. In life, if you are multitalented, your chances of succeeding in life accelerate. And these talents being unique help you in the long run.

(13F) Especially with education majors there are many things and topics that I will come across by being a teacher. A variety of courses will widen my knowledge along with helping with different situations that can occur.

Negative Value

(14F) I do not see much value in taking general education courses, there are few courses that have any benefits which make me a better more understanding person. Most of them are just a waste of time, effort and money.

(14F) I never took classes that interested me. I took all general education classes and one class for my major. I hated the courses I was forced to take. I don't see a value in

these classes. One was for my major. That's it. We should take classes related to our major not unnecessary classes that don't have anything to do with our future job.

Means to Discover Interests, Likes, Dislikes & Exploration

(15S) I think the value of varying courses is a perspective on what types of things are interesting enough to where I would pursue them further, or things I thought I may have enjoyed but decided against.

(15F) I was able to look into new things that might interest me.

Breadth & Diversity

(16S) I believe that by combining the knowledge I acquire from my major, general education courses and special interest courses will help me to become a more well-rounded and open-minded individual. To have a variety of courses is important because in the end those courses can be applied to one another.

(16F) I noticed that all my classes overlap in a way. Information discussed in one class applies and can be very helpful in other classes.

Personal Growth

(17S) By taking a variety of classes, you are opening up your mind to different things and expanding your knowledge to areas that you feel that will best fit you. I love how I get to choose what I want to do instead of being put into something that I completely don't want to do. Also by doing this we learn from different people and yourself more than you ever did in high school.

(17F) Well obviously my biology class was for my major so I had to take that class. Leadership helped me learn more about myself and others as did psychology. Math and English are a necessity to take because you will use the info. In your life. I think all these classes are important.

Further Responses to Question 2

Positive Affect or Grade

A recent assignment I had was to write a paper on anything about Shakespeare. It was tough because there is so much about him so I had a hard time concentrating. The skills used were to be open minded and not afraid. I was afraid that I would write a bad paper and was closed minded about the assignment itself. Once I let go, the skills I used helped me to write a wonderful essay in which I got an A on.

In my numerous music classes, I have learned about discipline, how important attitude is, and how it is important to always do your best and be open to others. For our final exam in AP English my senior year, we had to make a video, write our own script, everything. I used these skills to help my group get the best grade it could.

Contextual Grounding

Two classes which surprised me in the ability of one to connect to another were environmental science and history classes. I got a better understanding of environmental law and historical issues.

I applied my knowledge of World War II history to my 12th grade English class when we were studying poets of that time period. An example would be how the trauma of war affected the author of “Duke et Decorum est”.

Global Connections

In my Biology class, and all other science classes, I learned to do things step-by-step. I carried this process with me in other classes when confronted with any new situations. Also, in English I was taught how to do an “I-search” paper, which helped me do research in other classes.

Personal

I learned to go against the crowd my 10th grade year – in my old English class. I found when you stand for something you can never be brought down. In my future physics class my confidence in debate allowed me to learn the real reasons why objects moved as they did. I could questions with confidence and never felt stupid. Education helps lead the way to self discovery. It’s all relevant.

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“Cosmic”

In English 12 we had to write a short memoir. I used mostly skills from English but all the other subjects got tied into the assignment somehow. This was when I realized that everything meshed together somehow.

Types of Projects

“Soup-to-Nuts”

My final project in English was supposed to be a creative presentation on everything I learned about my chosen topic (J.R.R. Tolkien) throughout the class. To make my words more effective I used art and technology skills to create a life sized board game to assist my presentation.

My final research paper from English lit. This past year has combined much of my knowledge in various subjects. My topic was forensic science, which combined chemistry and other areas of wisdom from different subjects. The skills of research came from my experience writing my history papers. My computer skills also came into play when I had to revamp my paper to make it more presentable.

Simulations

I had to do a project for a civil law class. As a class we participated in a mock trial, everyone had a role, or duty to complete. I was part of the jury so I had to talk, write, interact and be open minded which was a great opportunity because I used skills, and the knowledge that I learned in the past with other teachers. It was important and fun because it made me realize that we should apply and put in use our knowledge whenever we can.

For my marketing final project I had to create a marketing campaign for “teen anti-smoking”. To do this I used the skills I learned in English and also what I was taught in webpage design to create a marketing campaign.

Forced Integration

I had to do a research paper in English in which I had to use science, history and common knowledge to write it up and present it. It dealt with how a murder case could be solved from the early 1950’s by using scientific technology, and detailed clues left behind at the murder scene. I applied my learning skills to this reach paper by knowing forensics (basic) and common knowledge to put clues together at the crime scene.

Public Policy

In my economics class, in my last semester of high school, the entire class was assigned to educate people on voting. This assignment had to be done and was also a requirement to pass the class, which was required to graduate. When I began this assignment I did not realize that I would use my math skills, public relation skills, speaking skills, history skills and also leadership skills. This assignment in the end was worth all of the stress.

Creative Projects

For my Spanish level 5 class we made an hour video entirely in Spanish. In the project we applied many other skills in theatre, music, language, and media production technology. We actually had students from other classes (technology) get involved with the production of the film.

Internships and Field Placements

A recent assignment I did was a presentation on the field I was interning in (veterinary). I used my public speaking skills from an honors course I took in 10th grade and I use my English skills from over the years to gather info and organize it. People skills that I gained from my internship helped relax me when there was time for questions at the end of the presentation.

Personal Growth and Development

There was an assignment I had to complete in my senior English class where we were given a packet called “Life Skills”. This assignment was meant to show us how to manage our money, interests, and goals as we set out into the real world. Skills from other classes such as mathematics, economics, and applied computer studies helped me complete the packet and have an idea on what I want to do after college.

For an English paper we had to describe a place that made us happy. My Psychology class talked about childhood development. While thinking about what makes me happy, I realized that it changed due to the way I developed as I grow older.