Reflections on Facebook after the keynote speech. NSR and gratitude and service.

“Everywhere I go, my elders travel by my side. I stayed up all night fussing over a keynote address for the Lake Superior Writing Summit. It is a great honor to be invited, and wonderful to share the excellent work of hundreds of The North Star Reports’ student writers and editors. As I fussed, it occurred to me that our main mission statement, "Those of us fortunate enough to
receive an education, and to travel, have an ethical obligation to serve others” is tied to the lessons taught by my paternal grandmother. Sold as a child bride, she worked since youth as a farm laborer, endured a lifetime of humiliation, toil and poverty -- yet the thing she regretted the most, the thing that made her the saddest, is that she was not allowed to go to school and died in her 90s illiterate. Ironically, or maybe not, she raised a family of scholars and teachers, and would spend weekend afternoons watching us read -- always with that look of sadness and wonderment. A door left closed to her that she opened for her children and grandchildren. I think of this often, and share this story with my students, because on a day to day basis, there are plenty of things to complain about, to worry about. It is useful to remind oneself of how fortunate we are, to be grateful, and to remember the obligation to serve that comes with this good fortune. Though gone for decades, not a day goes by that I do not think of these elders, my paternal and maternal grandparents, and the lessons they left for us, and how much more I have to do to honor them. When our elders travel with us, we are never alone.”
Opening: Good morning and welcome to Duluth. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk with you about the North Star Reports. Let me first thank the hundreds of volunteer student editors and writers who have donated their time and talent to The North Star Reports. Their hard work has made possible our mission of creating virtual and in-person learning communities between college and K-12 classes. In the current climate in higher education, their accomplishments are simply miraculous. [Refer to slide: principles and students]
What do we do: On our main site our student writers and editors publish original articles highlighting our diverse and multicultural planet. Articles we publish are used by middle and high school as well as college classes. The articles we publish are written and edited by students, supervised by me. We have close to 50 student editors. Many articles are written by students who are studying abroad, or by international students studying in the US. Some articles are from students discovering global and historical connections locally, within their families and hometowns. On our Facebook page student editors annotate global news articles. We publish 2-3 original articles and dozens of annotated news articles each week.

[Slide Three: “Metrics”][Refer to slide: those Buddha-damned “Metrics”][Refer to James and Laura articles – teaching English to students in Micronesia, no native word for “snow” and using language as window into a civilization. Cultural stereotyping, journalism, media, global]
imbalance, and the importance of humility and empathy in a diverse globe]

Two years, **234** articles, diverse global human experience.
Students have reported from all habitable continents, emphasizing our collective global and historical connections

Who are we: We are open access, “free” or more accurately, “donated” – We are available to all with access to the internet. Our student writers own the rights to their work. Our student editors and writers cross disciplinary boundaries. Vast majority of them are not humanities majors. They come from Nursing to Physical Therapy, Biology to Psychology. Some student volunteers are from other colleges and universities. A remarkable feature is how many of our editors and writers have long ago graduated college, but continue to participate in the NSR – most senior being graduates from 2009, they are in graduate and law school, or have started working. **We are all volunteers.**
Why do we do this: on the most philosophical level, we are a firm and concrete reply to the panicked and short-sighted voices in higher education regarding the future, or lack of it, of a well-rounded, liberal and humanistic education.

Personally this is an extension of my scholarly research and teaching. The scholarly side is to create an undergraduate companion journal to the global scholarly publication, The Middle Ground Journal, which I also edit.

The teaching side is that by participating, NSR students are engaging in a lifelong series of classes –

from 1. serving and teaching others,

2. to lifelong learning,

3. to embracing our diverse planet with humility and empathy,
4. to making historical and global connections,
5. to developing professional skills,
And finally, 6. to taking charge of technology and using it in a positive and humanistic spirit.

For student editors and writers, this is a space to engage in scholarly work outside of their disciplinary and professional path. For them to learn and to teach, and serve younger and less fortunate students. According to the student editors, this is a global, scholarly community that allows them to make thoughtful connections between there and here, and then and now. It is a forum to share personal experiences and observations, framed in a broader global, historical, and scholarly context.

Thank you for letting me speak with you this morning. If you are interested in collaborating with us, please email me directly. Best wishes for a good conference,

[PAUSE, final slide] I would be happy to take questions.