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Critical & Creative Thinking
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Exit Self-Assessment: Development as a Reflective Practitioner

a) Something that reflects what you have achieved well related to this goal

My synthesis has allowed me to clearly convey the mission of the GIRLS Project and how I integrate critical thinking in media production. One of the major accomplishments that I've achieved is reflected in the television program that is produced through Girl TV. Last, I have also partnered with community members who share our mission and seek guidance to incorporate media in their programs. I now have the language and skill to articulate the role of critical thinking in youth program development and how it applies to other agencies.

I have grown intellectually but more importantly, I have been able to transform my practice through the Critical and Creative Thinking program to strengthen The GIRLS Project and other community work. My journey in The Critical and Creative program and synthesis reflect valuable lessons such as teamwork and community buy in to make positive change. My experience working with adolescent girls and the use of media to teach critical thinking skills is now a stronger part of my professional development and educational pursuit.

b) Something you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on.

Working on my synthesis has been rewarding and a challenge. The major challenge has been balancing my time with other responsibilities while reflecting on my process as a practitioner and scholar. I've been able to seek out support from several peers to build support and enrich my learning in the process. This is certainly a new approach for me as I often resist reaching out to others. In spite of this negative habit, I'm not more comfortable reaching out and accepting support from others. I have also make a more conscious effort to continue reflecting on my work and how I'm developing as a scholar practitioner. Critical Thinking is so embedded in my day to day work that I find ways to include CT skills in meetings, events and even in informal dialogues with colleagues. Ultimately, my reflective practice in CCT has allowed me to take a closer and deeper look at my work while envisioning my future as a media maker and consumer. My organizational goals are also clearer and more mission-driven as I lay the groundwork to take the G.I.R.L.S. Project to the next level. Ultimately, the synthesis project became a unique venue to reflect, grow, and highlight the evolution of the G.I.R.L.S. Project as while I embrace my creative self.

I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

This is one of my strong areas where I can convey my work in media is targeted at young women for the purpose of empowerment and engagement.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

I've reviewed the literature and understand who the experts are in the field and my area of inquiry. I know what others have done and aware of the gaps in the literature.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

During the synthesis process, my vision has been expanded yet I have narrowed my areas of inquiry. While doing the literature review, it became clearer which areas I should spend my energy on. It also reaffirms what I've been doing well.

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

This is a fairly good area as I've learned through literature review about experts with strong perspectives and others who vehemently oppose to my point of view when it comes to media literacy. I think it's critical to know all sides in order to ground my area of inquiry and practice.

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

This area needs some improvement but I have become better toward the end of my journey in CCT. I'm now able to prioritize my work and meet deadlines sufficiently.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

While in the CCT program, I was surrounded by experts in various fields but also learn about new organizational concepts that I didn't have access to elsewhere. I learned about theories that were closely related to my area of inquiry and practice.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

I have been able to build an argument and back it with appropriate sources ground in research and the literature review.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

I have work on this area. I'm now able to organize my writing by narrowing my focus and address my thesis. I find quality is better than quantity when writing academically. I now know I need to be selective and gradually make my argument without losing the reader(s).

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

Throughout my time in CCT, I have created new avenues and increased my public participation in order to share what I've learned and teach it forward

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

I have taken the time to reflect on my journey in the CCT program while strategizing how I will continue to integrate my CT skills in my practice. I know the ability to make social change as a collaborative and reflective practitioner is possible. I intend to build on what I learn through professional development and connecting with other critical thinking practitioners locally and abroad. My journey has taught me there is much work to be done to fully integrate critical thinking in education and the workplace. I am committed to sustain the tenets of critical thinking and invite others to learn it as well.

II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

This area is one of my strengths. I have integrated what I learned in CCT in my synthesis and to create social change within my community. I've used several opportunities to discuss and integrate those perspectives in workshops and television program. For example, when I conduct interviews for the television program, I often ask guests about how critical thinking fits in their work and mission. If I am the presenter I explicitly include aspects of critical thinking skills such as active listening and creative icebreakers to teach and illustrate those skills.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

Two of the courses that have made a major impact in my experiences are the humor and introduction to critical thinking. I'll start with the lessons learn in critical thinking course. Although there are many, I think this course shows a lot of versatile way to integrate CT without overwhelming an audience. For example, the ability to define critical thinking in one's term yet bring in other CT experts and its relevance to larger social issues. The second example has to do with humor, which was an elective. This course gave me a change to find humor in media and to use media to teach about group dynamics. In addition, I was able to use the work of female comediennes to showcase their stories and struggles as women. How do they use humor to teach about social change and highlight gender injustice in the world. Before this course, I would really see the relevance of humor in this discipline but now I know its significance and fit it in my practice.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

This is an area that I am still working on as I learn about new tools daily to organize my time and research. There many tools such as Zotero that has made keeping track of my references more efficient. I'm savvier at using technology to find materials and saving them online for future use. One of the biggest discoveries for me was how to use Google for time management and to find relevant data for my work. Last, our library field trip and introduction to the librarians that we have access to, was very useful. I have taken advantage of those tools and reaching out to the librarians for their expertise.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

I have definitely experimented with new tools in an effort to improve my work and become more efficient. I have also asked my peers for suggestions on tools that they find useful. As stated above, there many tools available and being developed for scholars, educators and scholars. Often, I realize I'm learning about them independently and when newer tools are being tested. I make sure that all of them are part of my kit if though I have a few favorites that I'm more comfortable with. Although, Google is a widely used platform, I've learned that it has more to offer than a search engine. I've used it to manage my time and create a calendar of deadlines. In addition, I have the ability to keep track of my books and build an extensive library for research.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

I'm still developing in this area. This is not something that can be checked off or cured within a few months or years. One of the courses that I took had a module on stress management and some activities on meditation. I now know that I have to take the time to carve out time for my projects and block time for self-care. The ability to balance one's time has a direct impact on project outcomes and how I function daily. I also discover that I have to schedule block of time to focus on specific activities, whether it is school or community work. These strategies have taught about stressors in my life and how to prevent distractions.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

Through the CCT program, I have built wonderful relationships with peers and received invaluable support for many classmates. I believe they've enriched my experience in the program and made me a better scholar practitioner. I've also been open to supporting others and provide support in class and outside class time. These relationships have ensured that I remain on task but also boost my spirit. I appreciate the encouragement and even the interest in my work and synthesis topic. Even when I'm not in the same class with some peers, they have remained in touch with me about my progress and via versa. Ironically, technology has also played a role in assisting us in staying in touch and supporting one another in our academic endeavors.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for the them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

This is a work in progress. Through the synthesis process, I have become more aware and accepting of my learning style. In addition, I have also learned that I respond differently to certain feedback and I do extremely well when working in-group with my classmates. I prefer receiving written feedback that I can go back to line-by-line and process changes I need to make. I also appreciate when I receive at least one positive comment on my work instead of reading a string of negative constructive feedback. At the end of the day, I'm still human not just a scholar practitioner who can be neutral about negative criticism. In spite of those preferences, my writing has improved and I have taken a more pro-active role in receiving feedback. For example, I've asked peers that I trusted to review my work and provide their feedback. I've also met with a few students to gain perspective on their process in hope I have done a much better job at finding literature review for my work independently and not solely relying on faculty and peers for suggestions. My peers were great at providing sources when I made presentation about my work and letting me know areas that they thought were not relevant. I appreciate all feedback received because I can see how I've applied them in my courses and the synthesis.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

I have improved tremendously in this area. I have appreciated all the feedback that I received in my classes, during presentations and while working on my synthesis. I'm more sensitive to feedback that has to do with my writing than my ideas. I feel more pressure to present a document that can convey my expertise and grasp of the literature review. Overtime, I've learned to differentiate between critiques of my writing versus self. Although, I find writing to be personal process, which in turn influence how I respond to feedback. Toward the end of my journey in the CCT program, I've come to value comments from various sources and recognize how they have played a role in the final product. Interestingly, I respond to feedback differently when I present in front of a group versus when I write a paper. When I presented aspects of my paper as part of a work in progress or thesis, I understood better how to make changes in my papers. Eventually, I must learn how to integrate oral and written feedback to flourish as a writer.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

I have requested clearer guidelines from my professors in order to produce assignments that reflect my interests yet meet their criteria and my own. I find that I've been able to strike a balance in this area where I'm more strategic about my readings and making sure I understand what's expected of me. At times, I've had to make my point of view clearer to a few faculty members to ensure they also had a better sense of where I'm coming from and how I'm interpreting their standards. This is an area that can always improve but did well through my journey at CCT.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

I have indeed approached the CCT program and the synthesis course as a work in progress that requires greater reflection and processing even when I've submitted papers at the end of the semester. I find myself still pondering on concepts, theories and parts of my assignments that I struggled with or find intriguing. Often, something will happen in class or at work that trigger a new way of thinking or organizing my work to strengthen my learning. For example, while in class listening to another student, or a lecture, pieces of that were unclear would just click mentally. Meaning I'm able to either connect the dots or see how I can apply them in certain aspects of my work or writing. It is important to me that I'm motivated by what I'm learning, therefore a grade is rarely sufficient to stop researching or reflecting on an area of inquiry. In the end, I clearly see the strong aspects of my work and my weaknesses are crystallized. I view as an opportunity to improve as a scholar-practitioner who values her educational journey and transformation. In essence, the work is rarely ever done.