**English 101 Portfolio**

**Reflective Cover Letter**

Example Letter

December 4, 2012

Dear Portfolio Reader:

I appreciate your time in reading through the materials I have included in my English 101 final portfolio. I’ve worked hard on my writing this quarter, and I hope you’ll agree that I’ve become an effective academic writer. I would like to take this opportunity to call your attention to some specific examples of the progress I have made toward the intended course learning outcomes of English 101. You will see evidence of my progress in the areas of revision, improving in response to feedback, and responding to texts.

To me, revision used to mean fixing typos and running spell check. This quarter, I came to a whole new understanding of the value of multiple drafts. This shows up in my midterm essay, “Where I’ve Been, Where I’m Going.” In the first draft I submitted to my instructor, I had very short introduction and conclusion paragraphs. Each was only two sentences long. For the second draft, I expanded the introduction by including the little story about the summer my parents got divorced. I felt like that story really had the potential to hook more readers and help them understand why I changed so much in high school. But I still didn’t know what to add to my conclusion. I mean, other than summarizing my main points and restating my thesis, what else is there to say at the end of an essay? Well, after seeing some of my classmates’ drafts, I realized that I could come back to that story I used in the introduction and use it as a framing device. I added this sentence to my conclusion: “When I look back on that horrible summer of change after my parents’ divorce, I realize it was also the beginning of an exciting new phase of my life” (“Where” 4). That call back to the introduction gave me a chance to look ahead in my conclusion, and as a result, the whole essay is stronger because it isn’t just about the past; it’s about the future, too. The longer and stronger introduction and conclusion paragraphs in that midterm essay are evidence of my new respect for the power of revision because they only came into existence after writing multiple drafts of the same essay.

Part of developing that new respect for revision was recognizing that I’m not alone as a writer; I can use feedback from readers to help me see where my writing could be improved. When my mom read “The Future Looks Bright,” the new essay I’ve included in my final portfolio, she told me that it really seemed like two essays—one about my experience and another about Gerald Graff’s “Hidden Intellectualism” article. She suggested I write a new transition paragraph between the summary of Graff’s article and the section about my goals. Here’s that new paragraph:

The thing about hidden intellectualism that Graff fails to mention is that many teachers have already begun to do the things he’s suggesting. I had several opportunities to write about topics of my own choosing in high school. In fact, it was one of those opportunities—my senior project—that allowed me to explore the possibility of video game design as a career choice. (“Future” 3)

That new paragraph makes a huge difference in the essay, and I didn’t even realize I needed it until I got feedback from a reader. I’ve learned that not only can I ask people for feedback on early drafts but that doing so can help me see possibilities for revision I hadn’t even considered.

That example from “The Future Looks Bright” points to the last claim I want to make about my progress as an academic writer: I’ve learned how to respond thoughtfully, precisely, and ethically to texts. I spend the first two pages of “The Future Looks Bright” summarizing Graff’s argument and quoting specific passages that I especially agree with. Each time, I sandwich a quote by making sure my reader knows who is about to start talking and then explaining, after the quote, how I’m reading it and how it fits into the point I’m trying to make. Also, after each quote, I include a parenthetical page reference so that readers can go to the text and see the passage I quoted in context to make sure I didn’t misrepresent what the author was saying.

In this portfolio, you will see evidence of my strength as an academic writer. In this letter, I’ve tried to make sure you can’t miss that evidence. I made progress this quarter toward all twelve of the English 101 Course Learning Outcomes, but especially the ones related to revision, using feedback, and responding to texts. I look forward to seeing your evaluation of my work.

Thanks for reading!