Sample Reflective Essay

I have been a student at California State University Channel Islands (CI) for 5 semesters, and over the course of my stay I have grown and learned more that I thought possible. I came to this school from Moorpark Community College already knowing that I wanted to be an English teacher; I had taken numerous English courses and though I knew exactly what I was headed for—was I ever wrong. Going through the English program has taught me so much more than stuff about literature and language, it has taught me how to be me. I have learned here how to write and express myself, how to think for myself, and how to find the answers to the things that I don't know. Most importantly I have learned how important literature and language are.

When I started at CI, I thought I was going to spend the next 3 years reading classics, discussing them and then writing about them. That was what I did in community college English courses, so I didn’t think it would be much different here. On the surface, to an outsider, I am sure that this is what it appears that C.I. English majors do. In most all my classes I did read, discuss, and write papers; however, I quickly found out that that there was so much more to it. One specific experience I had while at C.I. really shows how integrated this learning is. Instead of writing a paper for my final project in Perspectives of Multicultural Literature (ENGL 449), I decided with a friend to venture to an Indian reservation and compare it to a book we read by Sherman Alexie. We had a great time and we learned so much more that we ever could have done from writing a paper. The opportunity to do that showed me that there are so many ways that one can learn that are both fun and educational.

The English courses also taught me how powerful the written word and language can be. Words tell so much more than a story. Stories tell about life and the human condition, they bring up the past and people and cultures that are long gone. Literature teaches about the self and the world surrounding the self. From these classes I learned about the world, its people and its history; through literature I learned how we as humans are all related. By writing about what we learn and/or what we believe, we are learning how to express ourselves.

I know that my ability to write and express my ideas, thoughts and knowledge has grown stronger each semester. I have always struggled to put my thoughts on paper in a manner that is coherent and correct according to assignments. I can remember being
told numerous times in community college to "organize your thoughts" or "provide more support and examples". These are the things that I have worked on and improved over the past couple of years and I feel that my work shows this. The papers I wrote when I first started here at C.I. were bland and short. In these early papers, I would just restate what we learned in class and what I had found in my research. I did not formulate my own ideas and support them with the works of others. The classes I have taken the past couple semesters have really help me shed that bad habit and write better papers with better ideas. I have learned how to write various styles of papers in different forms and different fields. I feel confident that I could write a paper about most anything and know how to cite and format it properly.

There are a couple of things that I do feel I lack the confidence and skill to perform, and that is what I hope to gain from participating in Capstone. I am scared to teach because I don't know how to share my knowledge with others-students who may have no idea what I am talking about. I hope to learn more about how teachers share their knowledge as part of my Capstone project.