Writing Assignment #1: THE SWANSON SCHOOL AND ME • Engineering 0011/0711 Fall, 2017/2181
Submission Date will be provided in class and via email

READ EVERY PART OF EVERY PAGE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT. READ EVERY PART OF EVERY PAGE MORE THAN ONCE. This assignment and any related information and materials provided in class, sent to you via email, and/or posted on the 0011 and 0711 sites essentially constitute Chapter 1 of your 0011/0711 writing textbook. The chapters in your “writing textbook” are as important as the chapters in your textbooks and the lecture notes for all of your other classes. As with the textbooks and notes from all of your classes, if you don’t study the material, you will have difficulty doing well on the graded assignments.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
• Submission date and additional submission instructions will be provided in class and via email
• On the submission date, have your hard copy (with attached evaluation sheet) already proofread, printed, and stapled when you come to your 0011 or 0711 class
• Be sure to attach a hard copy of the Assignment 1 Evaluation Sheet to your paper
• Staple all pages of your paper (including the evaluation sheet) together, with the evaluation sheet on top
• Do NOT plan on coming to class and then printing out your writing assignments. Do not plan on using class time to finish writing or proofreading this assignment or any of your writing assignments. Have everything finished, printed, and stapled before you come to class

THE SWANSON SCHOOL AND ME: A DESCRIPTIVE PAPER ABOUT MY FIRST SEMESTER: Write a 3-section, 950-1000-word paper on “The Swanson School and Me.”

• This paper will show your understanding of why you are where you are, and will allow you to speculate on what you want to achieve and on how you might meet your goals.
• Note: You must format your paper correctly. All format specifications are detailed in the document Engineering 0011/0711 • Format Specifications, Writing Assignment 1 • Fall 2017/2181

- Do not use any other formatting types or specifications than the formatting specified in Engineering 0011/0711 • Format Specifications, Writing Assignment 1 • Fall 2017/2181

THE SWANSON SCHOOL AND ME: SECTION 1
Describe and explain why you want to be a student at the University of Pittsburgh Swanson School of Engineering. You must specifically explain all elements of this part of the paper so readers can “see” your relevant thinking and experiences. Be sure to support all claims and evaluations with “concrete,” specific, details and specifically, concretely detailed examples. An excellent, effective paper of any kind will always contain clear connections among all of its parts. Be sure, then, to clearly, specifically describe/explain how this first section leads into and/or relates to the other information/sections of your paper.

THE SWANSON SCHOOL AND ME: SECTION 2
Describe and explain what you hope to achieve/accomplish during your first semester at the Swanson School of Engineering. You must specifically explain all elements of this part of the paper so readers can “see” your relevant hopes and goals. Be sure to support all claims and evaluations with “concrete,” specific, details and specifically, concretely detailed examples. Though most or all of these claims and examples will be hypothetical, they must be detailed in such a way that they are clear and reasonable/believable/credible. An excellent, effective paper of any kind will always contain clear connections among all of its parts; be sure to explain how this “part” of your paper connects/relates to the other parts.

THE SWANSON SCHOOL AND ME: SECTION 3
Describe and explain how you plan to meet/accomplish your goals for your first semester at the Swanson School of Engineering. You must specifically explain all elements of this part of the paper so readers can “see” how you plan to achieve your goals. Be sure to support all claims and evaluations with “concrete,” specific, details and specifically, concretely detailed examples. Though most or all of these claims and examples will be hypothetical, they must be detailed in such a way that they are clear and reasonable/believable/credible. An excellent, effective paper will always contain clear connections among all of its parts; be sure to explain how this “part” of your paper connects to the other parts. Keep reading for further essential information
ESSENTIAL CONTENT OF THE PAPER

SECTION 1 of your paper must describe and explain why you are currently attending the University of Pittsburgh and the SSOE; this section will contain information such as

• what led to your decision to apply to the SSOE?
• how and why you selected the University of Pittsburgh and the SSOE
• if you applied to and/or were accepted to other schools, why did you decide on the University of Pittsburgh and the SSOE?
• why you and the University of Pittsburgh and its SSOE are a good “match”

SECTION 2 of your paper must describe and explain your goals and hopes for your first semester at the SSOE. This section will contain information such as

• what do you hope to learn during your first semester at the University of Pittsburgh’s SSOE; how and why is this particular learning important to you?
• what do you hope to achieve during your first semester at the University of Pittsburgh’s SSOE; how why are these particular achievements important to you?
• what types of experiences do you hope to have during your first semester at the University of Pittsburgh’s SSOE; why do you want to pursue these types of experiences?

SECTION 3 of your paper must describe and explain the thinking, action, and strategies you might employ to achieve the goals you have described in the second section. This section will contain information such as

• what strategies might you use, what actions will you take to meet your academic and other goals?
• what strategies might you use, what actions might you take to inspire and/or maintain focus and motivation?
• where and/or to whom will you go for assistance with your coursework?
• where and/or to whom might you go to talk about issues that seem to be standing in the way of your goals?

ESSENTIAL SPECIFICITY OF THE INFORMATION

When writing an effective paper, you must use specifics, throughout. Specific/extended explanations; specific examples; specific details within those examples—these are essential components of clear, credible, communication at university and professional levels. If you use “abstract” terms to introduce or summarize a concept or claim in a university or professional level paper, you must always, ALWAYS clarify and support these general, abstract concepts and claims. This support is established and reinforced via concrete details, detailed examples, and extended explanations.

What is an “abstract” or “general” (and often vague) concept/claim/term?

• An abstract or general concept/claim/term is usually quite broad and can have many different possible meanings
• An abstract or general concept/claim/term is often evaluative—the concept/claim/term posits that something is “good,” or “valuable,” or “bad” or “problematic” or “exciting” or “useless” or “innovative” or “disappointing”
• While your readers will know that “good” can generally be the opposite of “disappointing,” your readers will only know how YOU see or evaluate something as “good” if YOU explain to them how and why something (an achievement, a plan, a program, etc.) is “good!” This is equally true if you make a claim that something is or was or would be “a problem” or “disappointing” or “confusing,” etc.

How do I explain to my readers how and why something (an achievement, a plan, a program, etc.) is “good” or is a problem or is exciting, etc.?

• You clarify and explain abstractions by following them up (or, sometimes replacing them) with specific, concrete details and examples.

But what is a “concrete detail?”

• A concrete detail is specific, particular, real and tangible (or, if hypothetical, it is specific, particular, credible, and can be clearly visualized)
• A concrete detail comes from the experience of actual objects, occurrences, experiences, or events (or specific, particular, credible, hypothetical experience of things and events)

Keep reading for further essential information!
A concrete detail provides tangible evidence for claims and/or demonstrates the meaning of abstract terms and concepts.

What about examples?

- Examples are essential to an effective paper, but an example is not useful unless it includes concrete details that “illustrate” the importance of the example and unless it includes concrete details that support any claims and evaluations that are connected to the example.
- Concrete details in an example describe the particulars of actual experiences and often answer the questions “how much,” “why,” and/or “how.” If an example is hypothetical, specific, particular, details often credibly answer the questions “how much,” “why,” and/or “how.”
- Concrete details provide visible, tangible evidence for claims and/or demonstrate the meaning of abstract terms and concepts. If an example is hypothetical, concrete details credibly demonstrate possible/likely experiences, processes, and outcomes.

Sample abstract statements

Examples of general, abstract statements and claims

Questions Leading to Concrete Details

Answer these types of questions to arrive at necessary concrete details and necessary clarity

“I did well in math.”

What, exactly, does “I did well” mean? (100% on every quiz and test in pre-calculus? Nothing lower than a 90% on every homework, quiz, and test in BC Calculus?? Took advantage of tutoring to raise my grade to between 95 and 100 in Analytic Algebra and then in pre-calculus? Made sure I understood concepts in my BC calculus class by frequently asking my instructor questions and by working with a tutor?)

“I saw that the SSOE is a good school”

What sources provided the information about the SSOE, and what, in particular, makes the SSOE “good?” What do you mean by “good school?” What specific criteria did/do you use to determine that the Swanson School is a “good school” and is a “good school” for you (and how does the SSOE meet those criteria)?

“I plan to have a successful semester.”

How are you defining “successful?” Are you referring strictly to academic courses and grades? For you, what constitutes “success” in academics and grades? Are you referring to particular aspects of engineering you want to learn about? What is it you plan to learn about (what engineers do? what engineers in a specific field do? what are the knowledge areas that are most important for engineers?) Are you referring to having a safe, fun social life (what constitutes “safe?”; what constitutes “fun?”) Are you referring to academics and a social life?

I plan to get some help if I need it.

How might you know or determine whether or not you “need help?” What kinds of help might you be referring to? Are you referring to academic help—help with math, science, writing? If so, where, specifically, might you go to get that help? Who might you consult first? Are you academic work amidst all the new experiences of
university life? If so, where, specifically might you go to get that help? Who might you consult first? Are you referring to getting help if you are feeling anxious or very stressed? Are you referring to help you might get if you are stressed and physically ill? If so, where, specifically, might you go to get that help? Who might you consult first? In any of these situations, how might this help be significant to your “success” in your first semester at the Swanson School?

ESSENTIAL SOURCES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Are there “research sources” that will help you answer the types of questions posed above? Yes!—here are some sources; you should feel free to use others:

- **YOU**; you are an essential “source” for the specifics of this paper. To write a clear, effective paper, you will need to “research” yourself. You will look into your own decision-making processes, your goals, your motivations, and your actions to find the specific information regarding “why,” “what,” and “how.”

- **The University’s and SSOE’s own materials and other reliable sources** that provide information/analysis regarding the University of Pittsburgh and/or SSOE.

- **Instructors and advisors**: do not hesitate to ask instructors and advisors questions that will help you provide necessary specifics; do not hesitate to include information and specifics already provided to you by your instructors and advisors.

- **SSOE sophomores, juniors, and seniors**: sophomores, juniors, and seniors in other University of Pittsburgh schools and programs; do not hesitate to ask upperclassmen you might know (for example, RAs, your 0081 small group leader; friends, and friends of friends) questions that will help you understand and specify your decision-making process, your goals, potential actions you might take, etc.; do not hesitate to include information and specifics already provided to you by SSOE/Pitt upperclassmen.

- **Your fellow freshmen**: do not hesitate to discuss the questions posed by this assignment with your fellow SSOE (and/or other Pitt) freshmen. Such discussion can lead to useful insights, realizations, and, of course, valuable specifics.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR “AUDIENCE”

Who is my audience for this paper? My writing instructor? The English Department? SSOE? There are several “audiences” for this paper: you, your writing instructor, and your writing instructor's professional colleagues.

- **You, because writing = discovering and understanding**: Writing about any topic—including yourself—allows you to increase your understanding of that topic, to explore farther and in more detail than you could if you were not writing about a topic.

- **You, because when you draft and revise, when you move from the general to the specific, you increase your own knowledge**.

- **You, because you can see how your knowledge of the expectations and requirements of university and professional level writing is increasing**.

- **You because by writing carefully and specifically, you teach yourself**.

- **Your Writing Instructor and your Writing Instructor’s professional colleagues**: because your writing instructor and his or her colleagues have many years of experience and knowledge about the expectations and requirements of university level writing; thus, **your Writing Instructors can help you understand and enact** those expectations and requirements.

- **Your Writing Instructor and your Writing Instructor’s professional colleagues** because these instructors are **genuinely interested and invested in helping you and your colleagues** understand yourselves and the world, do your best work, and make the most of all a university education has to offer.