

Client Testimonials

From LinkedIn:

[Nikki McLean](#)

[Advanced Simulation Healthcare Educator/Strategic Innovator](#)

[October 9, 2018, Nikki was a client of Vernetta K.'s](#)

Dr. V gets it! I remember the first time I attended one of her live sessions. I knew that this was the information I needed in order to progress in my dissertation journey. After that, I set up individuals sessions with her and attended her web sessions. It was one of the best decisions I made for my educational career. I was able to approach my dissertation, once thought insurmountable, with a fresh perspective. When I was nearing my defense and editing phase I reached out to Dr. V once again for assistance. It was the second-best decision I made in my dissertation journey. With her guidance, I defended successfully and went through editing successfully on the first try which is a rare occurrence. The proof of her effective assistance is in the fact that I am completing the final step for publication. So I say, "thank you, Dr. V, for your support and I share this great milestone with you". I hope that others will take the time to connect with you and experience the same success I have gained from your expertise. [See less](#)

[Lequita Westbrooks](#)

[Proposal Writer at myMatrixx](#)

[December 2, 2015, Lequita was a client of Vernetta K.'s](#)

Dr. Williams is a compassionate professional. Just one phone call and I am extremely impressed. She is thoroughly gifted in speaking into the lives and purposes of people. That is what I call PASSION!

[Gregory Spearman, CPPO, FCCM](#)

[Purchasing Director at City of Tampa](#)

[December 16, 2013, Gregory worked with Vernetta K. in different groups](#)

Vernetta is the epitome of professionalism and excellence with a focus on outcomes vs. outputs. She also has an innate ability to relate to clients and colleagues at all levels. Without hesitation or reservation, I highly recommend utilizing the services offered by Vernetta's company in helping you to strategize, execute and to excel at achieving your business and professional needs.

“I’m ~~Not~~ a Writer.....and I am ~~Just~~ in Graduate School” Student Takeaways from this Assigned Textbook

What are your 3 (three) “Key Takeaways” from “I am ~~Not~~ a Writer and I am ~~Just~~ in Graduate School?
For each Key Takeaway:

- Introduce the Key Takeaway and tell us what page/pages it is on.
- Tell us why it is a ‘Key Takeaway’ for you.

Student 1

I started to read this book while I was waiting for an oil change and brake pads on my car, so I figured I'd skim through it to pass the time and do more detailed reading later. After I started, I ended up reading it entirely in one sitting. Overall, my impression is that this is one of the best books of this type I've ever read.

My first take-away is when the author discussed accurately the lack of preparation we received as undergraduates for the type of writing we will engage in, especially the transformation in thinking we should've accomplished (pp. 12-14). I almost felt disappointed in the scrutiny my previous written assignments received as an undergraduate. As I reflect on my junior college and undergraduate college experiences, I remember completing many written assignments for a variety of classes. Never once, however, did I receive any kind of feedback on how I was as a writer. My grades were always good, so I replicated my writing style as I went along. It's true, as the book pointed out, that we are engaging in a different kind of writing because we have moved on from what I'd call the book-report style to "scholarly writing". Nevertheless, I am confident in saying that I really never received any kind of guidance on writing that would have prepared me for what's expected going forward. I was very happy to see that this book easily presented a great deal of that guidance.

Secondly, the emphasis on critical reading and critical thinking were important concepts for me (p. 20). I am a good reader but it's usually for a purpose such as entertainment or, as with a textbook, to learn facts. I've never really read anything with an emphasis on critically looking at *how* the author arrived at their conclusions. Honestly, I didn't really have any idea as to why we were focusing so much on annotations for the first part of the class but that lightbulb went off as I was reading here. I know I heard references to scholarly writing along the way but in the third chapter this critical thinking/reading concept finally made sense as the mechanics of writing and annotations were discussed (p.39). I mean, it finally clicked and I got it. It makes complete sense now as to the reasons we focused on that aspect in the first half as such a great tool to help think about the research we were doing.

My third take-away was how accurate the description by the author of the writing/thinking process differences between what we've done in the past and what is expected of us now, especially in the "pre-writing" stage (p. 33-34). The need to organize what we are thinking and trying to say has also been somewhat of a foreign concept for me. I began laughing out loud when I came across the sentence, ~When ideas are jumbled and have not been sorted out properly, the writing reflects the cluttered state of the mind (p.33). This was a very powerful sentence to me, one I know well, in the subsequent discussion about the writing process and how to organize thoughts to create the paragraph body. In addition, I found it to be very descriptive the explanation as to how sentences were truly supposed to be related to each other. As I read a few of the examples and when I looked at the outline I could immediately see the reasons I have struggled while writing in the past. The hardest part of the battle for me has always been trying to figure out my topic just to get started.

Lastly, I was struck by the emphasis in the 6th Chapter about the suggestion, and the reasons why, we should transform ourselves as students, not just in school but professionally overall as well (p. 92). In fact, extending the professionalism we have at work into our studies was also very powerful to me. Each of us entered this line of work probably for good, altruistic reasons. I personally am easily frustrated by those who choose not to work very hard or simply go through the motions when they are at work. The traits of being professional listed in the text were excellent reminders to me as to why it is we should be going to work every day and how this process that we have embarked in this program is so interrelated with the other aspects of our lives, whether we realize it or not. To me this final chapter could be summed up by having some pride in our efforts and work

Student 2

When it comes to scholarly writing, I am intimidated. On page 23 of "I am not a Writer...and I am Just in Graduate School", Williams writes that as students become more familiar with their subject areas they "begin to notice omissions, assumptions and oversights." Instead of feeling discouraged about not having an excellent scholarly voice, this notion of searching for omissions within literature gives me a task that I can use when reading scholarly works. So, this takeaway has helped me identify a way to improve my writing by searching for gaps in emergency management literature.

While all of the prewriting section was helpful to me, I found the Primary Purpose section p. 36 as a key takeaway. Figuring out a goal is difficult for me to master. Keeping in mind why I am writing and who I am writing for is a simple way for me to consider and refine my goal when writing.

On page 63, a key takeaway describes the notion that you don't have to stop writing when you forget a specific source. I often find myself citing sources mid-sentence and then I lose my train of thought after I find the source I was trying to cite. This takeaway suggests to, "simply place the word "cite" in parentheses after the borrowed information" and come back to it later. This suggestion allows someone to continue working on their sentence, and get their entire thought on the page without the diversion of looking for the exact source and worrying about how to cite it at that exact moment.

Student 3

Using the templates offered in the book does not stifle creativity (p. 11) 1. This is a key takeaway for me because, though I want to improve my writing, I was concerned that using the template could be perceived as mundane or too simple. The example provided in the book refuted that concern of mine.

When constructing an argument, remember that you are entering a conversation and must begin with "what others are saying" (p. 20) I always felt more comfortable providing my argument first with the intent to have the readers understand my perspective before mention of the opposing argument. I will be sure to change that in my future writing assignments. I think the writing will flow better this way too.

Remind readers what ideas you are responding to, so that my writing is effective (p. 28). Reminding readers of which ideas I am responding to, is something I almost never do because I try to avoid repetition or the perception by professors that my intent is to extend the length of my paper to meet the minimum page requirements. However, my takeaway from this is that it makes complete sense so that my readers do not get lost as they read through the paper.

Student 4

Prewriting (pg.32): Even as an essential step to completing a writing assignment, I've always found myself completely skipping this stage. It's never intentional either, I just forget about it entirely. It's definitely a fresh reminder not to jump headfirst into a single draft, which is what I've been tempted to do through my college years. I consider this an important topic because it's a strong reminder to plan out and pre-write your writing process to achieve the best quality content.

Address writing issues early (pg.4): Another key takeaway I've found I need to emphasize on my writing. If you don't correct a behavior, it's sure to either continue or worsen. This can always apply in how you write, from grammar errors, misspellings, and your structure as a whole. When addressed and properly corrected, it's much easier to improve rather than carry on and repeat the same mistakes over and over. This is why any feedback I receive is taken to heart, it's a structured push in the right direction.

Advice from seasoned graduate students (pg.22): The biggest and most reassuring advice a student could receive is from a fellow student! I'm always making quite the effort to familiarize myself and do things right. Hearing genuinely helpful advice from those who have applied and succeeded in what they've done can be a huge relief. I found this a great section to get some hands of experience from those who have gone through the same path that we're currently on right now.

Consider audience (pg.34): Realizing the audience isn't just your professor is sometimes hard to process for me, considering I feel like I'm only writing to please one person. The emphasis to appease a wide audience from many backgrounds and cultures is a good way to keep a plan in mind that will appeal to everyone equally. It's important to consider that we're writing to a huge audience, not just a teacher for a good grade. This is obviously going to be applied when we become emergency managers, making sure the language we use is understandable and universal.

Student 5

In our readings, I have found more than 3 Key Takeaways. Out of all of the readings the first one that stood out to me was on Chapter 1, page 3. It discussed how students feel isolated, stressed and abandoned. I experienced all three of those. Taking online classes may seem easier than going to a classroom but it really isn't. I have felt isolated, stressed and abandoned due to the lack of communication with peers and the professor. In a classroom setting we can have discussions and give each other ideas and in an online class we have the discussion groups but it can become rather overwhelming to have to take the time to read all of the posts on top of all the reading assignments that we have to do. This part of the reading made me feel supported because it made me see that I'm not alone. A lot of students feel the anxiety that I have felt and it's comforting that I'm not actually going crazy, it's normal how I feel.

Another key takeaway was the chart that shows the Common Graduate Student Writing Issues on page 4. I've been out of school for a few years now and it's so frustrating when I get bad grades due to the lack of expertise in writing. Slowly I'm starting to understand my common errors and I am rectifying those mistakes. I found it very helpful that they broke it down into important writing skills for Graduate students to master. It's so much easier to see the break down in simple terms to write a thorough paper. I hope that by the end of this semester I have mastered the writing skills and I can focus on the subject matter.

The third key takeaway was on Chapter 3, page 34, where it gives us the break down and stages of the writing process. It's nice to see them in order and it will help me better organize my thoughts when writing a paper. Something that really stood out was the stage where you consider the audience. It's very important to know who the audience is and not generalize as if the audience already knows what I'm

talking about. I can think of times when I've done presentations geared towards the Police Officers that I work with and I'm able to use acronyms that we all know because we work in law enforcement. If other people that didn't work in law enforcement got a hold of my presentation they wouldn't have a clue of what I was talking about. I'd have to explain first what the subject is about.

Student 6

Changing mindset, Chapter 1, Page 13: Immediately after I started to read the book, I am Not a Writer, the feelings and stresses of entering graduate school that I felt when school started were put aside; knowing that the stresses and feelings is a common feature of starting graduate school. In chapter one, the author presents the importance of students entering graduate level learning, requires a shift in the thought process of school (Williams, 2016, p. 13). The perceptions that were created from prior schooling need to change. I am now aware of the required changes that will make me a better student.

The transition from graduate scholar to professional scholar, Chapter 2, Page 26: In chapter two, become a scholar, I was having a flashback when I finished Basic Training in the army, where a ceremony on a hill top that was lit with torches represented the transformation from trainee to soldier. The Author presented how the transformation of the graduate scholar to professional scholar occurs in graduate school. How the different phases of writing will make the scholar become more critical, gaining the ability to have a clear research voice during the last phase of graduate school (Williams, 2016, p. 26). My take away from this concept, besides knowing the end goal, is the changes that will occur to me as a student, and knowing that all the hard work will transform me into a professional scholar.

The writing process; Using prewriting techniques, Chapter 3, page 38: Approaching writing as presented in chapter three, breaks down the process of writing when using prewriting techniques. It would be common sense to do this, but it is important to know that no one can write a final draft on the first try. The author presents, when the prewriting techniques are used properly, the concepts and ideas of research will be more organized and structured (Williams, 2016, p. 38). My takeaway from this concept is the importance of having a process when writing. Using free writing can lead to new approaches or thoughts to present, while clustering will give you the larger picture, and what to do without brainstorming, probably the most important of them all. It is important that as a writer in graduate school, I use these techniques so that I can become a better writer.

Student 7

Time Management is vital (Williams, 2016. P31-32): This is a key take away for me because it's something I struggle with and being reminded of my need to improve in this arena is something important to helping me to actually do so. I used to be one of those people who Williams (2016) describes as claiming to "work best under pressure". I have come to recognize that I need to better plan for my writing, and I need to find the time to implement those writing plans. In this, my first semester as a graduate student, I am still working on this with some success and some failures. Every week I am reminded of how increasingly important this skills is, and this week it was brought home to me again in the form of this text.

Try different pre-writing techniques to find what personally works for you (Williams, 2016. P52-53): This entire section was so helpful in laying out the different kinds of pre-writing one can do, including several that I have not been exposed to before. Previously when given a writing assignment at various levels of education this step was either not clearly described to me, or a single type of pre-writing was enforced, often as a graded part of the assignment itself. I have only ever tried two of the eight options presented here; I had no idea some of these others even existed and honestly some of them look to be more aligned to my thinking style than the ones I was told about/required to use before. I have always hated this stage of

writing leading to what I think is described in this text as writing anxiety. Having permission (so to speak) to try new styles of processing information makes me wonder if my future assignments may be easier and less stress inducing, and I will be returning to my notes on this chapter in the future.

Break things down into their basic components (Williams, 2016. P31-68): I am citing the entirety of our reading this week for this one, as it was a theme throughout. A lot of the tips focus on breaking things down into more manageable and more easily organized pieces. From different pre-writing styles and how they help break down information processing and research, to how a paper, section, paragraph, and even types of sentences are broken down into their composite pieces to make the whole writing process easier to tackle. This is so, so important. I frequently become anxious when asked to write, and that happens for several reasons, but one of the big ones is that the whole process seems so overwhelming. Sometimes at the beginning of an assignment the struggle to write out even a relatively short paper (or even discussion post) that is relevant, insightful, and clear seems completely insurmountable. It can be easy for me to get lost in the big picture because I can't see the process that leads from where I am to where I need to be. And yet when everything is broken down as it frequently was in the reading's examples, it all seems so simple. My takeaway here is to remember to break things down into more manageable pieces when the whole of the thing gets overwhelming so that hopefully I can produce the quality of writing that I want to without (or with less of) the anxiety.

Student 8

I won't lie; I have actually had quite a few things smack me in the face as takeaways from this book so it is kind of difficult to narrow it down to just the three. Mostly I found the actual advice pieces to be the most interesting and useful because it really narrowed down some of the information in the book and made it more understandable and relatable.

Item one is the grad student advice block on pages 22-23: This is a takeaway for me because it has made me realize how far behind I am at this point even though I have just barely started. This advice talks about engaging in workshops and areas before even beginning but beyond that there is the whole lifestyle that isn't exactly something that people in an online course can really do. This made me really think about what students in a program like this miss out on and possible options to compensate. I find that I am really restricted because I am in another state so I can't go to campus even if groups are organized and I am very limited in funds so I can't just travel around or go to seminars very easily.

The next take away I got was, again, from the student advice area; this was on P 64: One of the reasons this one caught my eye is it brought the focus onto finding topics that interest you and defining those interests and research pieces early on. My problem is that I haven't found a specific research area that strikes my fancy and I thought I would stumble on it through the program but now I think I should have already had it in mind and been slowly focusing that topic and looking into it more deeply. This is difficult for me, again there are time limitations but also because there is so much information and areas that might be fun but also I haven't had the opportunity to really be exposed to. I need to adjust my schedule even more to find time to do just tons of research and reading and that is incredibly difficult for me.

The last one was the advice on being proactive on page 91: This was actually more motivational; this whole section of text was a bit more because it was discussing that many grad students are overwhelmed but it can be fixed and adjusted by actually trying and taking action. I think most specifically item number three in this section was the best for me because it is the item that is really about how many people are struggling with the same issues and it is not an uncommon thing. That helps ease some of the stress and makes all of the intense feelings brought from throughout the book a little more manageable.

Bonus: I am not actually sure if it is supposed to be three or four takeaways--I have seen both so I am adding in a fourth since I have quite a few anyway. The takeaway I have for this piece is more the entire first chapter that discusses how unprepared grad students are and the amount of help they can (or actually shouldn't) expect from professors. This whole section bothered me because it seems like there is a failure within the entire educational system. Apparently we are ill prepared to enter grad school but we won't have anyone help guide us. I understand that the expectation to get help really is on the student but sometimes you just don't know what you don't know. I peer reviewed some essays in my Bachelor's program and, from what I saw, many people were not prepared for even basic college writing so there seems to be problems starting very early in the system (high school or earlier maybe) and it just continues to pile into a mess. Perhaps there could be some sort of grad school introduction in a summer before school or something offered so students can actually get ahead and realize where they aren't prepared rather than just getting smacked with it in school and not really understanding why. I feel that overall responsibility might be with the student but, really, it will take a joint effort to actually bring everyone to the level they need to be and not everyone has funding or access to those additional services mentioned in the book, especially when working in an online program. Clearly, in an online program we are already at a disadvantage (or so it seems from the reading) and this is just another area where we lose out.

Student 9

Without even opening this book, I can say that this first semester has been one of the most challenging academic endeavors I have encountered.

Chapter one of "I am not a Writer..." exposes what I have experienced to be one of the biggest challenges. Immediately on page 1, the concept that writing challenges are not unique really hit home. As a writer, I have always felt comfortable expressing myself on paper. I had great English teachers in my formative years and they helped me to understand the basics of sentence and paragraph structure. Even in my undergrad writing, I was consistently complimented by my instructors and was under the impression that my writing was hitting the high mark. The graduate program has opened my eyes to the reality that maybe my instructors weren't as good as I thought they were. It's hard to comprehend some of the criticism I have received on my work. While I still feel comfortable with my writing, page 6 works to define what graduate writing is all about. The expectations on this level of academia are light years ahead of what was required in high school and undergrad studies. Had my instructors, many of whom possessed masters and doctoral degrees, set a higher bar, I wouldn't be struggling as much with the structural requirements of graduate level work.

My second takeaway is referenced on pages 18-19: The process of learning the academic conversation is challenging. Each discipline will have its own community and the responsibility of joining that group falls on each graduate student. In the case of Emergency Management, I am fortunate to have been immersed in the emergency response field for a number of years. The challenge for me from this point on will be to engage in the academic community where I will be able to not only express my own thoughts and ideas, but also learn from other students, professors, and scholars. I'm hoping that the process of academic conversation will force me out of my comfort zone and provoke new, creative ideas that will lead to a greater contribution within my career field.

The third, but certainly not final takeaway, is the concept of commitment to the graduate education, Pages 89-95 discuss the importance of going all in on the educational process. We must find new ways to challenge ourselves academically and philosophically. I can already say that there have been several moments where I have reconsidered my willingness to complete the work that will be required. I realize

that the frustration is part of the growth, just like the pain felt in the gym before muscles can grow. This commitment also requires a grad student to be proactive in the improvement of their writing, and to present it as a professional. As with each level of education, the expectations are higher and our works have the potential to be used/cited by other professionals. It is critical that the work that is produced is written at the highest level possible which helps to ensure accuracy and credibility.

I found this book to be more insightful than anything. The bulk of the material, if nothing else, provided some relief as it addressed many of the challenges I have faced in the first two classes. I'm looking forward to the learning process and working to bring my writing style up to the standards of a scholarly program.

Student 10

Mental adjustment (p. 11-15): The first key takeaway is to change my ways of thinking when entering graduate school. When I submitted my first annotation for this course, after being away from the academic environment for almost 10 years, my confidence level in my writing dropped to almost non-existence. I was never confident in my writing nor am I a good writer. I was and still am nervous about writing academically. However, I should adjust the way I perceive my writing and seek assistance as needed. I must learn to think and write critically as oppose to generalize my writing (which I constantly do). I also understand that not all graduate programs have an introductory writing course such as EMER 500. I am still making adjustments in my writing skills and hopefully become a better writer as the program progresses.

Learn the academic conversation (p. 18-19): The second key takeaway is learning the academic language within the academic community. For the longest time I thought the only purpose to researching and reading articles from scholarly journals is just to use it as a way to support my ideas for a writing assignment. I never thought that it is a way of joining in an academic conversation. It is important to understand the language and the style of scholarly writing because it is what shapes the academic community. Gratefully, emergency management is a fairly new field and does not involves centuries of scholarly work. Therefore, it should not be too difficult to learn the conversation compared to other graduate disciplines.

Read scholarship critically (p.20-21): The third key takeaway is to read and think critically. I was taught to read the material and make sure to comprehend what you are reading. Very rarely would I question the materials I read because I would assume that it is valid. Needless to say, I was wrong and that is why there is such a thing called university! I learned to filter out invalid information and to further research on topics that are questionable. Taking it further, I am learning to question the materials I read, analyze the information and to think outside the box; just like having a conversation with the writer, as mentioned in the text. In a way, it is like dissecting the writer's material and be your own detective. The information you question can lead to new discoveries of the topic. For me, it is an ongoing process since there are still times where I think what I read is correct information and there is no need to question it. I guess this is the difference between graduate and mediocre writing.

Consider audience (p. 34-25): The last key takeaway is to be mindful of the type of audience the information is presented towards. Not only be mindful of the type of audience, but know your audience. It is important to know who you are delivering your message to because not all information applies to the general population. There are different disciplines for a reason and each discipline has its own language, such as type of lingos or jargons. If an idea was to be presented to me (that is related to what I am studying), I would like to understand the idea and be able to learn more of it. Not trying to figure out where and what the presenter is going with the idea, which I have a tendency of doing as well. This key

takeaway is most important to me because I tend to try and apply my idea to everyone and generalize everything.

Student 11

Successful graduate students must master several writing skills. (page 8): This is a key takeaway for me because I don't feel strong in each of these 9 areas. I feel I need to do more work on my ability to organize arguments from several sources and synthesizing information from multiple sources. I find it easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of resources available.

Prewriting and prewriting techniques help organize and bring structure to writing (page 38-53): The chart on page 38 and the discussion on the following pages was an eye-opener for me. I have never thought of prewriting in such an organized way and I think I will be reading this over a few more times and using it often. Again, I think I need to improve my organization skills and breaking down prewriting this way is going to help me be more systematic and work on my weaknesses.

I need to become a better scholar including building relationships and participating in more outside activities (Chapter 2): I'm not sure I ever thought much about being a "scholar." I have learned in my current job that fostering relationships and attending outside programs and seminars can be valuable. I have some work to do on my "scholarly voice."

Student 12

To consider the audience that is being written for (pp. 34-35): The best example I can give to the importance of audience consideration would be the importance of age appropriate content in respect to motion picture audiences. All movies start with a screenplay, or a text describing action and dialogue. It would be inappropriate to take a toddler to a screening of three-hour subtitled Japanese samurai movie, just as it would be inappropriate to take an illiterate person to the same show. The toddler does not have the patience to sit through three hours of subtitles, while an illiterate person, although able to suss out broad strokes of the film, will be unable to get the nuances of the dialogue. Even though the writer is in essence putting out a broadcast, he is still trying to attempt a dialogue with an intended audience. It is important to write for the intended audience, just as it is important for the audience to grasp the intent of the writer.

The importance of a working thesis (pp. 36-37): As a film school graduate with a screenwriting degree, it is the age-old writer's dilemma to find oneself written into a corner. In a movie, if something insurmountable appears for a character, the deus ex machina can be pushed to miracle the protagonist out of a jam, but in academic writing, it is difficult, if not impossible to reverse engineer a thesis to fit what has been written. The thesis is the roadmap that the writer must follow, and while it is fine to disprove the thesis, it is absolutely imperative to have one.

The most important job of a research writer is to have a journalistic mindset and to question everything (p. 46): The six core values of journalism i.e. who, what, where, when, why and how are the backbone of any strong writing mindset and are prominently displayed in the Williams text (2016). It is this questioning that can help a writer establish and prove or disprove the paper's thesis, as well as help to mitigate any weak areas of the paper that have come up during the research phase.

Finally, the last key takeaway, and perhaps the most important, would be the importance of outlining what the paper plans to accomplish (pp.48-51): It is the most important element of writing as it the broad stroke roadmap in which the writer can plan out the journey, so to speak. The reason for this importance is

because page length is a finite resource, and the importance of word economy becomes more valuable than gold as the blank spaces of your document begin to meet the text spaces of your document.

Again, just like the importance of having a working thesis, it is important to have a solid outline as it will allow the writer to order, reorder, add and delete subject matter before actually devoting the time, effort or resources to the actual writing of the paper.

Student 13

“Graduate students first must embrace the identity of a scholarly writer if they expect to align with the purpose of graduate education and understand the interconnectedness of the academic activities they perform in graduate school” (Williams, 2016, pp. 11-12): I love to gain knowledge, especially when I can put it to use in everyday life. I also like to share that knowledge with others; this proves difficult when those around me either don’t care about the subject or I come across as a “know it all” – no fault of my own. For me, this passage identifies that I can share the knowledge I gain, and particularly my take on it, through scholarly writing with a community that is willing to listen and interested in the topic.

Annotations are valuable as a prewriting technique for several reasons. For one, they require a careful reading of sources for significance so they often help the writer of the annotation to comprehend significant principles, tenets, and evidence. Writing annotations also helps to develop critical reading skills because writers read with the goal of pinpointing the central idea and key sub-points.

By annotating sources, scholars become skilled in fleshing out the most salient points of a source when reading” (Williams, 2016, p. 39): Before taking this course, I had never heard of annotations. They are quickly becoming my favorite tool for academic study. If only I knew of this tool before starting graduate school, I might feel less behind on internalizing all the material I have been reading. I am setting a goal to create an annotation (or at least a compacted annotation) on each reading assigned, or researched, during the graduate program. Yes, I have to catch up, – and who has time with all the other priorities pulling in all directions – but it is the single most effective way discussed that, I believe, will help me process the multitude of information that is being put in front of me.

“When drafting, writers need to know the four types of sentences that comprise the body paragraph. Composing a strong draft requires an understanding of each sentence type and the relationship between each of them” (Williams, 2016, p. 56): Why does it take me going to graduate school for this lesson is taught? Yes, I knew that there need to be a topic statement, and that the last statement should transition into the next paragraph, but I never knew of the supporting and detailing sentences. Either I intuitively wrote my paragraphs including those, or the instructor didn’t know either and I just received high marks on papers. It makes me question my writing skills, but in a way that motivates and encourages me to get better. I needed to hear this from Williams; my inner self, after reading this, said, “see, there is always room for improvement.”

Student 14

In the book *I am Not a Writer... and I am Just in School* (Williams, 2016) there is a lot of advice on how to become a stronger academic writer. The text points out that in graduate level courses there is much more writing than there was in your undergraduate program. I have already experienced this being only halfway through my first two graduate level courses.

There are many key takeaways in each chapter of this book, but throughout my reading the following is three of the biggest takeaways for me: I feel that Chapter 1, “Learn the Mysterious Expectations of Graduate School”, had many important key takeaways for me. At the end of the chapter there was a

summary of expectations for graduate students, though from the entire chapter, I feel I benefited most from the section “Respond to Graduate Faculty Writing Expectations” on pages 8-9. In this section the expectations that professors have for their graduate students. Not only did this section discuss a few of the areas that professors will be looking for. Though it also discussed a lot of the common feeling graduate students have such as, I wish I had paid more attention in previous writing classes, embarrassment, and confusion. Though at the end of the paragraph it went on to state that the attitude needs to be, “Determination to improve academic writing.” I felt that this section specifically was helpful and relatable.

Another key takeaway that I had from this text came from pages 22-23 in the section, “Advice from seasoned graduate students”: In this section there are just quick bullet point pieces of advice, but to me having the advice from someone who has been in my shoes is helpful. Two of the points were to attend conferences and workshops related to your field of study. There are several conferences close to me that I have been debating on attending or not due to not knowing how much benefit that I may get from them. After reading those points, I am more inclined to find time to go to these conferences.

The third key takeaway that I had from the text came from pages 89-91: There are two sections in this chapter that I feel are especially important. The sections are “Be committed” and the other is “Be proactive”. While these may seem like obvious statements for anything in life I feel that it is especially important for me in graduate school. I currently work a job that consumes 48-72 hours a week. While I love my job there are many times when I am off I don’t want to do anything productive. Part of being committed is to force yourself to keep graduate school a high priority. Being proactive has many parts, but for me part of that is during my down time at the station I need to take advantage of that time to work on school assignments.

While this text offered a lot of advice on constructing a paper that I felt was useful, to me the takeaways listed above were more useful to me.

Student 15

Chapter three under the subheading labeled Pinpoint a Primary Purpose (Williams, 2016, p. 36): I have always struggled with the process of pre-writing. This simple idea of focusing on the purpose of the paper I'm writing was a new concept for me. By determining the reason for the paper (i.e. inform, persuade, or entertain) prior to beginning the paper, the writing style of that paper will stay focused. Too many times I have lost track of what I am trying to say in a paper. This technique will help me stay on task and hopefully keep the reader more interested as well.

Chapter four under the subheading Incorporate and Site Research Properly (Williams, 2016, p. 62): Throughout my undergraduate education, no one ever taught me when and how to incorporate sources into my papers. In this section, the author makes it very clear that there are specific times when using a direct quotation is acceptable and/or preferred. I never knew when to quote an author rather than simply summarize or paraphrase what they were saying. This new information will allow me to make better use of source material and hopefully improve my academic writing.

Chapter six under the subheading Be Committed (Williams, 2016, p. 90) : I think it is important for all students at all levels to be committed to the learning process, especially at the graduate level. Specifically, for me, the idea that school at the graduate level has transitioned from a learning institution to a training center really hit home. This completely changes how I feel about this process and, indeed, this program as

a whole. I feel like I am now beyond merely learning and have moved into a new realm of preparing for a future career.

Student 16

The first key takeaway from the above titled book entails the systematic writing process, located on page 31 and continues through the chapter to page 53: Returning to writing basics is a great refresher and reiterates the 4 step process utilized in order to produce valuable writing. One particular part that stood out was considering your audience and the questions that need to be asked prior to writing. This process may already be a habit, but nevertheless, it is always beneficial to return to the basics.

The next takeaway deals with more basic writing skills and the details of composing the body of the paragraph: The most important piece is located on page 57 and explains the topic, supporting, detailed, and conclusion sentence structure. This again reiterates some of the basic writing components that will assist with graduate writing.

The last key takeaway is located on page 67: and reiterates the initial draft needs to have all ideas in an organized manner. The example that will help in this area is on page 63 and talks about continuing the writing flow, not stopping to cite a resource. Instead to simply write the word "cite" and come back to it at a later time when revising. Although the citations in the previous weeks have helped, they aren't second hand and will take away from the flow of writing as discussed in Chapter 4.

Student 17

Graduate education is not, and should not be, separate from our everyday lives. Instead, it should be integrated with our professional life and life outside the class so they may supplement each other (Williams, 2016, p. 14): I have been working in emergency response while attending grad school and am trying to work toward a career where my educational and professional background can be combined for a solid understanding of the field. With this idea actually put into words by the book, I feel a lot more confident in my chosen path.

When hit with writer's block, uninterrupted free writing can help you come up with ideas (Williams, 2016, p. 43): I tend to create detailed outlines and fill in the blanks until I have a paper, but I still definitely get stuck. Creating a stream of consciousness paragraph that lets me circle in on my ideas and topics is going to be a very helpful strategy in moving past that.

Instead of focusing solely on your own work, reading the work of others is going to help a writer hone their own skills (Williams, 2016, p. 64): Learning from others who have gone before us will help us learn what kind of writing is accepted and works best in our field. Writing style varies based on the type of article and the journal in which it appears, so reading much and reading often is going to give us a framework for how we should be writing.

Think critically about everything you read, and question everything (Williams, 2016, p. 24): We are no longer undergraduates, and we are no longer reading the work of others for the sole purpose of learning. We are in the process of becoming these authors' peers, and we have to get used to evaluating their work on a critical level, searching for what could have been done better and what still needs to be accomplished in the area to guide us to our own research objectives.

Student 18

My first key take away from *I am Not a Writer*, focuses on the improvement of critical reading and thinking. This key point is located on page 24: This information is vital because I lack the ability to analyze the text that is being read. Being able to analyze the text and critically thinking about the information that is being drawn allows for a better structure in writing research ideas. This creates a platform for organization and important information to further a strong argument in a writing prompt. Further, this shows that a student is able to understand the field and material that is being focused on.

My second key takeaway is brainstorming/list, which is located on page 42: This is important as it allows for ideas and topics to be the main focus in order to start a research prompt. This provides an effective way to gather important information from sources that are being used. This helps identify what will be crucial and effective in creating a strong research.

The third key take away would be commitment, which is located on page 6 of *I am Not a Writer*: This is important as being repetitive creates a better understanding of the field you are in. By practicing and building resilience, students are able push through the program that is built on new ideas. By staying committed, students are able to allocate all of their resources in order to do well at an institution. This will also provide the standard for student to meet the requirement in being a profession in their field.