

A reflection on Core

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The trip through core has been remarkable, life changing, and inspiring. Beginning fall quarter I was terrified. I didn't know anybody, I was new to Bellingham, and I was still uncertain about spending \$40,000 on a degree that will bring in very little income. Looking back, I can say I really didn't know anything about myself, specifically what made me into who I am or how I played a part in my community and the world. There were many questions still left unanswered, and I had no clue where to begin.

As the first quarter of core came and went I learned a lot about myself, my values, and my beliefs. From past travel and volunteer experiences, I came into core knowing I have a passion for working with people and helping others in any way possible. I knew I had many close friends and family who support me and love me. God played a very large role in my life and was my biggest motivation. However, I didn't know why. Searching for what I value and believe in was one of the toughest challenges I had to face my first quarter. When I began, I didn't know I had values that were worth anything. Nonetheless, by analyzing who I am within different systems I became newly inspired and motivated to be myself and follow my heart. It became clear that even though I am only one person, I have the ability to change many lives, starting with the one closest to me. This mindset also brought out a new perspective on my personal values. I can now say I value respect, honesty, and trust above all else. It is much easier to stand up for myself in ways I didn't before. I feel I have gained more faith and respect in myself over the past year, all because I was taught to care and acknowledge I have values that are important in my life.

Winter quarter began and I had to focus on myself within the context of the dyad experience. This wasn't new to me, as I have worked with a partner many times before. However, when we were able to reflect on the experience at the end, a few things stood out that seemed a bit surprising. Lindsey brought to my attention that I am quite dedicated to my work, very organized, and a great communicator. Learning I was a good communicator, in the sense that I am a respectful listener and I am open about my opinion, was a bit of a surprise. I always thought I was shy and reserved, considering myself to be more of an observer. When I learned Lindsey had made this observation, I began to reflect on previous experiences to see if it was true. It appears to be the case that I am more willing to open up when I am around just a very small number of people. However, when it comes to large groups, such as speaking in front of a classroom full of people, I become incredibly nervous. After hearing Lindsey's interpretation of me, I came to realize, it is important to keep in mind there are multiple ways of interpreting words and actions. Even though I may see myself one specific way, there are a hundred more ways other people can understand me. In any case, it is essential to be aware that words and actions can have many different means and every one of them needs to be respected.

Now junior core is ending and I can say there is one final lesson this quarter has taught me. I have a never-ending need to make people happy. Working in my group I began with the usual mind-set that I would do all the work and take complete control. This would allow me to feel safe and insure that everything would get done. However, right away, I knew this wasn't going to happen the way I had envisioned. Being able to predict the roles of my group members almost instantly, I set off using the elimination strategy to determine which open role I would

be most likely to fill. There were many instances, when working with my group, where I didn't speak up. To ensure everything would go smoothly, meeting location, task distribution, and meeting days were left open on the table; I knew I could make anything work with my schedule, even if it wasn't what I preferred.

My need to make people happy can also be seen through my interactions during my internship. I frequently asked the social workers I was shadowing if what I did was appropriate, if my tasks were completed correctly and accurately, and if there was anything at all I could do to help them. After my field visit didn't go as well as I had hoped, I made sure to do everything and anything I could to make it up to them and make them feel I was doing well. I worked for hours every night after I got home on little side projects for them. Every day I was in the office I had a good attitude and was ready to take on any responsibility they gave me. I can relate this need back to many childhood memories, but it's more important that I can see how it relates back to fall quarter, when I analyzed and discovered my values. Understanding that I value trust and honesty can shed light into why it is important for me to make people happy. By making sure to trust and be honest with others while doing what I can to get their needs met, I can only hope they will reciprocate the trust and honesty that has lacked in my life.

From this standpoint it is easy to see how everything interconnects. Looking back on how I have grown within myself and with the people around me, I understand that as I continue to grow my ability to work with a diverse population develops as well. When I reflect back on this last year the biggest thing I feel I have learned was to stand up for my values and have confidence in myself and others. I have grown to acknowledge and understand that I have a

need to put other people first and to make them happy, no matter the cost. Also, to work well with other people open communication and active listening skills are a necessity, and that every individual has a unique way of interpreting actions and words. Now that this year of Core is ending, I can confidently say that every ounce of effort it takes to get through this program will be worth it. The skills I have gained so far, and those I will continue to grow in, will shape me into a professional the world has never seen before. Each one of us is unique in our experiences and unique in the way we interpret events. We need to appreciate our diversity and grow to acknowledge ourselves first. If we don't take the time to understand ourselves and who we are as a professional, how can we help other people grow?