**Activity 2: Writing Exercise for Research Interests Narrative**

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**Research Interests Narrative**

1. **First, choose TWO of the following influences on your academic or professional interests. Write at least a page about each, exploring the connections or contradictions between them.**

**Formal education**. Describe the schools you attended before college. Which parts of school did you enjoy most and least? What subjects came most easily to you? What did you struggle with? Describe a memorable teacher or course. When did you become interested in your current major? If part of your education took place outside the United States, how did the differences in education systems affect your interests and academic decisions?

**Self-education**. Write about how you educated yourself on topics that interested you, particularly those that still interest researchers in your field. What books were especially important to you? What memories do you have about libraries, bookstores, museums, films, lectures, performances, or any other opportunities to learn more about what interested you?

**Cooperative/collaborative education.** Write about the parts of your education that required cooperation or collaboration with others. You can focus on group-oriented academic work, extra-curricular activities such as sports or clubs, participation in community or religious groups, military service, internships, or other work experience.

**“Life” education.** Write about personal challenges, family expectations or obligations, or cultural or political circumstances that you feel shaped your academic or professional interests.

1. **Next, write about a time when you became motivated to learn more about a topic that is related to your current major and that still interests you.** **Which of the experiences that you wrote about in Part I had the greatest influence on your interest in this topic?**

What questions did you have? Where did you seek out information? What obstacles did you face in getting answers? What fascinated or frustrated you? How did this experience affect your academic and professional interests and goals? Try to answer these questions in narrative form—use past tense, include details of time and place to tell the “story” of your interest in this topic. What would you still like to learn about this or a related topic? Why is research on this topic still important? (Don’t forget the default topic: How could education and training in your field be improved? What do students and professionals need to learn so that they can accomplish and contribute more?) Continue writing until you have a sense of where the story begins and ends, as well as why it’s important (this will become the draft of your “Research Interests Narrative”), and until you have a preliminary topic (phrased as a question) for your research in this class.

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