

**2019 SWEETLAND CENTER FOR WRITING  
DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT IN WRITING FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS**

**STEP 1: INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

At the University of Michigan, **you make the decision about which writing course to take first.** The Directed Self-Placement (DSP) for Writing will help you judge your own readiness for and comfort with college writing, and assist you in choosing your writing courses at the University with input from the Sweetland Center for Writing and your Academic Advisor.

**Once you register for your first writing course, your instructor will read your DSP essay to familiarize him- or herself with your writing and to help you develop as a writer in college.**

During the DSP, you will complete four tasks:

- 1. Read an article.**
- 2. Write an academic essay about the article in response to a writing prompt.**
- 3. Upload your essay and keep a copy for yourself.**
- 4. Answer some follow-up questions about your writing experiences.**

We have selected this article and prompt to introduce you to the kinds of reading and writing you will be asked to do in a first-year writing class at the University of Michigan.

**IMPORTANT: You must submit your essay at least 5 BUSINESS DAYS (Monday through Friday) prior to the start of your orientation. If you do not do so, you may lose your seat in your first writing class at U-M.**

*Some tips for completing the DSP:*

- We encourage you to **read the article carefully**, making notes as you read.
- Take as much time as you need to create a well thought-out, polished argument. Make sure to take time to **revise—this is not a timed writing test.**
- As you prepare to write, think carefully about what the **prompt** is asking you to do. You might find it helpful to rephrase the prompt in your own words. Think about how you want to organize your response, and come up with a rough plan before writing.
- Your instructor for your first writing course will read this essay in order to learn about your writing, and to help you develop as a writer in college.
- **Proofread** your essay carefully before you upload your file.
- After submitting your completed essay, you must **answer a set of questions** about your writing experiences. Think carefully about these questions and answer them honestly, so you can make an informed choice about your first writing course at the University of Michigan.

## STEP 2: READ THE ARTICLE AND PROMPT

### 1. Read the article "[The Charter-School Crusader](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/01/success-academy-charter-schools-eva-moskowitz/546554/)" by Elizabeth Green

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/01/success-academy-charter-schools-eva-moskowitz/546554/>

### 2. Write a 4-5 page, double-spaced essay (1200-1500 words) in response to the following prompt:

In a 2018 *Atlantic* article "How High Schools Shaped American Cities," Professor Amy Lueck traces the historical shift in the ways the United States thinks about public schooling. For over two hundred years, the prevailing value of public education was to foster a sense of community and shared identity. Public schools contributed to their communities and to civic life more generally. Now, however, due in part to the quickly-growing number of charter schools, that prevailing value has changed. Charter schools are publicly-funded but privately-run schools that set their own agendas, choose their students rather than accepting all in a given area, and often provide fewer professional opportunities for teachers. Because they are private entities, charter schools need not have a particular investment in their communities or in civic life more generally. Lueck argues that schools should not be separated from the communities surrounding them and that there are grave consequences for doing so.

However, many people believe charter schools are highly successful and the key to large-scale school reform. *The Atlantic* article "The Charter-School Crusader," which was also published in 2018, follows charter school businesswoman Eva Moskowitz, and her highly successful and quickly-growing "empire" of charter schools in New York.

In her article "[The Charter-School Crusader](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/01/success-academy-charter-schools-eva-moskowitz/546554/)," Elizabeth Green writes, "I am more than a little terrified about the conclusion I've reached: Moskowitz has created the most impressive education system I've ever seen."

- Why does writing about Moskowitz's success terrify Green? What, in other words, is threatening about Moskowitz's success? How do Green's writing choices make readers feel both uncomfortable and impressed by Moskowitz?
- Would you characterize your own educational background as closer to a public school experience (as described by Lueck at the beginning of this prompt) or a charter school experience, and how has that background affected you? Describe and explain your answer, using specific details

Your instructor for your first writing course will read this essay in order to learn about your writing, and to help you progress as a writer in college.

Most of the writing you will do at the University of Michigan will ask you to enter conversations, develop arguments that are both clear and complex, and support those arguments with specific evidence. In writing this essay, it will be helpful to keep the following guidelines in mind.

- **Focus:** Your essay should be developed around a clear central thesis or argument that draws on both your close reading of the article and prior knowledge to support your argument. This prior knowledge might come from personal experience or other sources you've read.
- **Argument:** A good academic argument enters into a conversation with nuance and complexity. While your argument should be clear, it should also thoughtfully engage with alternative points of view and questions you have about the issue. Craft an argument that still remains valid after considering these complexities.
- **Structure:** Your essay should be clearly organized in a way that elaborates on and supports your own central argument. Individual paragraphs should be cohesive, and your reader should be able to follow the logical progression of your ideas from one paragraph to the next.
- **Evidence/Analysis:** Support your claims with well-chosen examples from the articles, and, if relevant, your personal experience or other sources you would like to include.

### STEP 3: WRITE AND SAVE YOUR ESSAY

1. **Write** a 4-5 page, double-spaced essay (1200-1500 words) in response to the prompt (review prompt in step 2).
2. **Save** your essay in one of the following formats:
  - Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx)
  - PDF (.pdf)
  - Rich Text Format (.rtf)

**Any other file format will be discarded**, and your essay will be considered incomplete.

**Please use your username as the essay file name.** Your username is the part of your U-M email address before the @ sign. For example: if your U-M email address is "psmith@umich.edu," your file name should be "psmith.doc."

### STEP 4: UPLOAD AND SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY

To submit your essay, click "Browse" to search for your file and upload it. Then click "Submit."

**NOTE: By uploading your file, you affirm that the work you have submitted is your own.** Since this task is designed to help *you* choose the writing class that will best meet your learning needs, it is important to produce and submit your own work so that you can make a good decision. **In addition**, your essay may be used to inform writing instruction and research at UM and in future publications - in all cases, your anonymity will be preserved. If you have any questions, please contact [sweetlandinfo@umich.edu](mailto:sweetlandinfo@umich.edu).

Once you submit your essay, your file name and the submission date will be displayed **below** the “Submit” button. **If you still see the “Not yet submitted” message, the essay was not submitted properly.** Please resubmit your essay.

*[TEXT BELOW SHOULD APPEAR AFTER THE DATE FILE SUBMITTED LINE]*

**After you submit your essay, you must answer the questions in step 5 in order to complete the Directed Self-Placement process.**

### **STEP 5: ANSWER THE DSP QUESTIONS**

Now that you’ve written, uploaded, and submitted your essay, please answer the question below, and the additional questions that will appear after you answer the first question. **You must answer all of these questions to complete the Directed Self-Placement process.**

After you submit your responses to these questions, the submission date will be displayed above the questions. **If you still see the “Not yet submitted” message, your responses were not submitted properly.** Please check your responses and resubmit them.

Once you have submitted both your essay and question responses successfully, the message **“Self-Placement Complete”** will appear to the upper left on the web page.

When you arrive on the U-M campus for orientation, you will discuss the DSP process with an academic advisor to help you choose your first writing class.

*Your essay may be used to inform writing instruction and research at UM and in future publications - in all cases, your anonymity will be preserved. If you have any questions, please contact [sweetlandinfo@umich.edu](mailto:sweetlandinfo@umich.edu).*

**Thank you for completing the Directed Self-Placement for Writing! 😊**