

# **How I Decided to Major in Cybersecurity: A Personal Narrative Essay**

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Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) 493

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September 13th, 2025

## **Abstract**

Hello, I am a senior at Old Dominion University who is in the process of graduation with a Bachelors in Cybersecurity. My paper will be about how I chose this career path and why it was the major I ended up choosing to pursue. Using the narrative essay format, I will be reflecting on what I've learned from both Old Dominion University and from outside sources that helped me get to where I am today. All of my choices academically and experiences in a work environment have made me gain insight into what cybersecurity will offer me in the future.

## **How I Decided to Major in Cybersecurity: A Personal Narrative**

### **Essay**

Originally, my journey was to deal with animals which involved being a veterinarian or a zoologist. In spite of my love for animals, I've later decided that I wanted to go into the technological field because my interests with computers outweighed my interests with animals/caring for them. My journey with cybersecurity being my major began when I was still in middle school. Although I really started actively participating in my interests in computers at 12 years old, I always had a keen interest in technology and the inner workings of computers and other smart devices. During the summer break of 2016, my mother had put me in a S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) program for girls my age. While I was there, I learned how to disassemble a computer and put it back together which was really cool. Additionally, we learned about coding and many other important things involving stem related subjects. A significant thing I've learned from the program is that people who look like me can be anything they put their minds to. This is when I realized that I wanted to pursue a career in computer science, but I did not know that I would later go to college for cybersecurity instead.

### **Blossoming Into Cybersecurity**

Later on in high school, I found out that there were classes for cybersecurity and decided to take them. At first, it was hard to figure out what I wanted to do with my

future in computer science because I was having second guesses about what I wanted to do with my career. Taking cybersecurity classes ignited something in me that made my life feel meaningful again. My teachers were an inspiration for me to realize that cybersecurity was a career path that I wanted to pursue. One of my teachers invited me to join in the TSA regional competition, in order to have fun and gain some experience. The TSA didn't go so well though because at the time, the laptops the school gave us for the club/competition did not work adequately. Despite the fact that we couldn't do much in the club, I did have a lot of fun with my peers and my teacher. This is because it allowed me to get more tips and help from my teacher personally, that I wouldn't have gotten if I was in class. With the guidance of my school counselors, teachers, peers, and family, I was able to find my passion in cybersecurity and find the colleges that would help me with my career goal. Ultimately, I graduated from high school with a newfound passion in cybersecurity and IT (information technology), taking it with me to college.

### **Academic/Workforce Challenges**

My academic and work experiences have gone hand in hand because when I had a job, it taught me some of the skills and abilities that I need to apply in college today and in my future career. Even though I only had a bad experience working one month at a shoe store, it has made me reflect on my character and taught me a lesson of collaboration and how hard the work environment can be for someone who was naive. I have taken

these lessons and skills into my academic career, which has made me change my mind on my career path throughout the years. At first, I wanted to be a veterinarian but as the years went by I realized that I was better suited for cybersecurity because I developed a feeling that I was destined to be in the cybersecurity field. As Adam Grant and Jane Dutton discovered in a study, “even making smaller story edits can have a big impact on our lives”. I think that this can apply to my situation because when I changed the career path I wanted to go on, more opportunities were available for me to partake in.

### **How College Made Me Realize My Love for Cybersecurity**

My time in Old Dominion University’s School of Cybersecurity has been really welcoming and helpful towards my goals and aspirations. My first year was hectic because of how new everything was to me, but I was still able to overcome those challenges. There are many classes that I have taken throughout my college career and all of them have given me the opportunity to gain new experiences and develop new skills that I will need in the future. All of the classes were on different principles or fundamentals of cybersecurity. For example, last semester I had a class on Ethical Hacking which taught us about penetration testing and how to identify vulnerabilities ethically. Another example is when I took the Windows System Management and Security class. It discussed different cyber crimes, different applications/systems within Windows and how those things worked. These classes have given me the knowledge and

the skills that I will need in the future. In spite of this, I still feel like I have more to learn even after I graduate but at the end of the day, at least I have the foundations for my career/future goals.

## **Conclusion**

Even though I'm still going through the lasts of my undergraduate term, I have learned a lot so far involving cybersecurity and what I would like to do with it in the future. In the TED Talk by McAdams, he claims that our stories tend to focus on bigger events, whether they were good or bad because these experiences tend to shape who we are as a person. I feel that discovering my love for cybersecurity and what it is, made for a good experience and changed my life for the better. Our stories could be classified as either "contamination" or "redemption" stories. Throughout writing about my journey with cybersecurity, I think that I had positive and negative experiences that led me to where I am today. In addition, Ricoeur proposed that "it is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character" (p. 148). My story of becoming a cybersecurity major has made me reflect on my character growth and how I've become a better person because I found something that I actually enjoy doing.

## References

Mc Adams, Jane Dutton, Adam Grant quotes: “The two kinds of stories we tell about ourselves”, Emily Esfahani Smith, *TED Talk*, Jan 12th, 2017.

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