

Self-Reflection on the StepUp Program in Lehigh University
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I appreciate my constant effort through the whole program. As my family life goes in and out, as my work becomes heavy during the application round, I finally reach the end of this program and finish my study plan.

Thanks to all my instructors, I have learned so much from the program and change greatly and positively during this program. I see my great progress in English use; besides, I can understand that I need to build up the social advocacy in my future work.

Great Thanks to my wife who took care of my old mom, who operated own business, and who came to the U.S. to share campus life with me.

Speaking and Listening Course

I was looking at sculptures, I was figuring out which sculpture I should choose, and I needed to choose a sculpture simple enough for me to say my feeling, its color and its appearance verbally in front of my classmates and my instructor. This is my first try to do a presentation in English as a StepUp student. Thanks for my instructor, Terasa, and my classmates, I gradually used to express myself in English and I feel happy to communicate in English.

At the start-point, I lacked the confidence to do a presentation in English. The reasons were that I was afraid to be judged on my poor pronunciation and that I was afraid to make many mistakes during my speech. I set my goal to talk confidently in a classroom setting and Teresa helped me so much to achieving this goal. She encouraged me to speak freely in her classroom without any negative judgement. She provided us to watch the TED talk named "The skill of self-confidence by Dr. Ivan Joseph". I can build up my self-confidence in talking by practice, practice and practice.

My first presentation was not good according to my view, even though I chose the simplest sculpture that I could find on campus, a sculpture stuck together by seven plants. The reasons are that I did not practice much before presenting, that I did not do solid research on the topic and that I did not believe that I could do a presentation like that in English. I even mistakenly used the name of the sculptor as the name of the sculpture. However, Teresa did say anything negative but said "I really love your interpret on the sculpture".

I enjoyed my second presentation and I was very careful on preparing my second presentation. I chose my familiar topic: the sociological meaning of education as my topic. I trust in my thesis statement: "every kid should have an equal opportunity in education". What's more, I spend three mornings on preparing my speech. I could still remember the three mornings I

spend on the lawn in front of the STEP building. I sit in a corner of that building, reading out loudly to squares and they felt afraid for my heavy Chinese accent, running away. Although I still had some mistakes, although I still felt hesitated during presentation, and although I still needed to improve my pronunciation, I felt confident at this time. I appreciated Mai who helped me to review my written speech.

I love the way Teresa guided me through and build up my confidence. She encouraged me to speak while ignoring my pronunciation mistakes at first and paying attention to my ideas. She wrote commend on my pronunciation mistakes personally, specifically and comprehensively. She was looking at me trustfully during my presentation and When coming to the topic of small talk, she assigned each of us with 2 chapters in a book and let us to talk and share with each other. During talking and sharing, we listened to different opinions on the same topic from my classmates and my instructor.

In order to build up my social advocacy, I choose the topic of Poverty in the U.S. Children as my topic for the final group project. I used my previous knowledge (SAT Score Report) to build up my argument and shared my story when I was a trainee in the admission office. I felt that when talking with my familiar topic, I would be more confident even without using outline. I wish I would continue to work with my speaking English, and I would speak like an American high school teacher does in a classroom.

Reading and Discussion

In the beginning of this program, I set up 3 goals for this program. When reviewing my work during my whole program, I have achieved some tasks but I still need to work on other tasks after my program.

Goal One and Reflection

By the end of this course, I would master reading skills to discriminate details and key points and focusing on critical information while discarding the unwanted. These skills would aid me in memorize academic pieces and then comprehend them in an efficient manner.

I have achieved this goal and I have done more than what I have expected. In fact, I have paid more attention to the feeling the author would like readers to have during the reading. During my program, when I was reading many pieces of beautiful writing, I feel what the author wish me to know. For example, in the famous writing, “Fresh Water”, Kingsolver, Barbara provides us with information such as human history, natural history, and personal stories. There is more information than I have expected; however, the author, in my mind, does not wish the readers to memorize this information. In fact, this essay inspires me to think more on my own. During reading, I think twice on why the author provides these information, rather than the information themselves. I do not need to memorize these details but need to feel these details.

Goal Two and Reflection

By the end of this course, I would like to be more familiar with the reading a fiction. I can read fiction as effectively as informative passages in my familiar field (science). Particularly, I can feel happy on myself while reading fictions and kill my time by reading fictions.

I have achieved this goal. During my program, I have read “No Apparent Distress,” although it is not fictional writing. I love my every role in the Literature Circle, especially as the leader. Not only do I have opportunities to dig deep into the context of this book, but also I can see how an English major student contributes to the field of medication. I enjoy her writing!

From this perspective, I wish my science background would enrich my career as an educator. Changing from a science teacher to an educator is challenging to me! I see the hope after reading “No Apparent Distress”. I love passages in which Rechel Pearson describes her feelings when she lost her friend. This part inspires to think more on mental issues for medical students. I love the stories from Malachai. It lets me to think on the rights of doctors rather than the rights of patients.

I hope I will continue to read more on similar topics and this is the reason why I brought “the Bond,” the stories by three doctors (Drs. Sampson Davis, Rameck Hunt and George Jenkins, fondly known as The Three Doctors) from Lehigh bookstore. I will continue to read this book after my program.

Goal Three and Reflection

By the end of this course, I would like to build up my own viewpoint when reviewing several academic reading materials on the same topic by effective identifying both the similar and different parts in both materials, discriminating the fallacies that may exist in some arguments, and by building up my own judgment based on evidence.

This is the task I am now working at. In the book, The Bond, the three doctors share their own experiences and feelings during their childhood and when they were growing up. I would seek answers from the stories from three different doctors: how they grow up, how they study and how their families influence their decisions. However, I still believe there would be differences during their life and I will seek these differences. I will bring my passion and skills learned from the program into my future reading and study.

Communication on Campus

I am pleased to have this course as I gain information on how to communicate with my classmates and my instructors on campus. In fact, I am not a very extroverted person, as I would keep myself silently in some noticeable place. I love reading and writing to gain perspectives and present myself; however, Ellena Reiss has changed me a lot. She taught me how to present my idea politely and assertively. I gradually understand the way students use to communicate with each other.

I set up three goals at the beginning of my class and I would provide reflection on each goal.

Goal One

At the end of the StepUp Program, I would like to manage the skills to communicate with my instructors, my classmates and other staff on campus via emails effectively. My email writing would be suitable and polite.

I have achieved this goal. Ellena helped me to revise my first email to Olga as I need to interview Olga for achieving my project. In her revision, I understand that I should use formal English in writing with my instructors and I should keep polite in all my writings. Recently, I love writing emails to my instructor to express my ideas, as writing emails would be a private and formal way to communicate with my instructors. On the other hand, I do think that I need to improve my ideas on email communication, as I find my classmates do not like to send emails nor do they use this way to communicate with me.

Goal Two

At the end of the StepUp Program, I would like to manage the skills to gain information from different departments on campus, such as the math and writing center, the office for international students and book store.

I have achieved this goal. Under the instruction of Ellena, I visited two places on campus, the writing center and the Office for International Students and Scholars. I also visited Dr. Murphy's office and interviewed her. I am very happy as they are so friendly and as the way I learned from Ellena works.

The way of face-to-face communication is important for me in my career develop. As a counselor in high school, I need to communicate with my admission professionals from different educational institutions. In my previous work, I paid little attention to this kind of communication and I know that I have made so many mistakes in my previous work. I would practice the communication with college staffs in my future work.

Goal Three

At the end of the StepUp Program, I would like to build up skills to talk with a college staff or a college faculty on campus effective face to face basis. I would manage my way to communicate with them politely and gain information.

The Goal Three is almost the same as the Goal Two.

In fact, people learn how to swim by swimming. I need to learn how to communicate with other professional by communication. As communication is a central skill for educators, I would continue to work on this and improve my communication skills.

Academic Writing

After the second paper, I still have not achieved my goal yet. You can identify many errors from my essay while I cannot. I still need to improve my skills in writing to avoid these errors.

After my StepUp program, I will continue to write essays and papers. In these writing process, I need to pay more attention on avoiding grammar errors. I also need to do advanced writing, such as research papers, in social studies. It may take me a long time to get my first research paper published as I am the first author.

It is the time to leave; however, I bet I will come back again one day!