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Literacy in Your Future Major

Sara Rodriguez

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In my first year of college, I noticed the differences between how one is supposed to write in high school, and how you have to change your way of writing in academia. Whether it was about finding correct information or adequately citing my sources, I knew I was in for a challenge. My literacy in my future major paper can be somewhat challenging and possibly seen as an inconvenience, but in the end, it will hopefully all be rewarding. Being a Marine Science student, I would have to go through tenacious hours of studying and about a thousand hours of doing homework because I'm what's considered a STEM major. Being a STEM major means that most of my classes consist of science-based courses, like chemistry, calculus, and biology. Since I have to take those kinds of classes in college, writing is extremely important and I also would need to be able to get it just right. What I mean by that is that I would have to have all my facts straight, but also go back and check, then double-check just as an added precaution. Writing for my future major requires skills of correctly writing and finding evidence with enough proof to support my claims, but once I am prepared enough, then I can go and actually learn more about what I can use my Marine Science degree for.

At CSUMB, there are specific classes that I would have to take in order to properly understand how I can put my degree and myself out there in the real world. For example, some of the classes I would need to take are several semesters of biology to get a better understanding of what I could be doing. And then, of course, there are the different types of math classes I would need to take.

Calculus I and II, but also statistics is in my perceivable future. Once I finish my GE classes, then I can go into the more exciting classes for my major. Those types of classes actually focus on my specific major and can really help me move ahead. Some classes include Oceanography, SCUBA classes, Marine Ecology and so many others that I think will be really exciting and possibly even fun, if I give it a chance but also if I do the work and put a good amount of effort into it. There are obviously some other classes that I can take that could also help me, however, I need to find the right fit for me. I will most likely go through a trial and error phase, but I have no doubt that once I find out what I'm good at, I will feel right at home.

I started my research on how writing and researching are supposed to be when it comes to my major. In more specific terms, how writing about my major is supposed to be. According to Michael Carter, there is a specific way college students and researchers are supposed to write articles and other documents. By conducting research, the researcher can gather information from the data they collected. Then, once the information has been gathered, the researcher can then write a report. According to page 388 of *Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines*, Carter states "Thus, the lab experience is a way of doing that is directed toward a way of knowing. It is primarily in writing the lab report, however, that doing becomes knowing." Carter means that doing and knowing go hand-in-hand and can be connected to each other, like in researching and writing. However, Michael Carter is not the only author who thinks that doing and knowing can go hand-in-hand. Jason E. Dowd also wrote an article about how scientific writing is slightly different from writing about any other major, but there are also multiple similarities to writing a paper in general. Since my major is a science-based one, the article that Dowd wrote is the one that resonates with me the most. According to page 37 of *Quantitative Genre Analysis of Undergraduate Theses: Uncovering Different Ways of Writing and Thinking in Science Disciplines*, Dowd states "Scientific writing, then, is a form of rhetoric in that scientists construct arguments—first to persuade themselves, and then others—that an interpretation of findings or an explanation is valid and interesting." From what I gathered

from the quote, Dowd tried to show how a scientific researcher conducts his research while also trying to explain how you can make your audience understand what you are trying to tell them in terms and words that they will most likely understand.

As I researched my major on the CSUMB website, I found all kinds of classes I could possibly take, but also things that I will learn. My Major Learning Outcomes (or MLOs, as they're called on the CSUMB website) have multiple things written down. These things are what I will (hopefully) learn and be able to use for myself in the future, whether that's at my job or just in general. My first Learning Outcome is quantitative, research, and communicative skills. This means that I would need to use quantitative evidence to evaluate hypotheses, and display and analyze data to interpret and communicate marine patterns and processes in written and oral formats. My second Learning Outcome is personal, professional, and social responsibility. This means that I would need to be able to work professionally and ethically to promote inclusive environmental decision-making based on diverse stakeholder perspectives. My third Learning Outcome is marine science depth of knowledge. This means that I would need to demonstrate marine science content knowledge appropriate for marine science careers or graduate school. My fourth and last Learning Outcome is marine science integration and synthesis. This means that I would need to synthesize, connect, and apply knowledge, skills, and experiences across the interdisciplinary field of marine science (e.g., biology, oceanography, etc.) allowing them to address new and complex challenges facing the oceans. Now, since I am studying for a Marine Science degree, what I could do with it has always made people curious about my future plans. Marine Science is actually a really broad subject, or degree, technically so I really have a lot of options in case I ever need a backup plan for whatever reason. However, if everything in my life can go according to plan (and usually it never does, but here's to hoping), I would wanna study sharks as a profession. But since studying sharks could be done behind a desk or out in the water, I suppose I could be a little bit more specific about my dream plans. I would like to join a club or research program that specializes in studying sharks. My top three

sharks that I would love to study would have to be Tiger sharks, Great whites, or Hammerheads. Pretty much the popular ones. I would love to track their migratory patterns, what they eat, and how we, as humans, affect a shark's way of life. The one thing I know that I will absolutely not compromise is what I want to do with my life. I want to be able to go out in the open ocean and be on a big boat where I can tag sharks. I want to go to a certain place on our planet and see the one thing that I've been dreaming of since I was a little kid watching Shark Week from the comforts of my home. I want to go there and be able to get some amazing photos and show everyone and be able to tell them, "Yeah, I really went out there and saw this for myself." I want to be able to also go out in a shark cage and dive with them, but I think that once I do this, I'll really feel like I can also belong in their world. I may live on land and they live out in the water, but we all call planet Earth our home, and I think we should all be grateful for that.

In order to achieve that dream, I would need to know how to properly write out certain essays or other written things. For this to happen, I would need a very good or well-thought-out plan of action. As I have no doubt discovered in this college life, writing is an essential skill that will help me get the word out on what I want to express. Whether it's about an academic topic or if it's me writing a short story, writing still plays a big role in my life. However, in order to write correctly, I need to be able to say that I know what I want to say. In addition to knowing what I want to say, I also need to be able to plan ahead and gather my thoughts and sources in order to write a really good paper. After I read the articles from both Carter and Dowd, I realized that they were, in a way, helping me in preparing for what I would need to do for my major. First, Carter explained that when I am doing research, like collecting data, I'm also starting to understand or know what I'm doing. Like when I'm writing my research report or writing a paper on the data I collected, I'm starting to know more and more about my major and what it requires of me. Then, Dowd explained how when a scientist is writing his research paper, they need to not only be able to convince themselves about what they have done but convince others about the data they collected. Dowd also tried to explain that the audience needs to be able to

understand what you are trying to tell them, either in scientific terms or simple terms, depending on who the audience is.

I have learned that when it comes to academic papers, I need to be able to properly cite my sources, but also write in a manner that is both professional and understandable to those who may not be familiar with my major. Researchers who are studying in a science-based major should know that doing research and knowing research will always be something that will go together.

Author Bio:

As a writer, Sara believes the most important thing we can do is show perspective on an important topic that we feel deeply about. By writing something that has meaning to us, we can take pride in our work and we won't be afraid to show it off.