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Reflection Essay

Throughout this quarter I have learned a significant amount about writing and communication in STEM. I have improved both my oral and written communication skills in a technical setting. I have also gained a better understanding of how necessary and invaluable effective communication skills are within a professional STEM environment. These skills will help me immensely throughout my career in data analytics and software engineering. Here are some of the most important aspects that I learned from the class.

One of the most significant details that differentiates writing in STEM from other types of writing is the intended audience and purpose. When writing in a professional and technical setting it is important to consider who will be reading your material. Considering the audience will allow you to create more effective content that is both efficient and easy to understand. It is important to acknowledge the amount of technical expertise that your potential reader will have. If you are writing to stakeholders, project managers, or a more general audience that might have less technical experience, then it is important to use language that they will be able to understand. Elizabeth Tebeaux's *The Essentials of Technical Communication* is an effective, in-depth guide about how to consider your audience and adjust your writing to cater to them. She summarizes some of the most important things to consider when "writing for your readers" with three quick tips, "1. You want your readers to understand your meaning exactly in the way you intend. 2. You want your writing to achieve its goal with the designated readers. 3. You want to keep the goodwill of those with whom you communicate" (Tebeaux 15). The book also provides a variety of useful examples of different kinds of documents you will likely need to write in a professional STEM setting such as emails, technical reports, and proposals.

Another important aspect to remember when writing in STEM is to always evaluate your sources. The research report that I worked on with four other classmates gave me significant insight into the disparities in credibility between different sources. Through exploring the contrast between scholarly and popular media sources related to the controversy surrounding Facebook's data collection practices, I was able to gain a better understanding of the variability between different sources and communities. The presentation in class also gave me the opportunity to improve my oral communication skills and learn about how to effectively summarize and present findings. "In today's work environment, knowing how to speak effectively and use presentation slides has become an increasingly valuable asset, whether you work in an academic or a non academic environment" (Tebeaux 309). As Tebeaux mentions, the ability to communicate orally is essential in a professional STEM environment.

Overall, this course has helped me greatly in developing my technical communication skills. Practicing writing technical reports and memos, presenting researched content and ideas, and working collaboratively in a team setting have all greatly contributed to my learning. These communication skills have already begun to benefit my professional development as I have been able to apply them to my writing when corresponding with recruiters and hiring managers for internships in STEM fields. I have also been able to significantly improve the content of my resume and personal portfolio site. I look forward to continuing to improve my technical communication skills and to applying them to my writing throughout my STEM career.

Tebeaux, E., & Dragga, S. (2018). *The Essentials of Technical Communication*. New York: Oxford University Press.