

Diana Rodgers
Personal Development Portfolio 8
Summary Reflective Essay

This semester, I wanted to get Fit Education Consulting LLC out of my head and out of my office and into the real world. I realized in our leadership course that while working independently has some great perks, it can also lead to stagnation and a lack of motivation to change. I believe that the Personal Development Portfolio assignment helped me to successfully tackle some of these challenges of stagnation and complacency and empowered me to think about the ways that Fit can engage better with our students and community.

As a requirement for the portfolio, I met with my State House Representative, Dan Frankel. While I found Representative Frankel's expertise on funding issues and public higher education in Pennsylvania to be interesting, I have found myself most frequently thinking of the social issues that intersect with higher education. Specifically, Representative Frankel is a strong proponent of restricting hate speech and implementing responsible gun control in the Commonwealth. Because I work with a variety of high school aged students, I have clients who have been both the victims of and often ignorant, although not malicious, perpetrators of intolerant speech. Hearing Representative Frankel's explanation for the way that this type of intolerance hurts the Commonwealth, even if it is from a young person parroting something that they don't really know is offensive, has made me reconsider my role as a consultant. Previously, I often ignored or just said "I don't like that language" to a student who said something offensive, because I didn't want to lose the client. Now, I think it is important for me to think of myself in an educator role, something also reflected in my Writing Workshop, and engage the student on why what they said was inappropriate. I am a business owner, but I am also an adult working with young people, and a member of a community that cannot bare more hate.

My meetings with institutional leaders helped me refine my work and my future Problem of Practice into something more practical. While the requirement was to meet with one institutional leader, I ended up completing five meetings. Hearing about efforts in the medical school and the UPMC medical training programs to attract, retain, and support minoritized applicants and future physicians led to my developing a problem of practice that is much more rooted in what Fit is already doing. At the beginning of the semester, I thought I wanted to institute a change in the Pitt Med admissions office, such as developing a new interview protocol, convincing them to use it, and seeing how rankings of minoritized, specifically rural, applicants changed. Now, I realize the greatest need is the development of pipeline programs and reliable information for students and their families about the medical school admissions process for students as young as middle school through their early career. This is particularly important for all minoritized students, and while I am still interested in rural students, I think that what I create will target first-generation college students, many of whom are rural. This process was actually really hard for me because it means that my PoP will not be quantitative, and I love numbers, but it will tie to parent education, which is something I am already doing, and fill a void that can lead to greater educational equity.

My second goal was to start to get ready to hire new employees, and this is really the bulk of my micro-change process, but I wanted to position myself to teach and explain my processes, especially around essay coaching, to a new employee. I completed the Writing Workshop as a self-check in and had many moments where I began to question and scrap my own process in favor of some of the suggestions presented by the webinar host. I am pleased

with the way that my micro-change project and my personal development portfolio overlapped, and because of the time and thought I put in, I will be able to develop business practices from a much more thoughtful and intentional mindset which will make training new employees easier. Finally, my social networking paid off in a first employee lead more than any Monster.com paid job advertisement ever could have.

Last, I spent a lot of time this semester talking to people about my problem of practice and my desire to expand Fit. A casual conversation with a neighbor who is an emergency physician led to an ally in him and to my meeting with Paula Davis. Going to Bible study and explaining my work, led to client leads. Finally, my meeting with Dr. Berlacher, which started out as my wanting to hear her opinions on nurturing women in medicine, led to an idea and a research paper that we are going to work together on for my internship in practice.

The Personal Development portfolio pushed me to actually take those first steps towards growth and expansion, and towards aligning my Problem of Practice with my current practice. I have been wanting to do this for a long time but had no incentive to actually do it. I am pleased with the ways that I have met my goals, the ways that I have grown in confidence in my community engagement, and the way that my personal development supported my micro-change project.