

Storybook Assignment

Alex Martinez

University of Washington - Bothell

B CUSP 203 Peer Coach Practicum

Carrie Newman

5/31/2021

Chapter One: “Who are you?”

I am actually a lot of things. I’m a son, a grandson, a brother, an uncle. And while I love being each those identities, all of them relate me to someone else. They’re an identity but they’re not me. It’s very hard to establish who I am, I feel like I’m everything but at the same time nothing at all. If we want to get physical, I come from two backgrounds: Mexican & Spanish. Even this gets confusing because they’re both ethnicities/nationalities. I never know what box to check off when filling out a document. Despite having an identity crisis my whole life, it taught me something important, something that shapes the way I think to this day, that’s simply to not judge others for their identity. I learned to acknowledge race, yes, but also recognizing & admiring everyone’s background and stories. It sounds super cliché but growing up with a mixed identity really allowed me to have an open mind. I think it’s made me a very compassionate and empathetic.

My personality is very emotional & resourcefully based. Since I could remember, I’ve always been the kid that helps others, shares things if can, and overall, just be there for other people’s needs. I am probably the biggest people pleaser I know and if I have to be honest, I think it’s because I’m scared of being seen as a *failure*. Something that’s dreadful to me is letting others down. I know it’s not healthy, but I would put aside whatever I’m doing and focus other people’s business & problems that might need solving. It’s not always toxic and I’m getting better, but I can’t help it to not always be there for others. I would describe myself as that friend or colleague you could always come to with any problem and I’d stop what I’m doing to help. A positive thing I learned from this was how to time manage very well. Helping others simply meant I had to do my stuff early. Again, part of this fear of failure, meant I’d always had to study, learn how to study, do my assignments before the due date, and just mold myself to be a better student. I’d have to admit, going to college holds a lot of weight on my shoulders. I’m the youngest of 3, but I’m the first in my family to go to college. My parents didn’t receive more than a high school education. It was pretty much determined I would be the one to attend college. I don’t mind it that much now that I’m in, but it was hard to have to navigate through everything *alone*. Which is why UWB was perfect for me and that’s also partially why I wanted to be a Peer Coach. UWB offered a place where if I’m lost, everything is just an email away. I don’t feel like I’m drowning anymore. I want to use my story and my lived experience to do the one thing I (learned to) love, helping others. I can’t wait to support incoming first years in their transition to college, especially BIPOC first-gen students.

Chapter Two: Transition

Being a first-gen student, I didn't know what to expect from college. Everyone in high school seemed to know what they're doing, and it started to have me worry. I was so nervous about everything. I honestly didn't know what I wanted to major in, that summer I had to worry about the pandemic & familiarizing myself with college, and overall felt small in an already small school. I was wondering I even made the right choice in going to college since it would be online.

But even with all those nerve-wracking feelings that kept me up sometimes, I was super optimistic to see what my new school had to offer. Obviously, due to media, the idea of college is very glamorized and romanticized. And if you want to get technical, I guess I can't have an opinion just yet because I've had to attend college literally through a computer screen. But nonetheless, I'm so excited to see new faces, get to explore the campus with other students who are just as excited as I am, getting to use campus facilities that have been so hyped up. *Ahem the ARC!!* A big downside of being virtual during my transition was being able to *genuinely* meet people. Two things I did to overcome this was 1.) joining Greek life over in the Seattle campus and 2.) applying to be a Peer Coach. Both of them allowed me to connect with so many people it's actually overwhelming the number of new friends I've made. Being in Greek Life compliments my social & community helping aspects/interests. And being a part of the Peer Coach program really helped me form a stronger relationship with UWB. It really is the best combo I could've done. If I had to give myself advice before coming to UWB, it would be to loosen up. I would also add to trust myself, especially when I applied for the Peer Coach Program, everyone I talked to told me "You got this!" "You're going to be great" etc., and I was so anxious when I didn't need to be. I would say to ignore the voice that tells you, you "can't".

My first quarter here at UWB, I ended my first quarter with a 4.0*! Note that I put an "*", I took CSS 101 and the midterm scared me into thinking I wouldn't pass the class. So, I S/NS'd the class. The final rolled around, and it did crush me but realistically I would've ended the class with a ~3.2, which isn't bad, but I acted out of impulse. After taking this class, I had to rethink my plan. Did I really like CS? Or did I like the *idea* of CS? Winter quarter *definitely* solidified that CS wasn't for me. I failed my first class ever, but like fall quarter I S/NS'd it so it didn't affect my GPA. After my first failure, I learned to not let it define me. Because of this failure, I learned my passion all along was both Political Science & Education. With the help of my advisors & Peer Coach, I was able to find a major that accounted for those passions.

Chapter Three: Reflection

I've learned a lot this quarter. I learned how to cope with failure, I learned what my passions are, I learned how to take care of myself both physically and mentally on & off campus. And through this course I was able to see myself beyond a mirror. All those little tests we had to take, reflection forms, and being put into different work groups, they all made my identity become a bit clearer.

I learned that I'm a blue person. I'm also an "encouraging the heart" person. As well as an owl. If you'd had to ask me what this all means I'd just simply say "I care about people". Though I didn't need a class to know that; it was important to me to be able to recognize those skills & aspects of my personality.

I'm proud to be a blue, I'm proud of encouraging and supporting others, they all allow me to have a spot in this team.

Being a Peer Coach is all about being there to support incoming freshman from all kinds of backgrounds. Ranging from those who've never had a single idea of what college is like, to those that just fine in their transition. Being able to cater to all kinds of students is something I believe I'm great at. Through cold calls, I've had a mixture of students who fall into those two options and the only thing that changes are my approach. I make sure I handle all my students in an equitable way, what they need I'll provide to the best of my abilities. Not specific to BCUSP but in one of my other classes we did make that distinction between being equal and equitable. If I gave everyone the same equal attention and effort, in theory it would work but in practice I noticed each case is different, so they all have their own needs. Using a growth mindset & not giving up on a student is crucial for this position.

My end goal is to graduate UWB and get both my history endorsement & teaching certification. The plan is to teach political science in high school. I'll use my dedication I have for this position to guide me through college & eventually be able to emulate it for my future students. I'll continue to navigate through college using a growth mindset & grit. And I hope to never lose my drive to always help others with anything I can.

Chapter Four: "Help is one email away"

After realizing that Computer Science wasn't the path for me, I had to reevaluate what it was I wanted to do. Luckily, there were two people I could always rely on: my Academic Advisor, Lauren Berry, and my Peer Coach, Catalina.

With my Academic Advisor, together we went back to the drawing board. That month was such a wonky road trip to my destination. I first expressed that I wanted to be just an education major but didn't know how I would be a teacher. Lauren Berry then referred me to another advisor, but this one was for the Education major specifically. That's when I met Kristen Labrecque who also took me to the drawing board and

together, we put two in two together. I really liked the idea of teaching secondary education at the high school level. So, with that I was referred to again another advisor, Amy Couto, who helped me solidify what subject I was passionate about and wanting to teach in, that being civic engagement/political science. And also, how to attain the things I need to be able to teach that subject: a history endorsement & a post-baccalaureate teaching certification.

After having my plan set, I consulted all this with Catalina. She was so happy and proud of me for finding my passion. Her encouragement these past three quarters have made such a small but amazing impact on my academic life. Catalina was one of the people who helped me realized I needed to start believing in myself. I remember during the Peer Coach application process, she kept reminding me that I got this and to not be nervous. This quarter I explained how my goal was to be engaged & more present during my (hopefully) last quarter online. Making goals with her was the best because it always felt like I was in control of my plans, she was like that voice in my head that's always encouraging me and keeping me accountable. I plan on taking the strategies she used to help me, to help my upcoming coachees.