**Developing Student Agency**

**Essay Evaluation Form**

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Set #: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **Essay ID #** | **Independence** | **Curiosity** | **Reflection** | **Ownership** | **Content Analysis** |
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**“Developing Student Agency” Evaluation Rubric (Revised January 2012)**

**In response to the two prompts, the student:**

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|  | **6** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **0** |
| **Independence**  **(internalization, self-generation or regeneration of “interests” or breadth)** | Articulates learning goals and impacts without focusing on institutional or course requirements, and demonstrates intent to pursue those interests within and beyond the classroom. | Articulates learning goals and impacts that are not primarily focused on meeting institutional or course requirements, although those may be mentioned. | Connects institutional or course requirements/ credentials to own learning goals and impacts (can articulate WHY graduation requirements are meaningful). | Expresses learning goals in form of institutional requirements/ credentials or generalized markers of success, but is able to connect one goal or partially connect both to personal learning goals and desired impacts. | Expresses learning goals in terms of gaining credentials, fulfilling requirements, or obtaining generalized markers of success; shows some understanding of what requirements entail. | Expresses learning goals and impacts in terms of gaining credentials, fulfilling requirements, or obtaining generalized markers of success; may only address one goal or address only at the surface level; minimal exploration. | No learning goals/ expectations articulated (although social or other goals might be given, without any mention of learning) |
| **Curiosity (surface -level identification vs. deeper analysis and hypothesis formation)** | Uses deep exploration of the topic (and its relevance to lived experience) to pose new questions of self and others. Cites specific examples. Addresses questions fully. | Demonstrates strong desire to explore topic in depth and gain insight into lived experience thereby. Cites specific examples. Addresses all or most parts of both questions. | Demonstrates some interest in examining topic and its relevance to lived experience more deeply. Cites specific examples. Addresses all or most parts of both questions. | Explores topic minimally, but may cite specific examples. Addresses all or most parts of both questions. | Explores the topic minimally, with a focus on abstract or general concepts; may not address all parts of questions. | Addresses topic at surface level, demonstrating a little interest in examining it more deeply; may not address all parts of questions. | No interest in deeper examination: “I want my band to be known nationally by recording and producing my own records and to pass all of my classes so I don’t flunk.” |
| **Reflection (dichotomous self-analysis vs. multiple interrelated factors in past and future)** | Makes plans or envisions a future self based on experiences that have occurred across multiple and diverse contexts, exploring complexity of context in depth. | Evaluates changes in own learning over time, recognizing complex contextual factors (e.g., works with ambiguity and risk, deals with frustration, considers ethical frameworks). | Articulates strengths and challenges in specific contexts (within specific performances or events) to increase effectiveness in different contexts. | Takes account of context in describing some strengths and challenges, and provides a general acknowledgment of value of this knowledge outside of that immediate context. | Takes account of context in describing some strengths and challenges, but does not describe using this information to increase effectiveness elsewhere. | Describes own performances with general descriptors of success and failure (bad writer, great student, etc). | No reference to self-knowledge in description of goals or impacts: “In high school my teacher came dressed as George Washington; anyone would remember that.” |
| **Ownership (Responsibility for and understanding of learning process; strategizing to achieve own goals)** | Takes full responsibility for the learning process, setting specific goals and articulating coherent strategies for achieving them. May also demonstrate awareness of significance of interaction with others in learning process. | Takes responsibility for the learning process and achieving articulated goals; may also demonstrate awareness of and intent to seek out helpful resources. Planning is specific and thoughtful. | Demonstrates clear recognition of own role in learning process, and possibly that of others, as well. Planning includes some specific steps that demonstrate understanding of learning process. | Demonstrates some recognition of own role in learning process, but focuses on the role of others, and/or demonstrates superficial understanding of learning process. Some planning, but vague or incomplete. | Ascribes responsibility in the learning process to educators rather than learners, and/or demonstrates flawed or superficial understanding of learning process. Minimal or no planning. | Addresses either responsibility or planning, but not both, and at very minimal level. | No responsibility, no planning: “Beloit and its great professors will give me the tools I need to succeed at anything.” “I hope my teachers will give me the grades I need to succeed.” |

**Questions for content analysis:**

In what areas of their lives (academic, social, personal, etc.) do students set goals?

Where do students locate learning (e.g., classroom, social interactions, co-curricular activities, community engagement)?

Do you notice any other trends that might be relevant to this study?

Please note any responses that strike you as especially valuable for this study and/or the evaluation of the Initiatives program.

**Student Essay Samples**

**Pre-test Sample 1**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

I suppose the most memorable moment from high school occurred during summer school. I chose to take pre-calculus the summer of my junior year because a lot of my friends were taking it. This meant I could take Calculus AB as a junior and then Calculus BC as a senior. The class was a 6 week course and there were two sessions available. One started at 7:45am and the other around 10am. Naturally everyone picked the later session. My parents then told me that we had a vacation planned 4 weeks into the course. Then my instructor told me that in order to finish early and leave, I had to take the 7:45am session because the 10am one required you be there for all 6 weeks, even if you finished early. I was pretty bummed about that, but I went for it. I ended up staying for both sessions sometimes and finished both semesters with an A and in time to leave for vacation. I'm not entirely sure of the effect this situation had on me. I suppose it showed me that I am capable of working hard, something I have yet to really do. I don't know how it will affect my life in the future, but I guess I'll find out.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

I don't really have any goals for the semester. As of right now, I'm just planning on taking my classes, doing my work, and hanging out. I'll see what happens. I am a "go with the flow" kind of person. I tend to do things with no preconceived thoughts and let the events I experience help me form my goals.

**Pre-test Sample 2**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

High School Experience High school is an emotional roller coaster, filled with ups and down, but one must take advantage of the four years because they lead to many great memories. I have several sensational experiences from high school, but the one that stands out the most is football. I enjoyed football so much and it will be a memory with me for the rest of my life because I spent tons of hours playing a game I love with my friends, it taught me plenty of valuable lessons, and it is a once in a lifetime experience. Though I am playing in college, it will never be the same because I will not be playing with my friends that I have known since I could first walk. We had so many inside jokes and nearly everyday something happened that was a great story to tell. Whether it was Techno Tuesday in the locker room where we turned out all of the lights and used glow sticks for a dance party or were just sitting there telling hilarious stories waiting for practice to start, it was the time of our lives. It would be our senior season and we would still be talking about the great times we had from the first time we stepped on the field together in sixth grade. Football will definitely be the thing that my friends and I remember the most out of all of the time we spent together. The lessons it taught me will not just help me with the rest of my athletic career, but also with life in general. I learned how to win with class and lose with my chin up. I built a desire to get better at whatever task I was trying to accomplish and be the best I can be. Since football is such a team game, it illustrates the important of trust and teamwork. If one person messes up, the whole play goes to shambles. If one person fails in the business world, that brings the whole company down. Most importantly, it taught me sportsmanship and how to respect everyone, but fear no one; which is a great philosophy in the "real world" when negotiating and doing business. As mentioned earlier, there will be nothing like that experience and it is irreplaceable. One only gets four years in high school and that person has to do it to the fullest. Since football was my best experience, it is hard to imagine I will never get to strap it up with my best friends ever again. In a few years, it is going to be a struggle to even stay in touch with them when we all move from home! Since I had this attitude of "there are only four years so do it with all your heart," I poured my soul into football and it hurts to see it end. High school football was such a key component of my high school experience because it was with all of my best friends, I learned valuable lessons from it, and I will never get to experience it again. Though it hurts to see it go, I have to move on in life, so here I am at Beloit College! I will use the lessons and experiences I faced on the football field and do everything I can to bring them to Beloit for another excellent four years.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

Two Goals In the semester ahead I have so many different goals I would like to accomplish. Not only would I like to have success with my grades, but I would like to have fun doing it. Playing football will help me with my time management because I will have to plan out when I am going to do everything. Two goals I have for myself are to maintain a good grade point average while staying relaxed and make lots of friends to set myself up for an enjoyable four years. I am having a great time with football so that will help me let out my stress when I am feeling overwhelmed with school. That also has helped me make some friendships that I know I will keep for the next four years. I am a pretty smart student so I am not concerned about keeping my grade point average but I am worried that I will keep too much pressure on myself to be perfect when some work at Beloit will be very challenging. I had some good advice from my father that his worst semester was fall of freshman year but he just put his head down and plowed through it and ended up graduating with respectable grades. I also need to think about the rest of my college career and that is where making friends comes into play. Having friends on the football team is great, but I also need to make sure I have a couple of friends in each of my classes that are not football players so the classes are more easy and enjoyable.

**Pre-test Sample 3**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

The first day of class in Acting I, our teacher dove off a table into our nervous arms. Following suite, the entire class had a chance to crowd surf, something which I had never done before. That was the kind of class Acting I was. Our first performance assignment was one that scared most students out of their wits, especially after his example performance that left most of us in tears. We had to choose music longer than three minutes and tell the journey of a person along to the music, using no words or sounds. The entire thing was to be created by ourselves. I was terrified of performing in front of people. I didn't like emotionally exposing myself, even in front of my friends, and telling a story in acting that had personal meaning to me seemed like an impossible task. I had no idea what to do, no idea how to start, and had no clue as to what music I wanted. Eventually, the idea came to me through a song. I was listening to the soundtrack from "Tani no NausicaÃ¤", a Japanese animated film. And I pictured ballet; simple tutus and elegant ballerinas pirouetting and spinning around. I realized I wanted my story to be about a ballerina, and the loss of her ability to dance. I mirrored the story to my greatest fear- losing my sight. I am a visual artist, constantly drawing, writing, and taking pictures. Losing my sight would ruin me completely. The rest of the story of the ballerina came easily, and soon the music flowed through the movements creating a fluid art piece. I never had an open space to practice in, so I used the small floor of my bedroom, which was decidedly hard to dance in. I got my first chance to really run through the whole piece, music and all, for my two friends in the advance acting class the morning of the performance. Being alone on the dark floor of the Studio Theatre with only blinding lights heating my face, I felt sick to my stomach. However, as soon as the music started, my nerves turned into emotions that pulled me through the story of my ballerina, from receiving her first ballet shoes to becoming a ballet instructor for small children after the accident rendering her unable to dance. In the final moment, I watched my children run out onto stage, shooing them on. As the lights dimmed, I realized I was crying. There was no left over residue of nerves, no fear of judgement, no ridiculing looks from my audience members. Only pure, beautiful emotional release. My scheduled performance for the class went smoothly, the music played true, and I forgot no part of my act. But there were no tears this time. Any pent up fear I had had before that morning was gone, because I knew that it wasn't a fatal action, to become vulnerable in front of others. No one judged me for opening up and displaying something personal. From that moment and that class onward, I have become more open about who I am and how I act around other people. It will stick with me because I have seen the benefit of showing emotions. It helped me learn to trust that people will be respectful, and if they aren't, they're not worth seeing the real me. Becoming vulnerable is the only way to really get to know people, and though I have not mastered said skill, Acting I has taught me well.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

a. My first goal for the semester is to find a class I enjoy so much I don't mind doing the classwork. (A class that really "clicks.") This will mostly be a task of trial and error, since I'll never know if I'm signing up for that class. But, there are certain actions I can take to assure the class is a better fit. First of all, I need a passionate, interesting professor who is willing to be bold and creative in his or her teaching. Almost any seemingly boring class can have life put into it by a good instructor. I also need to willing to accept that all classes will not be perfect, and I have to give them a chance to click with me. I clearly can't have everything my way, nor will the class always be the most interesting part of my day. That said, I'm still waiting for the moment of "wow" at the end of the semester when I know I've found a class that will stick with me forever. My second goal of the semester is to sleep more. I love sleeping. (I think everyone loves sleeping.) Unfortunately, though a second-semester senior during the previous school year, I did not get nearly enough sleep. I survived, but I was tired all the time, and probably not the healthiest person. Life is truly not as fun when you just want to go to bed all the time. This one is entirely up to me, unless professors decide to give out absurd amounts of homework. I have to learn to manage my time in the sense that homework gets done at a reasonable hour, and though midnight art urges may happen, these are not to be indulged. I feel a million times happier and much more agreeable when I've gotten my 8 (but preferable 9) hours of sleep.

**Pre-test Sample 4**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

One high school experience that was meaningful and memorable to me occurred during the months of July through October. It all started when I was notified by an administrator from school, Mr. Kaminski, he informed me that I would be a "good leader" for a service project called, "Kids Against Hunger". At first I was hesitate about agreeing to play this role in something I knew little about, but consequently I said I would and Mr. Kaminski was thrilled and gave me all the details. At that very moment I thought to myself, "what did I just say yes to?" Once he and I hung up, the idea of being a leader lingered in my head. Soon enough there was a meeting in mid July, and there were about seven other seniors curious to know about this whole spiel. We were all told that this project would not only require enormous effort, but extensive dedication and team work by student leaders and hundreds of volunteers. Concisely, Kids Against Hunger packages highly nutritious meals feeding starving children and families in demanding countries and the U.S. The goal for Beloit Memorial High School was to send 285,000 meals to Cameroon, Africa, a country ranked 15th in infant mortality. In order to ensure that 40,000 pounds of raw ingredients, shipping equipment, and handling of food would be made, the funding of 45,000 dollars had to be fulfilled by October 27, 2010, the packaging day. That left about two and half months to raise the money, organize the event, and put together about 800 volunteers. Now that was too much to handle, even impossible. My role as one of the student leaders was to present this project to schools, corporations, service clubs, churches and foundations to solicit the money. Admittedly, public speaking is a huge obstacle for me. However as I spoke at each presentation, I gradually became less nervous and more passionate for Kids Against Hunger. Some of the presentations I spoke at were at the high school, elementary schools, Beloit city council meeting, First National Bank, Beloit Fire Department, and the Beloit school board meeting. So in the end the Kids Against Hunger service project; altogether packaged 291,952 meals, which was almost 7,000 more than expected. To conclude this service project has made me a better person and an excellent leader. Also I have grown to be determined to do the best of my ability and strive to high expectations. These life-long skills will help me to become an expertise in my studies at Beloit College and my future career.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

My first and most important goal for this semester is to maintain a 3.5 GPA or higher to keep my scholarship and for personal reasons. I plan to achieve this goal by socializing less and cutting down my involvement with extra curricular activities along with volunteer work. College is a new start for me and I would like to have different study habits and much less procrastination to achieve my personal qualities. I believe that my interaction with the right group of friends will help me strive to keep grades up and stay on task. Also I hope that others are understanding of my standards, and I think I am capable of being on top. My other goal is less complicated than the first, I would like to learn something new, fun, and interesting this semester. I believe that Beloit College has that here and that is why I chose to attend this school. Personally I think I am quite adventurous and trying something new and different will not be a problem with me. This semester I will learn a different language, try to be artistic in an Arts class, and learn a different culture. If I do not try something new when it is thrown at me, I hope that others will encourage me and I will do the same for them. I am requiring myself to not be shy and hidden in the corner.

**Post-Test Sample 1**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

Once again I find my main "learning experiences" from this semester are general life lessons learned in classroom settings, since those experiences seem more relevant to my life than most other parts of my education. After I slept through class twice in quick succession my professor told me to be careful. That was all that happened--nothing particularly profound, but it was all I needed to realize that I, a nineteen-year-old child, have to be responsible for my education now. The onus is on me to make it to class, whereas before I mostly went because my parents wouldn't have it any other way. The onus is on me to make decisions about my life, too. I think it is self-evident how that will affect my life in the future.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

I don't know how to make goals without knowing the context for them. I don't know what classes I will be taking, or what my mental or emotional state will be next semester, or what will be a struggle for me, so I do not know how to make goals for next semester. I can make those goals about a week into the semester at the earliest. I guess one of my goals should be to learn how to make goals--I also guess that's something I should have learned to do ages ago.

**Post-Test Sample 2**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

There has not been one specific learning event that has been memorable to me but every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday when I go to my physics class with Paul Stanly I seem to always be having fun. It is something about this guy’s personality and the way that he teaches the class that makes me and most of the students in the class forget that it is 8 am in the morning.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

Two goals I have for the next semester at Beloit College are I want to achieve straight A’s and to take a course that is not as rigorous as anthropology. Achieving straight A’s I believe would be a reasonable goal for me next semester because a majority of the courses I will be taking will be courses that I know are within my strengths. However for my fourth course I want to take one that is not like anthropology. Anthropology was not a difficult course but I did not enjoy the way I had to memorize information about places and basically regurgitate it back to my professor on tests to get a good grade. I will have to work with my advisor and ask my peers about courses that they took that were fun for them and I would have to look into them to see if it something I would want to take.

**Post-Test Sample 3**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

I think that my first college paper will have a lasting effect on me. I was so confused by the prompt, which was much more vague than anything I had ever received. I began writing with no sense of direction, and never realized what I was saying until after I turned the paper in. While I had a fine grade, my teacher gave me the opportunity to rewrite, which I accepted immediately. I wrote the paper once more, and tried to really focus on my ideas. I met with my teacher and was told that I still was not going to receive a final grade, and to rewrite the paper once more. I feel like this emphasis on the revision process had been really helpful, and it really began the drive to create pieces which I am confident convey the message I want.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

Next semester I hope to take classes that are outside of my comfort zone. While I am almost certain that I would like to be an education major, I hope to discover other interests that do not directly relate to education. This said, I would still like my classes to contribute toward the requirements fro graduation and my possible major. I would also like to look into what other field I would be able to major in, and any possible minors. This means that I must identify many classes which interest me, and ignore whether or not they will work toward my requirements/education major. Then I will work with you (Carl) to find which choices will work best together. I would also like to continue with Spanish. While I am taking a Spanish class right now (210), I do not enjoy the setup of the class. Through high school I had many disorganized teachers, so nothing was ever clear. While this class is taught be a very organized teacher, I am not happy with how much memorization is required. I understand that I have to learn the material and that memorization is an effective way of this for many students. The problem is that I am not able to absorb the information very well this way, and do much better when the information is in context. I know that the most effective way of retaining and enriching my abilities is to take the class, but I have not been enjoying it at all. I would like to explore the other options for working with Spanish with you and see if there are any opportunities which may be close to the class.

**Post-Test Sample 4**

*Identify one specific learning experience from highschool (pretest)/the current semester (post-test) that was especially meaningful and memorable – something that you think will have a lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.*

In my first semester at Beloit College my life has changed a lot. I have started learning differently, interacting differently with others, and thinking differently. One learning experience that highlighted this shift for me in the past semester was my Intro to Political Thinking course. I entered into the course being fairly confident in my abilities to participate in political discourse, and had thought I knew exactly what the class would be like. However, although it was an intro class, there were a couple of senior philosophy majors that ended up in the course. Their understanding of philosophy and practice in having those discussions completely threw me off guard. I was used to being one of the strongest in class, but in the first few weeks of the Political Thinking course I was pushed and challenged to think differently than I ever had been before. As a result, I lost a great deal of confidence in myself and found myself questioning whether a field I have always been passionate about was the completely wrong choice for me after all. I struggled with the course for a few weeks, not feeling comfortable enough to speak out all the time like I normally would, but instead I tried to absorb and understand everything I could and challenge myself with what the more experienced members of the class were saying. At the end of September in class, I had a “break-through moment”. I discussed how I felt about a certain section in our reading of John Locke’s Second Treatise, and the professor opened it up to the class, asking them what they thought about the questions I had posed. It was in that moment that although what I asked was not all that profound, that I realized I had pushed everyone, including the students that were more experienced, to think about it in a way they had not thought before. I realized that although I lacked experience, I could still contribute a great deal of insight to the classroom community because in being an individual, I would think of things in a way that was my own. It was the first time I felt my mind consciously open up, allowing participate in discourse the way that one should, and is a moment I will likely never forget.

*Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.*

Midway through my first semester at Beloit, I have realized there is a lot of work I need to do in order to grow as a student. A specific goal I would like to take on next semester is to improve my study habits. Although they had grown significantly since I have been here already, I need to improve on being more efficient in how I use my time. I tend to try and tackle large amounts of work at once, instead of spacing it out over time. Because I am taking a heavier course load, and plan to continue to do so, I often do not have large chunks of time to devote to getting work done, making my current strategy much less effective. I think I can achieve this by doing my homework the day it is assigned, not the day before the class, and by improving my time management. There are a lot of times in a day that I could be using more effectively if I planned ahead, but I end up wasting them a lot of times because I do not plan in advance to have materials with me. My other learning goal this semester is to try and solidify the field of study I plan on pursuing. At this point, I am fairly certain I would like to declare Political Science as my first major, so I would like to be able to declare this for certain by the end of the semester. This will require me to continue to take classes inside the discipline next semester as well as use time outside of class to get to know the department and start figuring out my focus of study. I know I am very interested in political theory, but also Middle Eastern studies, and so I would like to explore both of those concentrations further this semester in order to discern what I can do with them in my long term plans at Beloit.