

* Prompt A Response

I returned to school at South Puget Sound Community College to earn a technical degree in architectural drafting. The opportunity I had to change my life by pursuing knowledge inspired me to continue my education and to seek out opportunities to serve other students. At SPSCC I found an outlet for service by joining student leadership and as I have continued my education at Evergreen I have continued serving my academic community as a writing tutor. I hope to serve students just as I have served my peers by pursuing a career in teaching English. At Evergreen I have focused on writing and composition. Through assignments focused on memoir writing, I have explored how my personal experience could engage with a larger audience. I analyzed structure and themes from significant works in the genre and applied what I learned to my own work. In addition to all the technical knowledge, I gained from this course of study I also learned a lot about myself. Putting stories into writing is powerful. I believe my inquiry in memoir gives me the tools to empower students to tell their stories. I have taken the experiences gained from programs focused on writing and used them as a peer tutor in Evergreen's Writing Center. Spring quarter, in addition to my regular tutoring duties I served as an in-program writing tutor for the Evergreen Tacoma program *Shit You Should Know* taught by Dr. Anthony Zaragoza. In this program, I had the opportunity to work with students to develop pieces of writing based on students' lived experiences. At first, my position as an outside tutor in the class felt awkward. I was given a sense of authority by the other students that were outside of what I was used to in sessions in the Writing Center. Over the quarter I was able to build relationships with students and was humbled to be a witness to their stories and their process of developing these stories into writing. I have loved the experiences I have had working with young people throughout my academic career. I believe the experience I have had provides a strong foundation for a career in teaching. I will always have more to learn and I am excited to devote myself to a career teaching English in public schools.

* Prompt B Response

After working on farms for ten years I decided to return to school. I was still passionate about food and community but I was burnt out after years of long hours and low wages. Returning to school I was afraid that all the time and energy I had spent pursuing farming was meaningless. I began to realize that though my time on the farm didn't always fit neatly with what I was pursuing academically, I was still able to take away valuable lessons from that period of my life. I learned the work ethic I had developed working long hours on the farm didn't just apply to physical labor, but that it could also apply to my studies. I learned that community is just as important in an academic setting as it was working in isolated rural areas. The most important thing that I learned was that failure is a part of the process and not something to be ashamed of. For ten years it was my goal to be a farmer. I put my whole being into that goal and I failed to achieve it. I believe that pursuing a dream and failing prepares me to be an English teacher more than any other life experience. I know how debilitating it can feel to try so hard and fail. I also know that I have learned the most when I have been passionate about something, pursued it, and failed. There is always a next day and there will always be an opportunity to start again. I want to be a teacher to share that with students.

* Prompt C Response

When I was training to be a writing tutor in community college I worked with an older white man. He was bald with a ring of white hair circling his head and wearing clean work clothes. He was struggling to make sense of the formatting in a word processor and I did what I could to bring the shifting landscape of technology into a little clearer focus for him. As we worked together I learned that this man had just completed his GED and was beginning work on an associate degree. No doubt this man had worked physically demanding and perhaps dangerous jobs for much of his life and now at the end of his career he was working to better his life through education. I understood the importance of what he was doing. Community college was also a second chance for me after years of working physically demanding and dangerous jobs. Education is the opportunity to reinvent yourself, to transform your life by acquiring skills and knowledge that give you agency to make the kind of life that you want to live. The problem is that these resources and knowledge aren't always distributed equitably. In fact, at many points in our history, the benefits of education have been directed to certain groups and away from others. I am reminded of another student I worked with as a writing tutor this time at Evergreen. An African American woman of a certain age, she was working on expanding sentences about personal knowledge from lived experience into paragraphs. Talking about experiences to include she told me about her childhood experience of bussing to the white part of town for school. In class, her teacher would ask her questions that she didn't know in an attempt to belittle her. Understandably, she tried her hardest to become invisible in hopes that she would have to endure this embarrassment as little as possible. This foundational experience taught this woman that education was not a safe place to explore, ask questions and learn. For her school was a minefield of hidden dangers to avoid. The message of this experience was clear, that school, at least as her teacher envisioned it, was not for her. Schools can still be minefields for students of color and many other non-dominant groups. Curriculums still focus on the white narratives while ignoring the contributions and achievements of people of color. If students of color don't see themselves in the subject matter then they may begin to believe that education is not for them. As a teacher, I can address this structural injustice by working to include diverse voices in the classroom as well as taking the time to make meaningful connections with students. Everybody should feel welcome at school. As a teacher, I know my words and actions can determine if a student feels welcome. I take this seriously and will continue to work to reach all students so they will know that a school is indeed a place for them.