Jiayi—

Top Fives: I appreciated how you talked about what you learned as you wrote your Top Five documents. You talked about how you struggled at first with format issues, but, as is clear from the pieces you included, you quickly figured it out. What is always true is that your content was strong. You read carefully, and, as the semester has gone on, you’ve gotten better and better at identifying those elements of the reading that have made the greatest impact on your own learning. I see this most clearly when you talk about your struggle with revision—which, frankly, we all struggle with. Revision is the hardest work of writing, learning how to read our own work with an eye toward revision is hard.

Website: There is so much to like about your web page. You’ve constructed a thoughtful, nice-looking personal page. I love the tag line “keep curious.” It captures you and your sensibility about the world, and it’s clever and short. Doing the phonetic version of your name really does help US readers. So thank you. It’s a really comprehensive site. You’ve done so much work on it. I think it mostly works. The way you balance text with images is really great. I still say that your hobbies pages are too much. The focus leaves you on the food pages especially. That you like to eat food we get, but once you start to really look at those pages, we are clicking an clicking an clicking and we aren’t really reading anything about you. I think the eating page could be just that—one page, that talks about your love of food and some of your favorites. You might also consider putting the sri lanka experience with the volunteering experience. Again, I can tell that you enjoyed working on this site and so sometimes you include links that take the focus away from you, which is not what you want to do. You don’t need to talk too much about volunteering generally, you want your audience to know about how you volunteer. Does that make sense to you?

Resume & Cover letter: Really nice work with that resume. It’s all on one page. And you’ve designed it so that a reader looks at the entire page and learns a lot about you. It’s not cluttered. You could try a sans-serif font for your headings. Your cover letter is strong, the right amount of information without being too long. I would, however left align everything, including your signature. That’s just more modern.

Writing Studies Campaign: Because this is a joint project, part of this response is the same for you and for Savannah. I’ve got to say, I really like the final project. I love the tagline “kill the fear of writing in English.” I’m trying to learn Portuguese, and, let me tell you, fear is exactly the right word. I think that the flyer tells people enough to be interested. It doesn’t tell them much about what this thing actually is. That’s probably OK. If this flyer speaks to students, makes them think this might be something they want, I think this is a population that would actually follow up. And it is smart to have the contacts be both English and ISSS. The only thing that I wonder about is if students would understand that this is really only for students who are going to be here for four years. I think that might be important information that they need to know before pursuing it. Canva makes design easy and pleasant, and it’s a good idea for folks like us who are not super skilled at design. It works here.

It really is a pleasure to write this midterm letter to you. You are a tremendously hard worker. When we first met, I thought you were only interested in doing what you need to do to get an A, but what I’ve enjoyed learning about you is your genuine interest in learning things, in figuring out new ways of doing things, and your sense of humor about all of it. I can tell that you are taking real and complete advantage of your time here in the United States. I’ve enjoyed working with you.

Semester Grade So Far: A

Tracie—

Top Five: The Top Five assignment has been sort of pain for you, I know. It’s a weekly assignment, and that has been a challenge to remember it seems. I know that you had a few weeks there where I felt like I didn’t get anything, then I got a bunch. Then I had to figure out whose was whose (not just yours). Then we had to work out format issues. But, all that said, you seem to have hit your stride now. And you revised your documents to the standard. So I’ve made note of that. I appreciated in your reflection that you talked specifically about what you learned as a professional from the readings these covered. What you have to say about Top Five #5 was really interesting. It’s not surprising. I find this sort of lax approach plagues me in certain settings too.

Resume & Cover Letter: I know that it can be hard after 20 years at one job to imagine the need for a cover letter. I think that the second paragraph you have is a good one. And one to keep. I think you opening is a little odd, but perhaps I don’t understand the context. I do think that you should have a paragraph that talks a little bit about those 20 years. You are selling yourself short. This is a stronger and more contemporary resume. I’m sort of biased, but I like education to come first before work experience. I know that this is up for debate in the industry—that after you’ve been out of school for so long maybe it goes last. But since you are just now finishing your degree, I think it might work better first. I do think that you’ve greatly improved how you present your work experience. It has the space it deserves. You’ve connected skills to specific jobs. This, then, gives you something to talk about in that paragraph I’m saying you need in a cover letter. I hope you see the difference in writing out your different Verizon jobs. I certainly do. It shows a rare loyalty and enough smarts that got you promoted to systems analyst.

Writing Studies Campaign: So this goes to you and your partner (what I write in this part is identical to what I write in Chelsea’s). I’m going to make fun of you two now, but I just want you to know that it’s not affecting your grade: I think that this is a decent-looking brochure from probably 1980. It’s the black and white and the trifold business. It feels dated. A little bit that’s me. I hate brochures, and I’m not sure people read them. Some things I do like: I like your front page question—the “do you want the freedom” question. I think that this would appeal to certain students who do like to write but feel trapped by school writing. I think that listing all the possible courses you could take works too. I think it’s a problem not it include the Writing and Writing Studies minor on the front page. I don’t know that people will know what you are actually trying to get them to consider. You probably know that the inside info printed upside down on the page from the cover. That’s like a printing typo. I am not altogether sure that the reasons for participating are that compelling to the average student. Nor do I know if students reading this would know much about what the minor is from the technical information you’ve included.

Website: Tracie I don’t find anything in the portfolio to indicate that you’ve done a website. I looked through my email as well. I have the email from you letting me know about your father (and, again, I am so sorry for this difficult time for you. I lost my father 20 years ago, but the memory of organizing thoughtful, kind, end of life care is so hard and draining). But I neglected in my response to say that there were no documents. If you have anything else to send me, please do. I will certainly accept it.

Tracie you live in a grown ups world and are taking a class that doesn’t always fit with it. I want you to know that I recognize that and want to support you in that. Certainly, it’s complicated. You’ve had trouble keeping track of those Top Fives, but I also know you’ve made the effort to get them to me eventually—and with your name on it. I know, also, that you’ve found aspects of the class—some of the technology, the time demands, and some aspects of the group project challenging. You’ve also had work and family obligations. I take the time to write all of this to say that I want to give you the highest grade I can reasonably give you despite all this.

Semester Grade So Far: B

Suzanne—

Top Fives. I think I’ve mentioned on a number of occasions that while I think we have a lovely class, we’ve got a wonky class with lots of student behaviors in it. And when I think about who this affects, you are one of the students I worry about. Because you are always prepared and always ready and thoughtful. I wish you had a class full of you. Wouldn’t that be something? Your Top Fives were correct from the start (you took some cheeky liberties in the one you revised and I almost felt guilty nabbing you on it) and they’ve gotten better and meatier as the semester has gone on, as evidenced by even your most recent one and, also, in this reflection and selection. I really appreciated that you selected Top Fives that contributed to your more formal work (the website).

Resume & Cover Letter: What I’m most pleased with is that both of these documents show better your extensive experience and skill as a professional. I feel like this is material that is much more the resume and cover letter you deserve. On the resume, our eye goes right to your work experience. It demonstrates that you’ve been promoted in the same company over time. I would include the dates of these different jobs and I would include a more specific job title if you can I do still worry about the color. The three different colors seems a little bit juvenile to me, and it is wasted if there is no color printer. But overall a strong revision. This letter is not perfunctory—as was the first one—and the middle paragraph does a better job of shaping a story around the kind of employee you would be. It fleshes out the outline of your resume.

Writing and Writing Studies: Since this was a group project, the following is identical to what I wrote to your partner. I think that the strongest aspect of this document is the information. I think you’ve done a good job of writing to students in the school of business. I know, Suzanne, that you struggled with what you thought the audience would want to hear, but I think you’ve figured it out: how to get a job, how to earn  credit toward graduation, that’s not major credit, but counts as core and isn’t, in the vernacular of the general student population, wasted on classes you don’t need. I am not in love, I have to say, with the look of your piece. The colors make it look like a rainy day or the old Dallas Cowboy’s football uniforms. There is a lot of writing all over the place; I don’t know where to look. The eye sort of goes to the vertical line in the middle of the page. Then maybe the bullets. The QR code is a great idea. I love that. You actually say that BSU has a writing minor—you’d be amazed at the folks that didn’t. I’m more interested in the content then the design at this point, and in that way this was successful.

Website: I completely and entirely appreciate the energy, work, and thinking that went into your website. I know there is a learning curve, and I’m grateful for your efforts here. I think that the best things you’ve done to improve this site from when I saw it is to connect your amateur status to choices you made in design and content on the site. That makes so much sense. And, honestly, tech blogs are a dime a dozen—from tech experts who often talk as if everyone else is a tech blogger themselves. This is a voice for the rest of us. One thing I’d reconsider is the size of your font. It could just have been the computer I was looking at, but the font was overly huge on the home and about me pages. And who doesn’t love tech blog kitties? I don’t know, but I don’t trust them. I also appreciated what you had to say about how you figured out how to reconcile your non-expert status. You solved a design problem that way. Whether you realize it or not, it really worked.

Suzanne I am so grateful for you in our class. Your good work and your patience. I enjoy watching you learn and apply that learning. It’s energizing. This is a strong portfolio of work that does a good job of showcasing all the things that make you an excellent student. I enjoyed reading your reflection so far on this experience and what you are thinking and learning about as well. All around nice work.

Semester Grade So Far: A

Savannah—

Top Fives: This is an assignment that embodies both your strengths and your struggles in our class. As is clear, you turned in a lot of early Top Fives that did not adhere to the requirements of the assignment. Additionally, they were often late and had to be emailed after the fact. I have to admit, that was hard to keep track of. So I’m happy to see here that you revised these documents. Not only did you revise them so that they reflected the correct format, but you revised them so they *read* better. And that is what shows the other side of you in our class. You aren’t always doing everything right, but you are obviously trying to figure all of this out and keep on top of things. Your revised Top Fives meet the standard for the assignment, so good work there. I hope you do mean that you see how they are more professional looking with that revision work. Because they seriously do.

Resume & Cover Letter: I want to value the revision work that I see here in the resume. But I also want to say that these documents, if you want to use them in real life, need work. There are two different fonts working in the body of the document—use a sanserif font for headings, but don’t use it for body text in some places and not in others. The center titles don’t work. The italicized bold doesn’t work either—it looks like cursive. You need to create sleeker bulletted lists of your skills not these long narrative paragraphs. You also need to be judicious about what you include. “Maintain stock” does the trick. That’s better than “Ordering the proper amount of stock for the store was a requirement, as well as taking inventory of stock in the store.” No one is going to take the time to read those. There’s really no formatting happening in the document beyond that bolded, italicized text. This is something we might want to sit down in front of a computer and work on together. Your cover letter is too long. We need to cut it in half. The ideas are good, but you can’t tell a possible employer everything. There is just no time. You risk people not reading your material at all. And, as I mentioned last time, it is not formatted as a business letter at all. Again, I think we’ve got to sit down in front of a computer and do this work together.

Website: I’m glad to hear that this was a favorite assignment. I know that technology is a little bit of an issue with this assignment and so I’m glad you stuck it out and got the work done. I appreciated reading about your process for developing your idea. I think that there are a lot of wellness blogs out there, but the idea of one for a particular kind of college student (not some kid who doesn’t work and isn’t worried about paying for college, etc) gives it a unique angle. That said, I couldn’t locate an actual link to a site that I could look at. I didn’t see it in any of the material you turned in in your portfolio. And I did not get a portfolio reflection letter. I searched through my email. I have a lot of email from you, but not that document. If you have either the document or the web address, I will look at it and respond.

Writing Studies Campaign: You wrote a good reflection and I value the fact that you took the time to mention your partner’s strengths in the process. I appreciated reading about your thought process about how to reach out to your population.

Since this was a group project, this next part is identical to what I wrote to your partner:

I’ve got to say, I really like the final project. I love the tagline “kill the fear of writing in English.” I’m trying to learn Portuguese, and, let me tell you, fear is exactly the right word. I think that the flyer tells people enough to be interested. It doesn’t tell them much about what this thing actually is. That’s probably OK. If this flyer speaks to students, makes them think this might be something they want, I think this is a population that would actually follow up. And it is smart to have the contacts be both English and ISSS. The only thing that I wonder about is if students would understand that this is really only for students who are going to be here for four years. I think that might be important information that they need to know before pursuing it. Canva makes design easy and pleasant, and it’s a good idea for folks like us who are not super skilled at design. It works here.

Savannah your performance in our class has been sometimes strong and sometimes not. I can’t be saying anything you don’t know. You often come late and you leave early nearly every class. Additionally, as I noted above, you’ve struggled with Top Fives, though I am hoping that this has been figured out. This portfolio doesn’t have a cover letter or the link to your website. You have put me in a position to have to manage what you’ve completed and what you haven’t to a greater extent than you’ve had to do. That is not how it should be. I realize that you live a complicated and full life, and I want to give you as high a grade as I am able to do with the material I have in front of me.

Semester Grade So Far: B-