WRITING THE SENIOR PLAN ESSAY

Congratulations! You are a senior! You have written many essays and have completed much work to reach this exciting moment in which you get to reflect upon your advanced Plan work and your academic and personal adventure at Bennington College.

LET'S DO THIS:
Get out your Plan Progress and Advanced Work Essay and your Plan Minutes to reread them. Now jot down some answers to these questions:
How did your advanced work go, or how is it developing right now?
What issues, questions, or problems did you encounter, or are you encountering?
How have you changed as a student since your earlier years?
What do you think of the transformation from your Plan Proposal to your Plan Progress and Advanced Work essays?
Who and what were you engaged with during this process?
What have you learned outside of the classroom?
What do you wish you could have done in your advanced work with more time?
What are you most proud of in your advanced work?

LET'S WRITE THE ESSAY:
INTRODUCTION:
 a. You can begin the essay 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 Faculty Advisor, your Plan Committee, and the Provost and Dean’s office, so the tone can be academic and personal.
 c. You can organize your essay in many ways: by answering each of the questions in the Dean’s letter; by discussing your work chronologically or thematically; by addressing the capacities pertaining to your work; or by writing some combination of these approaches.
BODY PARAGRAPHS:

d. Please address the questions in the Dean’s letter. Most importantly, include *specifics* for each answer. You may include quotes from texts you loved or from your advanced work; ideas, images, or facts; anecdotes from class discussions or your talks with faculty; details and evidence from your final projects, research, or creations. Communicate to the reader a vivid picture of what your final terms and your progress has been like for you.

e. You could address how your Plan changed over time and why. What was a success? What was challenging? What do you wish you could have done? What were you most proud of in the end?

f. In terms of the Capacities, you can address any of these things: what you have discovered and accomplished in your years here; the inquiries you made and the problems you encountered; which skills you developed; how you communicated your knowledge; what you researched; what risks you took; what you created, tested, examined; whom and what you engaged with deeply; which courses challenged you; and, how your Field Work Terms and co-curricular work connected to your studies.

CONCLUSION:

g. Now that you have reflected upon how your Plan developed and was enacted (or is developing right now), what surprised you the most about your academic path?

h. What will you miss at Bennington?

i. 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.

LET’S REVISE:

j. 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. Then, take time to edit and proofread.
k. You may visit a Peer Writing Tutor or the professional ELL and Writing Tutor to work on your essay; please see the links on the Academic Minute to book a session.

l. Share your essay with a friend. One of the best ways to edit your writing is to read it out loud; you will often hear your mistakes and be able to generate ideas to fix them.

m. The essay should be 3-5 pages long; it should be double-spaced and include a header with your name, advisor, and a title.

n. Are your quotations integrated into your sentences or plunked without explanation? Have you indented quotes four lines or longer? Did you introduce those long quotes with a complete sentence and colon?

o. Have you properly cited your quotations and evidence according to the expectations of your disciplines (MLA, APA, or Chicago styles)?

p. Check your punctuation. Have you accurately used commas, semicolons, quotation marks, colons, dashes, brackets, etc.?

YOU DID IT! CONGRATULATIONS, SENIOR!