Summary of Strengths and Contributions

Overall, I learned a lot about myself and about group work in this Small Group Communication class. To be completely honest, I dreaded taking this class because of the fear of so much group work. I always liked doing projects alone so that I could make sure the task was being accomplished and completed to my liking. However, my pre-judgments on small groups dissipated within the first few weeks of class. I even decided I wanted to change my focus in my major from media to communication. Throughout the class, I took on a number of different roles, surpassed my specific responsibilities, and gained more insight about Communication in general.

When placing ourselves into groups, I was a little apprehensive of joining the one that I did. I knew every person in my group outside of class and was unsure if that would be positive or negative to the group atmosphere. After our first big group assignment of the jury trial, I saw this aspect to be a positive one. We worked very well together both efficiently and effectively and I believe that had something to do with our association outside of the classroom. Emily and I are in the same sorority, as are Mike and Jim in the same fraternity. Marisa and I went to high school together. Being friends with Emily, Marisa and Jim, and knowing Mike, Lindsay, and Crystal from other classes and around campus, I felt very comfortable with everyone in the group.

My roles in the group changed slightly as the semester progressed. In the beginning I was much quieter than in the end. This is how I typically am both in a classroom setting and outside of class with friends. I like to get a feel for the climate before I completely open up. Due to this I had more passive roles during the first assignment such as being a follower, compromiser and recorder secretary. I feel this was also because there were many leaders in our group and someone had to take a back role so others could speak up. Throughout the entire first assignment, our roles remained almost the same each time; and I think it reflected our personalities. For
example; I am always taking notes and like to listen and mediate conflicting situations. This went along with my main roles of recorder-secretary and compromiser. Marisa and Mike are leaders and outspoken in their everyday lives, which went along with their roles of initiators. One main concept I noticed during the first assignment was while we were being taped. Once the tape went off, we all were more outspoken, easy-going and opinion giving. This may have been because we knew we were no longer being watched and we were alone to accomplish what we pleased.

At the beginning of the next assignment, I took a slightly more dominant and active role. I still continued to always take notes being a recorder-secretary, but I picked up other roles as well. At one of the first meetings for our problem solving assignment, I even took on the role of initiator. We met to come up with a proposition for our question. I came prepared by bringing a list of ideas that I had previously sent to my dad for a trustee meeting. I started the conversation by bringing up the list of ideas and asking for comments and suggestions. Here I was also an information giver and opinion giver by distributing these facts to others and giving input to others ideas. I enjoyed taking on a stronger role during group meetings. During the first assignment I felt like my voice was being shut out by others, mostly Mike. It seemed like whenever I had something to say he had an opposing view and was more persuading than I to the rest of the group. However, during this second assignment, I felt that I was able to speak up more, give my views and be listened to without getting shut out or ignored. Those who were the main leaders in the first assignment took a step back to let others, such as myself, take a more powerful position in the group task.

Toward the end of the semester in this class, I changed from being a quiet follower to an outgoing energizer and tension releaser. I think this had to do with feeling more comfortable overall with the group climate and just knowing our task was near the end and we should be
proud of our accomplishments. I encouraged the group to continue to accomplish the goals we set such as completing assignments and reports. I would bring up other goals such as completing the power point by the end of the week. In being a tension releaser, I at times made a few jokes relevant to our group to ease the stress and allow for some laughter rather than complete seriousness. Overall, I learned that roles can change and people can take on more than one role to accomplish a task. Switching up roles allowed for the group to stay fun and energetic in accomplishing the tasks assigned to us.

For the very last assignment, Natural Groups, my role changed drastically. This was because our groups were changed and I was placed with no one from my old group. From the beginning I became slightly aggravated with the new group. No one seemed to be task oriented or focused. There was immediate conflict with Brian not being able to meet. Therefore, I became an initiator, suggesting everyone take a question and send me the answer. I would then compile all of the answers into a handout. I was therefore also the information seeker. Then I also took on the role of procedural technician sending out emails and calling group members when only two of the six people had given me answers to their assigned question. Switching groups taught me that I was very lucky with the first group I had. It was the best small group I was ever part of and we worked extremely well together from the beginning till the end. Once switching groups, I understood how the other groups had so much conflict with people not being able to meet or not completing their responsibilities. In the new group, I stepped up to make sure the task was accomplished.

I feel as I fulfilled my responsibilities beyond what was expected of me. Since I am somewhat quiet in the actual meeting, I like taking an active role outside of the meeting, such as volunteering to do different duties that anyone in the group could take. In the first assignment,
not only did I read the jury trial given to us, but I made out a detailed graph of the main points and facts of each person involved. I also took side notes other than that of different points I read that I felt were relevant and valuable. At the beginning of our trial, I passed around my graph and notes for the other group members to look at. When we were about to start writing our paper on the video of us, I wrote out an outline outside of the group meetings and duties. I did this for two reasons; one, to get an idea both for myself and for the group of what happened in the video and how we could organize our paper from it, and two, to give the group something from me since I would be unable to attend that next meeting time. Once we started writing the paper, I looked over and edited every revised copy for grammatical errors, and other mistakes. This was done to at least three revised copies then handed to the group for approval.

In the second assignment, I took on a number of side responsibilities as well. Before meeting for the first time for this assignment, I talked to my parents for ideas and brought out the list of ideas I had previously given my dad for a Trustee meeting. I then brought this to the group which sparked even more ideas. My biggest responsibility of the class was creating, conducting, and compiling the surveys. I came up with a list of questions to get reviewed by our group. Once approved, I then had copies made and gave each member of the group, along with myself fifty copies to distribute to friends or classes. After getting all of the surveys back, I went through each individual survey and compiled the statistics. I did this first based on gender, then based on grade in college. I acknowledged all possibilities of compiling and used the best solution for a final draft for the group. Along with this I wrote interview questions for the group to use as a basis for all of the interviews both with other colleges and faculty or staff here at Monmouth. After doing this, I used the survey for faculty and staff as a basis for my interview with Dean Condon that I conducted outside of group time. I then typed up all of the responses and sent
Dean Condon a follow up and thank you. Aside from the interview with Dean Condon, I also briefly interviewed my parents on the background information of Monmouth. Lastly for this assignment, I worked on the pictures and the animation in the power point. I did this on my own time so that group meetings could be used to get the main work accomplished.

Fortunately, our group did not have much conflict. There were only slight conflicting views of which I therefore took a minor role in resolving them. In my main group for the semester, the only basic conflict we had was in our first assignment between Mike and I. We had very opposing opinions on who killed who and what each boy should be tried as. To resolve this, I tried to look at the points from his perspective and be open to other options. However, I did not completely give in. I did try to prove my point with facts but left it open to discussion. This was resolved when others persuaded his point along with him and I realized my views could be one sided and the other members of the group were probably right. Another minor conflict we had was meeting times. Due to all of us being very involved in other groups, sports and organizations our schedules seemed to conflict. In order to work around this, we did not have a mandatory meeting time the same every week. We planned our meetings at the beginning of the week only for that week to work around everyone’s conflicts. When I was unable to meet, to resolve that conflict I did something extra ahead of time such as making an outline or revising a copy of our paper. Therefore I still had input in the group without being there for that specific meeting. Afterwards I got a copy of the agenda and notes that were taken so that I was updated on what occurred.

The biggest and only meaningful conflict, in my opinion, was in the last assignment with the change of groups. There was immediate conflict with Brian not being able to meet at all. To resolve this, I suggested we each take a question and email it to me so that I could type out a
handout for the class. This later brought about another conflict which was members of the group not emailing me their answers. By Tuesday night, I still had not received the answer to one of the questions, from Scott and Evy. Because of this I talked to Scott who said him and Evy were not able to meet to do their question until 6:30 that evening. He volunteered to make the handout since he delayed the process. Therefore the conflict was then resolved when we met so that I could give him everyone’s answers to compile. Overall, I do not like conflict so I try to remedy it as quick and as well as possible by doing what I need to then eliminate it whether that requires more work on my part or extra time spent to figure something out.

Throughout this course in group work, meetings, and evaluations, I realized there is one main weakness I need to work on. This weakness was not speaking up enough. This was not because I was at a lack of information or opinions. It was simply because I am somewhat of a shy person and that is just part of my personality. I tried helping this by doing work outside of the group and bringing it to the group to prove that I am getting my job done even though I do not talk as much as the others. However, I do hope to correct this better in the future by speaking up more, especially considering I am a communication major. I think to correct this I just need to continue to try to be active in groups and even in everyday life. I am involved in a great amount of activities and organizations where I have the opportunity and usually the responsibility to speak up. I can keep trying to speak up more and make my voice heard. I should not be afraid to voice my opinion in fear that others will not agree and accept the fact that there will be someone opposed to everything. That is why everyone is different. Also, more opinions bring about more discussion which can lead to even better ideas and a more productive outcome. I think while I continue to take Cata courses, I will gain more knowledge about communication overall and as time progresses I will feel more confident in speaking up about my opinions and ideas.