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History Major Reflection Essay

The rigors I have faced as a history major at the College of Charleston have molded me into an adept and proficient learner. The ability to think analytically has been a skill fostered throughout my undergraduate studies. My one-hundred level history classes introduced me to the idea of labor intensive research, designed to aid the construction of a persuasive and analytical argument. Furthermore, time management and planning became essential in composing a fluid research paper. In addition to time management and analytical thought, my initial year of study gave me the necessary tools by which to obtain information. Reading with the purpose of gathering information will continue to dominate my life as I prepare for graduate level work.

Upon completing the first year of my undergraduate degree, I studied abroad at the University of Nottingham. In Nottingham, I was subjected to a new style of lecture; however, the writing and research skills required to succeed as a student of history remained uniform with the College of Charleston. The numerous papers, constituting one-hundred percent of my final grade, were excellent opportunities to hone the skills I had learned a year prior. Thus, while attending the University of Nottingham I wrote many of my most diverse works. Also, my overall writing ability improved greatly and prepared me for future success upon my return to the College of Charleston.

After studying abroad, I returned to my history classes at the College of Charleston. Due to the liberal arts nature of the College, I was not inclined to focus solely on the study of history. While my classes were more diverse in subject, my learning of history remained steady. In the fall semester of my third year, I enrolled in a special topics class on African violence. This course stimulated my interest in history and

fostered the bolstering of my research abilities. Due to my initial ignorance concerning the subject of African history, I was forced to read material that was often subsidiary to the assigned and suggested material. This method of research ultimately added a tool to my repertoire, allowing me to incorporate less common information into my papers. This method greatly enhanced the quality of my subsequent writings. My research and writing abilities would reach their current levels during my senior year.

Although I enrolled in only a single history course in the fall of my senior year, the semester still proved to be the most dramatic period of improvement in my analytical and research abilities. Conducting my research seminar under the guidance of Dr. Richard Bodek gave me the opportunity to create my own topic, employing information obtained largely from primary sources. This method of research was the most rewarding albeit demanding experience of my undergraduate career as a history major. Ultimately, my final paper would be the first time I had little to no secondary research to build my synthesis and conclusion. While secondary sources provided a background, my own analytical ability and even imagination were challenged in composing my final paper.

As an undergraduate history major at the College of Charleston, I experienced a precise and noticeable growth in my research and writing abilities. My first year set the stage and provided the basics on which I would rely for my remaining years. The second year of study was characterized largely in studying at the University of Nottingham, with my skill set being further strengthened due to intense practice. My third and fourth years as a history major concluded with an increase in research ability with the zenith of my abilities being obtained while completing my research seminar final paper. Ultimately, the progression of my studies has prepared me to enter a new stage in my education. The

wonderful history professors I have encountered while at the College of Charleston have made this growth possible.