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ORACLE

MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO



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MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO

As the Fall 2023 semester ended, all 30 resilient Odyssey students made a case for why they should continue their journey together into the Spring 2024 semester.



I would love to continue on to the second semester with the Odyssey Program because being in the Odyssey Program is part of the reason why I bought my first book on Amazon and started reading. This is big for me because,

growing up, reading was always hard for me. In elementary school, I remember my teachers would always recommend to my parents that I should join a booster reading and math class. I also vividly remember all of the firsthand embarrassment that came with.

Now I feel encouraged to read and learn in the Odyssey Project classroom. Emily doesn't judge anyone but encourages students to "go for it." The Odyssey class doesn't look for perfection, just students willing. I understand my soft-spoken voice may possibly portray that I don't care, but I actually do. Being accepted into the Odyssey Program has encouraged me to grow as an individual, not to be so hard on myself, and also never give up on myself. I feel encouraged by my peers; seeing them write and be able to provide so much information and detail in their writing is inspiring to me. Therefore, I made some short-term goals for myself in regard to me being enrolled in school and those goals include: I will read my Oracles to learn more about my peers, and I will utilize my dictionary, book, or phone when I am stuck instead of getting discouraged and giving up.

I contribute to the class as I have yet to miss a day or come late to class. I believe the first step is showing up. I also contribute to the class as I hope my stories that are shared with my classmates in the Oracle are inspiring. Or maybe others can relate or get to understand who Dontaeva is. I will make my writing stronger second semester, giving detail and using what I learn as well. My personality can be compared to a turtle's shell, covering my



personality, but once I get to know and understand others, that's when Dontaeva comes out of her shell and can feel comfortable to express herself better. **(Dontaeva Acklin)**



I am a natural leader and someone who is not afraid to be heard. From this class, I have most importantly already been reminded to not give up. The love and support I've been shown from strangers in the first couple

of months has been amazing. When I stumble, I have help, help that's not judging, and help that is genuine. Some of my classmates have very interesting stories and backgrounds, and I have been reminded to not judge a book by its cover. Contributing has been my strong area when it comes to discussions as I am very opinionated and sometimes outspoken.

I would like to keep attending class for the second semester because I haven't gotten to really work on myself and goals – such as becoming a stronger writer. My falling behind shouldn't hinder me from the second semester because I'm still dedicated to bettering myself and hopefully helping others through my personal stories, writings, etc. I feel like I gave up on myself, and this group has helped me not lose sight of myself. **(Carissa Andrews)**



If thinking begets being, then I'm more me than I've been in a long time. Having the opportunity to be amongst black and brown people, being intellectual, is something I needed so badly—so essentially—that I didn't even realize how badly I was missing that experience until I arrived here. Odyssey is an oasis—the oasis I needed to not feel my future was a mirage. I'm more capable of sharing more world in my own voice, and that's a gift I've been able to give myself through this Odyssey.

Honestly, I wish that Odyssey could continue throughout my life—that there will always be two hours during Wednesday evenings where we can break bread, share stories and ideas, and be gloriously vulnerable. I have gifts to share, but shame and ego have kept me quiet in the past. I don't want to be that person any longer. I cannot imagine finishing this journey and marveling at the deeds I can accomplish and the stories I can share.
(Lucas Benford)

"Odyssey is an oasis—the oasis I needed to not feel my future was a mirage."



I should continue to have this opportunity because, thanks to Odyssey, I know I deserve to be here. I deserve to be successful and to be a student to learn and earn a degree. I found out I have the tools to deal with life, but Odyssey is like the family I didn't know I needed. I look forward to seeing my classmates, my professors, and the entire staff—the smiles, like I'm the best part of class. I feel encouraged by everyone. I want the opportunity to do something for me, and this is mine. This is my future, my education, and my chance to show the world me, the writer. **(Jasmine Benson)**



Opportunities like this don't come often. I took a vow to myself to get my life together. Physically, I'm now becoming a certified physical trainer, and spiritually I'm an active minister volunteering my Tuesdays to ministering to the kids at the detention center. And last but not least, I'm working to gain credits from one of the top universities in the country. I'll first say God is good, then add there's no doubt in my mind that I should be here.

I'm not committing to anything without finishing, so me not completing this course would go against my beliefs. With this completion I plan to go further with the aspiration of one day having my master's in social work. I was born to serve, and this degree would allow me to do so on a big scale.
(Vernell Cauley)





I should continue into the second semester as I know I bring a strong presence to this class. I contribute on a daily basis, whether it is with reading out loud, volunteering to lead a group project, or even just smiling all the time. So far, out of the class, I have gained and re-found new skills. Before this class, I'd say I saw a book once every 8-12 months. I forgot what a simile or a metaphor was. This class is driving me to progress and expand my literature skills.

I would like to say that I bring a certain seriousness to the class. We do need more people who are focus-driven and less wanting to giggle all night. I would not just LIKE to be part of the second semester—I NEED to be part of it. I have so much more to show and so much more to learn. Odyssey is going to be the way for me to show my true skills. **(Danika Bethel- Johnson)**

“My success is on the rise, I can feel it...”



What I've gained most from this class and my classmates is that I am not alone. To elaborate on this, I mean as far as feeling defeated and confused prior to this class, a yearning for the next step in my life that benefits my

future. But also knowing I am not the only one who feels greatly inspired by showing up and applying myself every Wednesday. I would consider myself one of the quieter ones in class, but that is mostly because my social battery is at 0% by the time I leave work and arrive here. However, my lack of commentary does not take away the impact the journey has on my life, and if I am feeling this powerful and in control of my future just after one semester, I can't wait to see the woman/student I will be after the second semester. My success is on the rise, I can feel it... **(Mia Cannon)**



When I applied for Odyssey, I honestly didn't know what to expect. All I knew was it was a good opportunity. When I started Odyssey, I was shy, peeping at the scene. I didn't write much or say much. Now I am comfortable.

I love the staff and my classmates' energy. I'm happy and dedicated to come to class regardless if I fall behind. Odyssey has opened me up to new opportunities and friends who feel more like family than my own.

I look forward for next semester and graduation. And I want to continue my education. I haven't felt this comfortable in school ever and it's an amazing feeling. Thank you, Odyssey gang. This has been everything for me—I feel like I can honestly be myself. I'm not scared, I'm not shy, I read out loud, and I'm more open to writing. I just really enjoy Odyssey and think this was a great move I made for myself and my children. **(Fataeshia Clark)**





I was stuck. Before this class I had a complete family, but a while after I

“I might fall short along the way, but I’m trying every day and I’m committed.”

still finding myself; I’m still finding my way. Deep down I’m just a child needing to be loved and cared for, but then reality hits and I understand

had been accepted my dad died, so my once complete family was missing something and left me missing someone. I didn’t want to continue; I didn’t want to breathe, almost like I was holding my breath waiting for the worst to happen while fully knowing it was happening. I had told my dad about the acceptance to this class. He was happy for me, he was proud of me, and I could feel it in the way he embraced me. He told me to keep bettering myself and when I was done circle back and teach him something. He begged me to help him sign up for MATC, and I told him I would come back and help him do it.

I’m an adult shaping the life for my kids, and they deserve the best from me. I might fall short along the way, but I’m trying every day and I’m committed. **(Mekicia Davis)**

Some days it is a struggle to get here because life is busy, especially as a single mom.



Balancing cooking and taking care of kids, I get to the end of the day and do not want to do homework. I feel like that is my me time. Everything still feels new, and it changes my schedule, on top of the things I already

I have had many long nights thinking where would I be if I give up now? Where and what will my kids be like, what do they deserve? That’s what keeps me motivated and dedicated. What I’ve gotten out of this class is unmatched and silences me in ways I can’t explain. I’d like to be a part of second semester because I know what I have to offer, I’m

do (making sure my son makes it to basketball on Wednesday, cooking, taking care of kids). Odyssey gives me a chance to establish habits that I want to have in the future. It is hard. I feel like I do not understand some things and get in my head too much. I overthink things and do not totally believe in myself. That is why I feel like I still need to gain some confidence.



I still find it hard to believe I am taking a college course, but when I accept it, it makes me feel GOOD and proud of my work. I never thought I would take a college course at UW-Madison. I’m getting messages back from Emily and getting positive feedback. If I believed in myself more, I think I would be able to do anything. Continuing my education will allow me to acquire new and more skills and knowledge. Completing the program will demonstrate my commitment to growth. I want to continue to gain new knowledge and skills, and I want my confidence to grow.

(Andrea Evans)



Going into our second semester, I feel so happy and even more joy that I am here. I feel every class has taught me a lot. Very interesting reads and I enjoy the diversity in the classroom.

I have learned a lot about women and writing and how they fought for those rights. Understanding Plato's Allegory of the Cave and how it applies to everyone in some form, I know we all have been in a cave or dark place sometime in our lives.

I feel I contribute to the class with my attentiveness and readiness to learn. I look forward to class and tutoring every week! I would love to be a part of second semester to continue learning more arts, history, and more. I love writing! I am focused and excited for the second half of class. God has brought me this far! I'm never turning back. It's only forward from here. **(Aleesha Flowers)**



"I'm never turning back. It's only forward from here."

starving for success. I want to show the world what I can do, never forgetting who helped me along the way.



Being a part of the Odyssey Project has gotten me in the groove of being a college student. After over 20 years of no diploma, Odyssey gave me a huge chance of better, for myself. I have gained confidence. Having supporters

of classmates and friends in college, I feel like I'm a part of a big thing. I contributed to the class by showing up, being on time and ready to work. I'm

I believe I am ready for second semester because I will not waste my time or yours. I am here to grow, and I will continue to be open about learning new things and getting to know my future classmates. Thank you! **(Andrey Gavins)**



Before I started taking this class I didn't know who Plato was, and I had never heard the story behind his name. Once I completely understood what he meant, it just made me think of so many scenarios in my life and how if I never would've taken the chance or opportunity to be a better me how much more I would've regretted not taking the opportunity, how much more I would've lost in the long run.

I lost nothing. Instead, I've gained an extra family. Our class is so close, I wouldn't change it for anything. Honestly, I've questioned if I deserved this, but now I know God doesn't have me in any room I'm not meant to be in. I am here because I'm supposed to be here, and this is a part of my story. **(Shanigel Goodwan)**





Odyssey is the support I needed. Working alone, not understanding a subject, and

“Where else can you learn, eat, and build amazing relationships with people?”

I don’t think I’ve displayed my full potential yet, and I don’t know why. I often feel like my bare minimum is enough, but in reality, it’s not enough anymore. I believe I still have so much to prove to myself. I love the compliments

having no one to turn to, this class has helped me so much. I don’t have many friends and my family lives an hour away, so every Wednesday I look forward to coming to class and learning new things and having discussion on things I would probably never learned about if it wasn’t in this class.

and words of encouragement because it’s letting me know that I’m leaving some kind of impression, and also it’s motivating being around people who want to see me succeed. It’s beautiful being around people who want to achieve the same things as me. **(Synquar Harston)**

This is a great group of people I have grown to connect with. Where else can you learn, eat, and build amazing relationships with people? I have learned so much about myself and see the improvements in myself already. I cannot wait to see how much I grow by the end of this class. I absolutely recommend this class to everyone I know. **(Mikaylah Harris)**



I’ve learned so much from Odyssey. Every day has been a challenge, but I refuse to give up. I wanted this opportunity so bad. Even though it took me two tries before I was admitted, I got through. That really showed how much I really wanted this and was committed to furthering my education. I feel like I’ve contributed a lot with my opinions and ideas. I don’t think there has been a class where I haven’t had something to say.



I believe I have gained a community. From my classmates, to the special guests, to every alumni student, ending with Emily’s father, it’s a big motivation being surrounded by people from all over who face different

obstacles than myself. It’s encouraging seeing my classmates open up and come out of their shells.

Even though my personal life is a disaster, I must keep pushing, Odyssey gives me a reason to keep going no matter how hard things get. Second semester and Odyssey beyond is exactly what I need in my life right now. A reason to fight. Thank you! **(Cierra Jackson)**



I can’t describe the whole experience getting in my first semester, but for sure I know I would need someone to shake me and wake me up out of my cave. I am honored to have met warriors—classmates that inspire me to keep going, I am thankful for all in the Odyssey group to have patience and believe in me. I know it’s still a long journey awaiting me, but I know I can keep contributing with my learning, I am savoring every single detail of my knowledge. It’s necessary for me to keep learning in the next semester. Thank you. **(Blanca Laine)**



Well, I'm definitely learning to write and write proper. I wouldn't know what I contributed, still want to be here! I feel this class has opened up my mind and heart, encouraging me to keep going and bringing the best of myself. I'm

seeing a path that awaits me through the Odyssey program. The Odyssey program is showing me the way for me to go forth and to be the best that I can be! Thank you for this opportunity to help rebuild my foundation of life! **(Rosanna Lopez)**



Every time I turn in an assignment, I feel like I can actually see my future getting brighter. This semester has lit my heart on fire, and I now remember why I love to write. I have been to every in-class meeting since the first Wednesday

and frequently attend tutoring. I also am proud to know I have all of my assignments turned in up until this point. This program inspires me to pursue writing or English—the beauty is I just have a zest for academia.

I can't wait for the second semester- I have experienced minor challenges, but I am growing by asking for help. I am leaning on all of my outside supports, and I am overall so passionate about Odyssey. I will devote the same heart and willingness to learn to this coming semester. One of my visuals for success is graduation day. I imagine May and how amazing that day will be. Thank you for this moment and opportunity. It is changing me. **(Giana Mason)**



I believe I am a hard-working woman that has come so far. I believe this class has taught me to come out of my shell to trust people and, not just that, but to take pride in

my work even if I don't like it. Being a part of this class second semester would allow me to strengthen my ability to write and grow friendships that I have already made.

“This semester has lit my heart on fire, and I now remember why I love to write.”

What I have gotten out of this class is that I'm not alone with some of my feelings I have and I always have a friend in class that I can lean on. With the courage of my support system who helps me with my homework checks it over for me, I now know that I can do anything I put my mind to. I need to finish this class with my six credits because my story is not over with. Catch me in three years as your favorite school social worker, all because of this opportunity to join this wonderful opportunity. **(Tanisha Milligan)**



Time flies when you like what you are doing. I can't believe we already passed the first semester. This first part of the program made me grow intellectually and personally. I feel more hunger for knowledge, and I am more open,

willing to face my fears like public speaking. I have gone from an introvert to an open person, from almost not a reader and writer to a book lover and friend of writing.

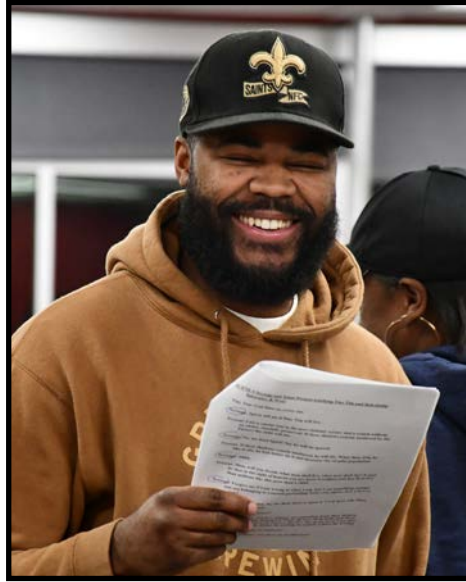
The Odyssey Program helps me realize my potential, and now I want it all. I want to keep going and get that life changing education for me and my family. Thank you for everything. **(Souleymane Nikiema)**





When I think about my first day in class, I remember thinking, "This might not be for me." I felt bad

about taking a laptop because I didn't think I would come back. My plan was to come to the next class and give it back with the check. I felt like I wasn't smart enough to be here. I'm still not smart enough! But what I mean is that I learned a lot about things I didn't know, but now I'm ready to learn more.



Odyssey is the light at the end of the tunnel, and this is a very powerful group of people I truly

enjoy being around. I learned so much from the class and the people in it. It's very encouraging to be around a group of like-minded people that are all starving to do better with their lives and reassure me I'm on the right path. My mother would be very proud of me. **(Isiah Pickett)**

The thing I got the most out of this class is learning how to be okay with not knowing something and having the courage to ask for help. I plan on staying in this class for every reason I wanted to give up and every reason I'm still here. If I never failed, I would not ever be in this position I'm in to succeed. This is every reason for me to continue. **(Terance Nix)**

"I am glad to be in class full of excitement and no judgment."



After taking the Odyssey Project, I am relearning what I didn't understand when I was in high school. The persuasive writing and usage demons is where I struggle the most. I want to further my education, and I am yearning and

wanting to keep learning. I may not be the brightest person, but I strive to want to keep learning and growing to reach my full potential of what God has for me.

In class, I am not afraid or intimidated to read as I have in the past growing up. I am glad to be in class full of excitement and no judgment. Everyone understands we all come from different backgrounds. I would love to continue taking any course that would help me grow and gain knowledge to live a fulfilled life that I yearn to have and to give back to the community. I believe everything is in God's plan. **(Sally Phelps)**



Being in this class and the environment really makes me go harder. Seeing everyone put in the work, the different personalities, different stories and backgrounds is really inspiring. Watching all of my other classmates' joy and

vulnerability, the countless shares of laughter, and the willingness to learn is what drives me. I believe I should continue because this is really helping my work ethic. This class is helping me mature even more, and actually want to learn due to the fun topics and adventures we have as a class. I am looking forward to how we all end up as a class, and I would love to see each and every one of us next semester. **(Rodney Poe Jr)**



What I have gotten out of Odyssey: the courage and strength to not give up. Life has its obstacles, and there have been times when I had no control of what's happening around me. I tried my best to do what's right,

do what I can, and, when I feel that's all I can do, I give it to God. Odyssey has taught me not to give up when things get rough, like when I didn't have time to finish my homework when it was due. Any other time I would have been too embarrassed to come to school without it. Odyssey has taught me that I am good enough and to give myself a chance. Odyssey has taught me that I can do it no matter what.

I have contributed my time and loyalty to this Odyssey family class of 2024. I love my Odyssey family, and I tried not to miss a day. I appreciated everything that Odyssey has given our class, helped me succeed, to plan, and to continue my goals. **(Kimberly Rodgers)**



At the time I applied for Odyssey, my life was in shambles and I had just graduated from MATC and had no plans of continuing my education.

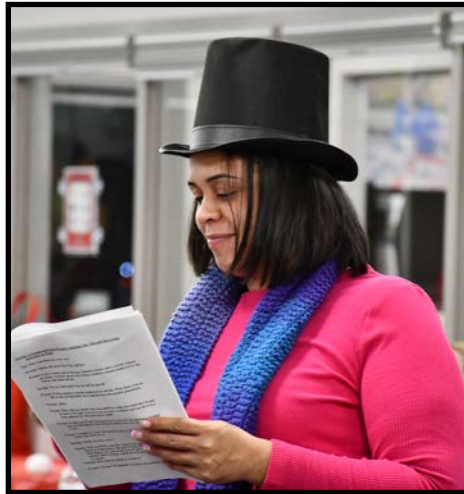
I felt trapped in my own little world and mind. I had just failed, it seemed, even though in reality I was winning. I had just taken on a level 4 foster child whose world was surrounded by chaos and seemed to make mine a living hell at times. I remember going to work only to hear Lesley remind me that Odyssey enrollment was open. At this time, signing up became a battle of mixed emotions, but I knew I had to make a decision and do what was best for me. I had my daughter watching me, and everything I do, I can see her pick up.

I wasn't expecting to get into Odyssey, feeling like I wasn't smart enough or I didn't belong. I am a very private person, but Odyssey has opened me up like a new book. I've experienced a whole lot, making new friends and getting to open up through writing and talking. I would like to continue through next semester because I want to belong. I want to complete what I started. **(Marcy Tibbs)**



After every class I feel more and more empowered. This class makes me feel like I deserve a second chance. I am very shy, but when I'm in class I feel like I can be myself. I'm slowly letting my wall down and embracing my true self.

I love the vibes, I love the teachers, and I love my classmates. We are starting a little family. You can tell everyone is getting comfortable. We all help and support each other. I'm learning that you don't have to be perfect (if that's really a thing). The amount of support is unmatched. I love that we can all be silly,



but at the same time still learn new things.

I would like to be a part of next semester because I am determined! I am ready to push myself as much as possible. I'm ready to make my family proud. My kids tell me all the time how proud they are. My older son is struggling in class, and we motivate each other. I don't want to go to school just as much as he does, but I want to

continue to show them that it gets greater later. You have to have determination to get where you want. Without struggle there is not progress. I use my time wisely and attend tutoring as much as possible. I am determined! I will succeed! I will finish! **(Amanda Von Behren)**



I'm a very caring, loving, hardworking, friendly person who came to this class with no knowledge of what I was getting myself into. So far, I've learned how to express myself through writing and learned meanings

of words I didn't know existed. I am also learning things about my classmates and that I'm not the only one going through hardships at times. We're learning so much about so many different figures from history, men and women, and the guest speakers are truly amazing. One in particular was Dr. William Banfield. I love his take on music, which I really love. I'm looking forward to next semester to learn new things and, more importantly, to graduation. I am so happy to be here, and the best is yet to be seen. **(Endia Walls)**



I have struggled at times. However, being in Odyssey is the first of many steps I will be taking to fulfill my next profession in becoming a social worker. Learning is about listening, not always being the first to speak. I enjoy paying

attention to others as they talk; that's how I become informed. I believe that this is part of my journey. **(Ron Watson)**