

**Self-reflection Essay**

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IDS 493 Summer

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My name is Okrah Opoku and I am a senior here at Old Dominion University. Before I started my freshman year at ODU, I was unsure of what major I wanted to pursue, but I had an interest in IT. After some self-reflecting, I decided that my personal goal is to work on my weak areas. Writing and creativity are two of my major hurdles. My writing was not up to pace with my standards and my professor's expectations when I was a freshman. Some of the artefacts that I have included are demonstrated in this essay. Presentations and projects are my weak points. When a lecturer assigned a project that needed me to develop or adapt, I would become disheartened. In the face of these flaws, I sought to focus on transforming these shortcomings into advantages. I chose cybersecurity as my major because I want to do something in IT, and I want to protect people from online crimes and abuses. As the use of technology is increasing day by day so does the need for cybersecurity. Cybersecurity is also an interesting field that attracts me. It is my goal to get a degree in cybersecurity and work as a Network Security Analyst in an organization so that I can protect and help others.

I am studying Cybersecurity as part of my interdisciplinary studies. Old Dominion University's degree in cyber security is a relatively recent addition. During the 2014-2015 academic year, the degree program was made available to students. There has to be an improvement in our approach to cyber security violations and prevention as outlined by President Obama in his State of the Union address in 2015. The Identity Theft Research Center (ITRC) reports a record number of data compromises in the U.S. in 2021, amount to a 68 percent increase over 2020 (III, 2022). This fact alone demonstrates the pressing need for recruits to the field of Network Security. With the cybersecurity program's help, students will be equipped with the knowledge and abilities essential to safeguard computer systems, networks, and personal information in the workplace (Li & Liu, 2021). Cybersecurity analysts, digital forensics specialists,

and information system security officers are among the careers open to students who have completed the curriculum (Dawson & Thomson, 2018).

I did my schooling at West Potomac High School. I went to Nova Community college which was located near my home. Graduating from college, being promoted at work, and for the first time in my life purchasing a home were all wonderful events in my life. I learned to be resilient and forgiving throughout my time in college. As a college student, I learned to increase my self-confidence, take advantage of social circumstances, and understand that people aren't flawless; rather, their imperfections make them great for us. Perseverance, tolerance, drive, and self-acceptance are some of the qualities that helped me rise through the ranks in my education. Over these past three years, I have learned a variety of skills throughout my courses. I have learned and grown and have become someone ready to graduate in 10 months. Most of the work in my portfolio is from my IT-based classes taken at Old Dominion University. Old Dominion University's central purpose is to provide the best possible education for students. The goals of the university are to elevate its standing and become one of the nation's top public research universities and make innovative use of modern learning technologies. This goal aligns with my personal goal to expand my creativity by using technology. This Learning Portfolio will serve as a reflection of my progress in achieving the objectives I have set for myself and honing the abilities I have already learned (Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015). I intend to explain why I feel the artefacts I have chosen demonstrate progress toward attaining my individual skill set goals.

Looking back over the last three years, I can see that my English class development has improved. I felt like I was swimming in shark-infested seas, unable to understand ideas like "thesis" or "transitions" when I began my freshman year. When I was a sophomore, I had to devote

the entire year to improve my writing skills. As a result of this, my marks for paper began to sparkle like a brilliant diamond. When I think back on my junior year, I felt that all I had done and the papers I had written today were the culmination of all the effort I had put into writing a decent paper. Ultimately, As soon as I mastered the mechanics and structure of a paper, I turned my attention to the design and uniqueness of the paper. When I look back on my freshman year writing projects, I find that the general quality of the writing was weak in comparison to the writing assignments that I have lately accomplished. Interestingly, one of the first writing tasks I had to do in college was a reflective essay about my development in English 110C. As a result, my writing appeared to be rudimentary and uninteresting. I had trouble meeting the word count even though the project called for two pages. A research review essay was my next task. The Phantom Pain is one of my favorite video games, therefore writing this paper was a breeze. The second time I looked at the work, I saw an improvement in my writing skills. I felt like I was becoming better at English with each work I completed in my English lessons. As soon as I stepped foot in English 211C, I knew it was time to buckle down and get my act together. I have included a Rhetorical Analysis essay from that class in the collection of artefacts below. In that paper, I discussed cyberbullying and its effects. As my first A-graded paper, it showed that my writing abilities were maturing.

For the creative goal, I believe I was lucky because I had many opportunities in my class to improve my creativity with presentations and videos. In my French 2 Class, my partner and I had to imitate a Restaurant conversation in French. We recorded ourselves at the Perry Library and recorded several attempts. With this, I was able to get hands-on experience with editing videos and designing videos. This presentation helped me achieve Old Dominion University's goal of making innovative use of modern technology. Another artefact that met the University's goal, as

well as my major's goal, was the HTML/CSS Website that I created from my summer CSC-110 class. Before I completed this project, I had no idea how to code a web page or design it for that matter. I knew that this coding project was sort of a foundation concept for cyber security majors, so I knew I had to master it. With countless hours of studying I was able to complete the project. I am proud to say that not only is this the most creative project that I have ever completed, but I was also able to master HTML and Cascading Style Sheets (CompTIA, 2021). These are both necessary skills for Cybersecurity majors. One was for a cybersecurity class writing assignment. An email essay was the subject of this piece. An email example from high school was utilized in this article, which was a lot of fun to write. I think it's easier to write about something you're interested in. Although I rushed through this assignment, I was able to deliver high-quality results and earn a good score. Achieving anything like this two years ago would have been impossible for me, therefore it's a huge accomplishment for me. Additionally, I interned at Walmart and Five Guys, where I excelled. My sister and cousin let me observe them while they worked as a Business analyst. I also worked as Business Analyst at INOVA Health Systems, Alexandria, VA. I worked closely with the Senior Business Analyst and Corporate Accounting to analyze and interpret monthly variances and trends between budgets, and actual and prior results in developing projections to produce visual reports for internal and external audiences using Excel, Tableau and PowerPoint. I conducted organizational reviews and performance assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to evaluate operational effectiveness. In my IT 315 class, I designed a project for showing the Telecom switches and in an academic building and calculating its budget. Finally, I designed a flowchart for criminal justice system that helped me to understand how this system works. Artifacts such as this one has helped me overcome my limitations while enhancing the abilities I need to succeed in my major. Finally, I worked as a Help Desk Associate at Old

Dominion University. I managed the lifecycle of incidents and requested tickets in accordance with interface agreements and follow-up for distributed actions, and compliance with defined processes, procedures, work instructions, and program requirements.

Furthermore, I feel that the knowledge and abilities I have gained here at Old Dominion contribute to the university's stated mission of "offering the greatest education possible to students". So, what's next? In my opinion, the next step in my career path is to build on the talents I already possess and further the aims of my degree and the university I attend. With the writing skills I have acquired, I am able to progress to the higher writing-intensive courses and other courses that require multiple essays (IDS 493). The French presentation that I completed taught me how to edit projects and format them as required. This is a skill that I can apply to the courses I am taking now. The HTML/CSS Website that I have created in my summer class will benefit me when I need to create/code websites in my future career. Even though I have a strong foundation of writing and creativity, there is always room for improvement. With these skills, I can apply them to the rest of my college classes and graduate. After graduation, I will be able to use my creativity and writing skills in the cybersecurity workforce and fulfil my major's goals of creating future Network Security Analysts.

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