

Portfolio Statement - Aengus McMillin - 11/26/2012

This first quarter I have spent here at the University of Washington has been an enlightening experience. I have learned a lot about myself, my strengths, and my weaknesses. Initially when I went into this, I had no idea how hard the classes were going to be, what would be expected of me, etc... And admittedly, I was a bit cocky. Although I homeschooled instead of going to high school, I have always done well in standardized tests, I have always read at a fairly high level, and I have always taken pride in being a grade or two ahead in math. But during this first quarter the difficulty has definitely begun to set in: I was a bit lazy in practicing for my second calculus midterm and my performance was poorer than I was hoping, I have been struggling to keep up with my readings for philosophy, and admittedly, I am somewhat terrified of finals coming up. I now recognize that, although I'm not exactly lazy, my work ethic could do with some improvement if I hope to achieve my goals.

But my realizations haven't all been negative. I now have a better idea of how much time I should expect to put into studying to improve my scores, and I think that I will be more than capable of putting that time in with just a bit more focus. I have also gotten a better feeling of where I stand in comparison with other students and the sort of grades I should expect for myself. All in all, academically I feel that I have grown and matured in these last two and a half months, and I feel better for it.

This first quarter has also greatly helped me confirm and clarify my goals and plans for the next two and a half years. I haven't had any revelations that have caused me to want to change majors or anything like that, but forcing myself to take a good hard look at exactly what I want to do to fulfill my requirements for my "four-year plan" has been incredibly useful. And, now that I know more about the various experiential learning opportunities that are available, I feel much more confident about my options. I hope to pursue research as my main project, of course I don't yet know *what* I will be researching, but I know that there are plenty of options available in the computer science department. For my other experiential learning project though, I'm still not sure. Because sadly I don't think that studying abroad will work well with my plans, I am considering becoming a TA, but I will also take a look at the volunteer opportunities at a local animal shelter.

Overall, this has been a good quarter. I have made a few friends, I have begun to settle in, and, although I still look forward to heading home for the holidays, Seattle and the University of Washington are beginning to feel like home.

