WRITING THE PLAN PROPOSAL

1. **Getting Started:** Try any of these approaches to begin your proposal.
   a. *Gathering Your Content:* Make a list of the courses you have taken at Bennington. Make a list of the most powerful quotes, facts, ideas, conclusions, or images (and so on) from your studies so far.
   b. *Free-Writing:* Sit down and write about what you have found to be exciting in your work. Write about what you have loved; what you have discovered; what you have created; who and what you have engaged with in your work.
   c. *Questioning:* Write a list of questions you have about your areas of study. What are you curious about? What do you want to learn more about?
   d. *Focusing Your Proposal:* A focus can emerge from a question, a problem, a quandary. For example, write about something you thought you understood, then write about how you discovered you were beginning a process of knowledge.
   e. *Drafting:* Make time to write a first draft. Often you will discover your best idea at the end of the first draft. Take that idea or argument, and put it in the first paragraph of your next draft.

2. **Introduction:** Start with the basics: your areas of study and your topics of inquiry.
   a. You can begin in a number of ways—with an anecdote, a memory, a fact, an observation, a quote, an idea, a question.
   b. Your audience is your Plan Committee, so the tone can be scholarly or academic and personal.
   c. You can organize your Plan proposal in many ways: chronologically or thematically; by subject or project; by the capacities; or by courses, co-curricular work (anything outside of your courses that relates to your studies), and FWT experience.
   d. Do you have a main question, idea, or argument? For example: “I propose that my Plan be in playwriting and dance to answer the question: Why is there a theatrical obsession with taboo?”
e. Give your proposal a specific title, if you can, such as “Explosive Content: Controversy and the Stage.”

3. **Body Paragraphs:** Write about what you have learned, what you want to learn, and what you’re going to do.
   a. You can address what you have discovered, created, and accomplished so far; the inquiries you have made and the problems you have encountered; which skills you want to develop; what you wish to learn more about or research; what you want to make, test, examine; whom and what you want to engage with more deeply; which courses you would like to take; what risks you could take next; and, how your Field Work Terms and co-curricular work connect to your proposal.
   b. Include specifics: quotes from texts; ideas, images, and facts; anecdotes and evidence from your courses, research, and individual work.
   c. Find connections between your studies; use words and phrases, such as *in parallel, in relation to, paradoxically, simultaneously, by analogy, in comparison, similarly, before I/I want to, in order to.*
   d. Consider discussing why you want to focus on certain fields of interest and not others; you can use transitional words and phrases, such as *in theory, despite, even though, to the extent that, in contrast, on the other hand, nevertheless.*
   e. Does each paragraph support your proposal topic or idea? Your ideas can lead to more questions—and even doubt—which is useful in this process. If you find that your paragraphs are repetitive or out of order, cut them into sections and move them around.

4. **Conclusion:** At the end, synthesize your ideas.
   a. If your conclusion only summarizes what you have already written, write a list of questions you have about your proposal and include those questions in your conclusion.
   b. You can use summarizing language, such as *in essence, put differently, to sum up.* Or you can use extending phrases, such as *by extension, moreover, not only..., but also.*
c. How can you end on a powerful note? As in your introduction, you might include an anecdote, a memory, a fact, an observation, a quote, an idea, a question.

5. **Writing Mechanics:** Take time to edit and proofread your proposal.
   a. Share your Plan proposal with a friend and proofread together. One of the best ways to edit your writing is to read it out loud; usually, you will hear your mistakes and be able to generate ideas to fix them.
   b. Turn to a favorite writer in your field. Choose one sentence and examine how you can model your own sentences after its structure.
   c. Are your quotations integrated into your sentences or plunked without explanation or context? Introduce quotes with phrases, such as *for example, in fact, for instance.*
   d. Have you indented quotes four lines or longer? Did you introduce those long quotes with a complete sentence and colon? (This is MLA style.)
   e. If necessary, have you properly cited your quotations and evidence according to the expectations of your discipline (MLA, APA, or Chicago/Turabian styles)?
   f. Check your punctuation. Have you accurately used commas, semicolons, quotation marks, colons, dashes, brackets, etc.?
   g. Edit generalities like “Since the dawn of time, people have liked to tell stories.”
   h. Have you changed examples of passive voice to active voice? And have you used passive voice where it is necessary?

6. **Help:** Work with your advisor on your draft.
   a. For more help, meet with a Peer Writing & Research Tutor, or with the director of Undergraduate Writing Initiatives, to work on any stage of your Plan (bennington.genbook.com).
Acknowledgments: Samuel Levit ’18 shared his Plans with me to write this handout. And, I have used “Stitching: Signal Words,” written by Ryan Wepler for the Yale College Writing Center, for suggested phrases: http://ctl.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Stitching%20-%20Signal%20Words.pdf.