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# ODYSSEY



# ORACLE

## MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO



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# MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO

*As the Fall 2022 semester ended, all 30 resilient Odyssey students made a case for why they should continue their journey together into the Spring 2023 semester.*



The definition of odyssey is journey, and I didn't know the definition until I started this class. Overall, these past months

have definitely been a journey itself. I learned to be patient with myself. Completing the homework has been a struggle to me, but I found a solution. Coming to Tuesday's tutoring has been the best thing ever. The tutors have been very helpful and patient with me. The environment is very calm and relaxing. I'm actually doing the work, enjoying doing it and, most importantly, understanding the work as well.

This class is definitely a journey. It tests you in ways you probably thought you couldn't be tested in. I would love the opportunity to continue on this journey for the better. I see myself actually thinking more; I tell my peers all the time that this Odyssey class has me thinking, thinking. I like how it's challenging my brain. I haven't been in a school setting in a while, and I like how the program is testing me in a positive way. I see myself going places just by being a part of this opportunity.  
**(Tameia Allen)**



When I first started Odyssey, I thought I had it all figured out. I thought class was going to be a breeze, but truth be told, I have fallen behind and things have been tough. I work six days out of the week—long hours—and go home to my kids, which is a

whole other job, then pass out and do it all over again every day. There have been so many times



I've wanted to give up and felt like everything was so overwhelming to me.

A major thing I can say Odyssey has taught me is determination. Every Wednesday I'm waking up at 6 am so I can make it to work by 7 am to work my 10-hour shift. By the time I get off at 5 pm, I'm so tired, but I push myself to make my way straight to class. Whether I'm late or on time, I will be in class. I know I'm behind,

but I guarantee I will be caught up no matter if I'm staying up all hours of the night finishing up worksheets or finishing my assignments on my downtime at my job. I love this program: It's one of the few things I actually look forward to every week, and I am so very excited for second semester. **(Antoneah Armour)**





I'm not much right now...but I'm getting there! In my courage paper, I finally wrote out a thought that had been stuck in my head for ages, but

I was too scared to say out loud: "I am a nothing and a no one trying to become a something and a someone." As much as I would love to say "I've made it" by now, unfortunately that's not the case. Time isn't that kind to me, never has been. However, I am getting there! I'm no longer hiding in the corner of the classroom. I'm not as nervous coming into class anymore, and I can finally look people in the eye as they speak to me. My voice, though still small, is getting stronger. Progress is slow moving, but it is happening! I've never been so hopeful for my future before. Years ago, I thought that I would never make it out of my dead-end job and would wind up being a forgotten soul. Now the image of me running a museum



of my own doesn't seem so impossible. I've even discovered such a love of writing that now I'm debating adding 'author' to the mix.

But I'm not there yet. I'm not ready to give this up or leave this behind. I have too much to learn still and so much more to discover. My hunger for more has only intensified as each week passes; nothing has been satiated yet. I want to keep going as long as I possibly can. Please allow me to stay. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**



I believe I bring positivity to my class every day. I'm welcoming to anyone and willing to hear anyone out, which is what I've been doing from day one. I really

learned a lot of things, such as history, architecture, and backgrounds from my peers surrounding me. I really love hearing about how people have trials that are related to mine, and how they dealt with them. It makes me feel like I'm not alone. This class has taught me more than education, and about how to be a better person. I hope to continue to learn from these beautiful people around me. **(Jonathan Booe)**





During this semester with Odyssey, I have been enlightened and gained personal understanding for my peers and their walks of life. I feel amazing connections to everyone in the class through their vulnerable and honest writing samples. I

appreciate every guest speaker who comes and shares knowledge and encouragement with us. I strongly believe I am a tremendous contributor to the classroom with my eagerness to always volunteer and participate and my willingness to listen and encourage others to get their voices heard. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



I'm a single mother of three who refuses to give up on her journey and dreams. No matter what obstacles or levels of defeat have come my way, attending class every week makes me feel so good inside.

The level of support and words of encouragement from staff and my classmates is something that makes this journey much more rewarding. Odyssey has taught me to never give up. You're not alone, and we're all in this together. I bring a great attitude, a willingness to take on any task, and words of encouragement and support to my classmates.



I need to be in the next semester for support and continuing education. Being in class around my peers brings me joy. I love the network and support system we

have created. Listening to some of the stories shared has given me a different outlook on something. These classes have connected me to people who share some of the same truths. Before Odyssey, I lost my love of reading. Since being here I have started to read more. I've added three books to my collection. **(Sarah Branch)**

I can't imagine being anywhere else on Wednesday nights. Odyssey has become part of my family.



I have a purpose in this life. I have dreams. I have faith the size of a mustard seed that I will graduate and start my nursing journey this upcoming year. Without my Odyssey family, none of this will be possible. Thank you for giving me a chance. Thank you for everything! **(Gabrielle Brown)**



I still remember my first day of class. I was very nervous; well, I still am, every time I need to speak or write. After meeting Emily, my classmates, tutors, and the entire Odyssey group, I find the class is easier because everyone tries to help each other.

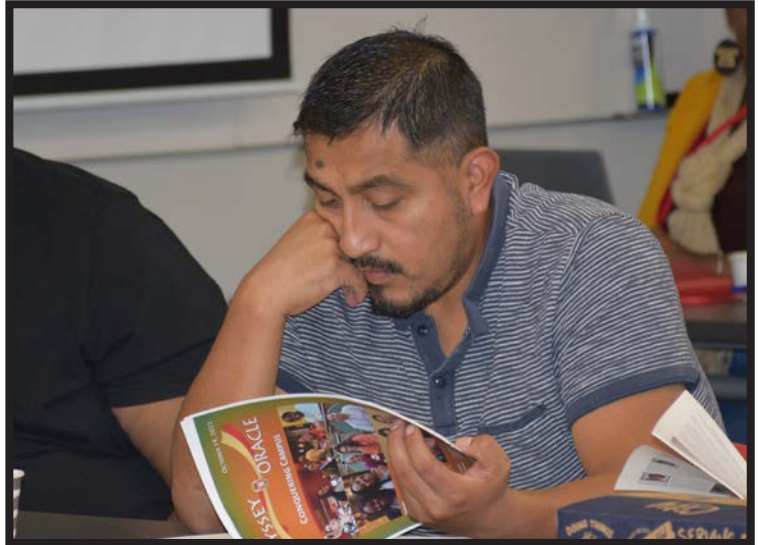
I have learned too much and my mind has opened to learn more. In this semester, everything I have learned has helped me to see that goals and dreams can be achieved. It all depends on how much time I have to study. Knowledge is the key to the future. I remember very well what a critic of Natalie Goldberg said: "Goldberg teaches us not only how to write better, but how to live better."

I would like to be in the second semester of Odyssey because I would like to continue learning more for a better life for my family and me. Thank you, Odyssey. **(Fredy Carcano)**



I was introduced to the Odyssey Project during one of the most difficult times in my life. I was serving time as a prisoner and on a daily basis I walked around with a crushed spirit. It wasn't until I took a writing class [English 100, Odyssey Beyond Bars, Oakhill Correctional Institution] that I learned that not only is it helpful for my soul to express my pain on paper but also that I have a talent that I was not aware of.

I prayed for my freedom, day in and day out, and in my mind, I envisioned freedom being something easy. I was wrong. A few months after my release, I started to go through an enormous number of emotional moments. I became afraid of success, and I was not used to the amount of praise I was receiving for my hard work and the fact that I was now being viewed as a role model to others. That fear led me into backsliding into some old habits.



My mind kept telling me to give up, but I didn't. I pushed through my hardship because I made a promise to myself and to many others that I would finish what I started. Had it not been for this class and the fact that there are 29 other individuals that inspire me with their own courage, I would have more than likely given up.

I won't ever forget a single person in this class, and their stories of triumph will forever live in my heart. I don't look at the next semester as just another three credits. I look at next semester as more time to spend next to 29 other amazing individuals. When you surround yourself with greatness, you're bound to reach greatness. **(Mark Español)**







Starting this class, I was not sure if I would fit, no matter that I was chosen to do the class. Starting the class educated me on things I never knew about. Learning about Lincoln and the statue of him ("Emancipation Group") brought me to thinking more about it. Writing my thoughts and listening to other classmates' ideas, we looked at a slave kneeling by the figure of Lincoln standing. I learned more about homemade education [Malcolm X], people learning to read and write from their mistress teaching them how to read, write, and spell [Frederick Douglass]. We learned the meaning of poems and breaking them down to get the full understanding of a thing. We learned to understand Plato's Allegory of the Cave and watched the play *A Raisin in the Sun*.

I've been so excited about what I've been learning in class that I started sharing it with my own students. I've recently started a new job working at the high school. When I started, one of my students was reading *A Raisin in the Sun*. I was so excited because we had seen this play, and it was something I was proud to help one of my students



out with answers. I also was teaching knowledge I've learned about Malcolm X and Abe Lincoln to another student.

I believe I should continue to the next semester because I'm not the smartest person and I don't know a lot, but this class has taught me a lot.

There's so much I want to learn in this class. I'm still stuck on some things, but coming to Odyssey every week gives me hope. I'm excited to come to class to see what excitement the class will bring, and what new subject we're gonna talk about next. I'm glad that I met a new group of friends, not just friends, but family. Odyssey is family, not just school. **(Curtrice Foster)**



I want to stay for a second semester because I feel I've learned so much about my history, as well as my classmates. I need to keep striving to be better and getting my time management more accurate. I want to keep learning about all the wonderful people as well as learning more about myself. This class has opened my mind to many ideas I have about making mankind more revolutionary. **(Geresa Homesly)**



My name is Tyrone Ozea Hudson, Sr. Being in this Odyssey class has made me a better person. I have learned not to be afraid of not being a good reader or writer. It has given me the chance to let others know that once you

believe in yourself, that anything is possible in life. I have learned a lot in the class this semester about how to do creative writing and poetry, something that I never had an interest in my life, but now I'm a person with an open mind to learn more and give that opportunity to express myself and be open to others' thoughts. **(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)**



Since I started the Odyssey class, I discovered how much wisdom and power a human can hold in the heart. During the fall semester, I got inspired from the many writers that we have read in the books and articles. For instance, I loved Frederick

Douglass' book. It inspired me so much. It opened my eyes to see life and the world with the lens of respect and humility.

I want to continue in the class because I would like to continue sculpting and molding my future path to my dreams, like Frederick Douglass did. He never stopped learning, and I want to continue educating myself. With the tools that I have received from the teachers during the first semester, I feel that my writing has improved more. For this reason, in the next semester I would like to continue learning more writing skills and learning how to raise my own voice. Moreover, I am sure that what I have learned so far, and what I am going to learn in the coming semester, will give me more confidence and assurance to bridge me to my future career. Additionally, this knowledge and achievements are not going to benefit just me but also the community that I work with. That is what makes me happy. **(Aida Inunca)**







Participating in this program is much harder than I thought it was going to be. When I applied, I was in a decent spot in

life...mentally, financially, and just overall stability. Since then, so much has happened. I lost everything... my job, my car, my spouse. And I became homeless. There are no words to describe the frustration I have felt toward myself because I know that academically I don't deserve to be sitting here. My entire first semester I have been disappointed with myself and my lack of ability to follow through with turning in the homework.

In the last few weeks, I have begun to gain confidence that I can turn my situation around if I just work harder. Things are getting easier at home, I'm finally working and getting my kids to school on time every day, and I'm also finally starting



to tackle homework and my class participation. I have spent the past few months failing, literally and figuratively. I feel determined now more than ever to really give this next semester my all because I owe it to you, Emily, but also to myself! I am starting to not be shy and to want my voice to be heard. I look forward to using winter break to recalibrate and perfect my daily routine to create

more time for homework, studying, and reading. Basically, I feel like I can't give up or stop now because I am so close to achieving my goal and putting forth the needed effort to succeed in this. I am gunning for my redemption.  
**(Tierra Kimbrew)**



Every class I've been in I feel more and more inspired. I want to learn and grow as much as possible. I love seeing alumni come into our

class and share their experiences. Odyssey is my motivation to continue to pursue my education. I will forever be grateful and be an advocate for the Odyssey program. **(Monèl Long)**





Greetings, my name is Maricela Martinez. I take this opportunity to say thank you for the big opportunity to let me be part

of the first semester of Odyssey. Time has passed so quickly. In this semester, I have been fascinated by this world of learning, and with good reason. Knowing that English is my second language and Spanish my mother tongue, this has not impeded my moving forward. I think it is an opportunity for curiosity, to know more about the reading assigned to complete the tasks that are given each week.



part of the UW Odyssey Project with families and students. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**

Another thing to mention is that the Odyssey Project has exposed my curiosity to savor art, philosophy, books that I never thought I would read in my life, poetry, and the construction of the relationship between each of us in the class. I admire the strength and desire to move forward, as well as each guest speaker, each class, my classmates, the patience and always-willingness of Ms. Emily, and the tutors who have collaborated with me during this first semester and added to my knowledge.

With all this said, I would like to be one of those who can continue in the second semester of the Odyssey Project, to continue learning, cultivating my knowledge, and achieving a goal to continue sharing the knowledge acquired with the people around me and reach the goal as I graduate. I am proud to know that this open window of education has given me the great opportunity to become



I am a woman of many roles: a mother of four kids and someone who is looked at as a role model. In the first semester I have gained a bit of my voice, a better understanding of who I am, and my start in my journey to continue and succeed in

my education. My contribution into my journey is making it to class regardless of my personal



disadvantages, trying to engage in class discussion, and completing my homework. I would like to be a part of the second semester because I'm worthy of my part in finishing and graduating in May. I can never start something and not complete it. I'm part of this class, and this is where I'm supposed to be. **(Lavinia Miller)**



I would like to continue in the program because educating myself is the only way I can open my mind to new possibilities.

I have learned so much about myself, and I'm feeling so proud to do so. I have made lots of mistakes in my life, and I feel like I'm finally getting the opportunity to change my life for me and for the ones I love. Moreover, the history I have learned from Frederick Douglass, for example, has helped me tremendously in my everyday life. I feel as though I can understand different points of view, and I feel more open and respectful about others' lives.



Sometimes it's hard for me to open up and put myself out there. It's probably my social anxiety that I've developed over the years, or maybe it's because I don't believe I am as good of a writer. Knowing others will read my work has forced me to try to be a better writer. I'm a little bit of a perfectionist, so I very easily get discouraged or insecure, feeling my writing does not meet the expectations after hearing others' pieces. But I'm trying. I'm trying very hard to push through those boundaries and let go.

I would love to continue because I want to see what I am going to learn in the second semester and what challenges I have to defeat and learn from. I'm not giving up on this opportunity because I want to change my life.

And lastly, I want to continue in the Odyssey program because I'm tired of feeling like I can't accomplish anything in my life. I want to graduate on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 because I want my daughters to be there for me. But more importantly, it's because I really enjoy learning in general, and I want to continue learning about me. I want to learn what I don't know yet and what I did not get to learn all those years I did not attend school. Please give me the opportunity to keep educating myself. **(Saul Naxi)**



I believe I am meant for the Odyssey program. I have been through many hardships but have always found a way to overcome them. I feel my voice has not fully been heard yet--I am not finished. I am not

as strong of a writer as I've noticed other people in class are, but I want to get better.

I hope by the time our second semester is completed that I've broken that shell, especially the one sharking my personal life. I almost feel like my life could be a sad story at times, though I know enough to piece the words together correctly. I also would love to make my family and my children proud by completing the Odyssey program. I never have experienced a graduation ceremony, though I will be nine months pregnant at the ceremony. I will stand there so proud of who I've become and what I've accomplished. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**







For starters, I'm not that shy anymore reading in front of the class. I have developed

confidence in myself. What I have gotten out of this class: I read more, and I also write a lot more, which I never did because it was difficult for me, but it gets easier every time I write. I would like to be a part of the second semester because I want to learn a lot more. Every time I come to class, I learn something new. **(Gael Rodriguez)**



Before Odyssey, I was unsure of my purpose to be heard. I only knew that I had something to live for: my daughters.

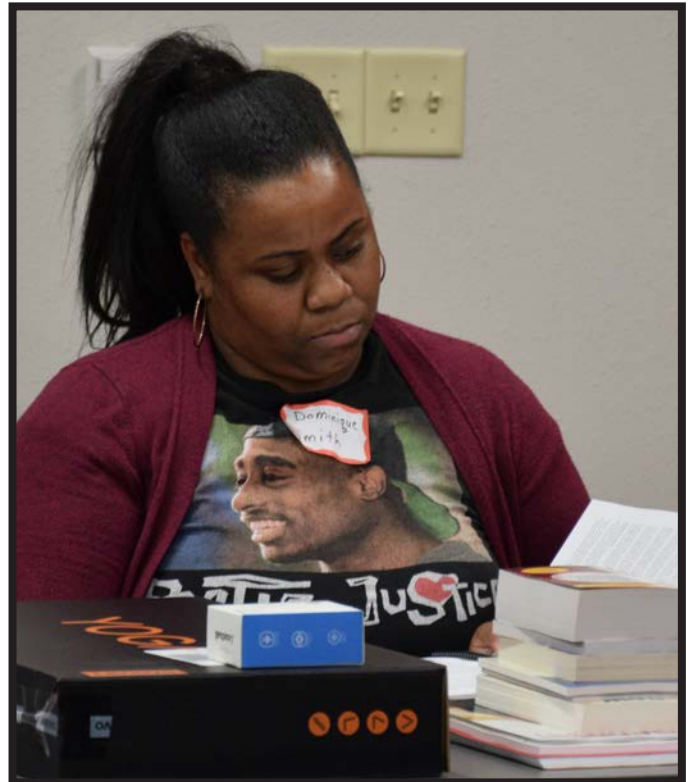
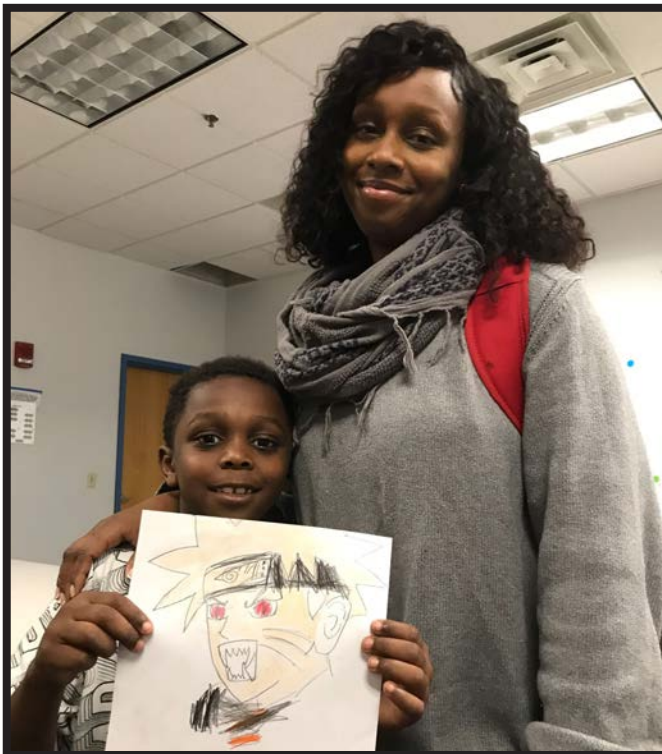
Over the course of the first semester, I have tapped into my voice and found that I have much to share with the world. I learned that I want to live for myself, not just survive and provide.

My hunger to gain knowledge and think outside of the norm has

given me an outlook to believe that there is more to life and much to be gained. Through the power of the pen, I have found a multitude of volumes of expressions, perfecting my personality to flawlessly fit me. I know that this is only the beginning of me winning, and I am determined to take full advantage of this opportunity of a lifetime. This is my time. This is my test, and I will pass. **(Dominique Smith)**



Why I should be here is because I have made it this far. I am here writing my paper. I am here. I really don't like school, but I am in love with finding my voice. I don't feel scared. **(Kiana Sims)**





This class has taught me many things. Importantly, it has taught me how to open up and become the rawest version of me. I have learned things here I may never learn anywhere else. I have become more

consistent, determined, and sympathetic. Being around people who are just like me but yet so different has made me realize that struggles come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. I am glad to be around classmates who teach me it's okay to embrace the bad things in my life.



I think I've made my mark, but I will make a bigger one to finish with my peers. I don't feel like I deserve a spot because there are many others who deserve it more than me. But I've earned it. **(Tiara Smith)**



Being in the Odyssey Project has really been a new experience, something I've never experienced in my educational path—having a support system in a class, connecting with classmates at a deeper level, sharing our stories, and creating new ones.



The Odyssey program has taught me many things I had no idea of, such as vocabulary words or authors I had no clue existed. It's a great way to expand my knowledge and to have my kids see that it's never too late for school. I have expressed myself

through writing and been able to share and hear others' stories. Being a part of the Odyssey program has given me hope to keep pursuing my education, be someone important in life, and make a difference in the life I want to have. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

I would love to be a part of the class in the second semester to keep on learning not only educational things but also about each other. I am determined to do my best in this class, showing up and doing what I'm asked for. This year I am grateful for Emily and the Odyssey team for being so supportive. Thank you! **(Lupita Valerio)**







Since September 7th, 2022, I've learned so much about Odyssey and about myself. From the very beginning I was

encouraged to use my voice, and I did just that. I won second place in the essay category in the "Why Vote?" contest! That was something that made me so proud of myself, and it made me proud to represent the Class of 2023. Along with that, my essay was featured in the *Cap Times* newspaper, and I did an interview with the *Wisconsin State Journal*. These things have been a highlight of my twenties and my life so far. Although I've been sick the past couple of weeks, I still plan to put my best foot forward, work hard, and make it to the finish line on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. **(Andrea White)**



I should be able to continue this journey with Odyssey because although there are a lot of things I know, there are so many more I don't know. Having a chance to continue my education has always been my goal, but I could not make it a reality before

Odyssey. The support Odyssey affords is the real



reason I am able to make my goal a reality. The desire to hold my head high and say "No matter what troubles come, no matter how hard the work, no matter how old I am, I got my degree" keeps me motivated, and Odyssey is the vehicle I'm driving to the finish line.

The people that I have met in class also help me continue on. Even when I feel I can't or don't want to, I can reach out and get encouraging words.

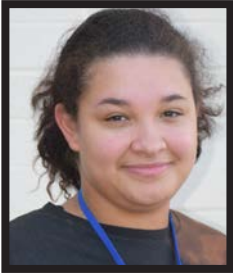
This doesn't happen often in a school setting, so it's a real blessing to have. Odyssey is setting the stage for my evolution! **(Mya Whitson)**



Not saying I did horrible the first semester, but I would like to redeem myself because some of the promises I made I haven't kept, like sharing more in class and reading aloud (which gives me great fear). It is a judgment-free zone, but I still need to build

up some more courage.

I love being at Odyssey! I've learned so much, and my confidence is inching its way up there, increasing day by day. I feel more confident working at a school where I am helping my children academically. I still have tons more to learn here that I can use to help others. **(Amanda Willis)**

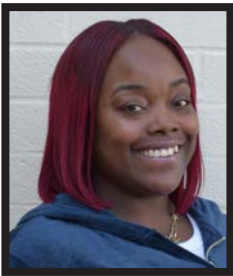


Applying for Odyssey was a great chance at pushing myself to do more and do better. Since the first day, I felt welcomed and loved from a whole new family. Learning

everyone's challenges in life showed me that I'm not alone in this cruel world. Coming to class knowing I won't be judged for anything makes me feel like I can accomplish anything. Odyssey is pushing me to work hard and to open my mind to different things. I call out answers (even if they're wrong) and can talk to Emily if something comes up without feeling like I'm going to be punished or looked at like I can't finish. I love Odyssey and the people here. **(Sinetra Wilson)**



thought that I would be learning new things such as William Blake and different types of poetry. This was all new for me, and now I'm not nervous to make mistakes and start over and speak out loud.



This class has been an absolute blessing. Meeting new people, hearing everyone share their stories and what they've been through in life, I have gotten courage and gained new friends. I really have connected with so many people. I never would have

This class is making me be a better me. It has helped me write more and not be afraid to express my feelings on paper. I want to be a part of the second semester because I know I can do it. I can complete my assignments on time, and I show up every day. I participate, and I want to be here. I like that I have a chance to go back to school: this program really did that! **(Zykia Wilson)**

