Internship Final Paper

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Introduction

I decided to intern at the ODU Innovation Lab for a multitude of reasons. The ODU Innovation Lab was specifically looking for Cybersecurity student interns, and since my degree requires a cybersecurity internship, it fit the requirements perfectly. Another reason I decided to intern at the iLab was due to prior work experiences and the workload/schedule offered. I used to work at the IT helpdesk at my highschool, so I'm quite familiar with working in an office like experience. Although, I had very limited interaction with fellow employees and customers as I was primarily tasked with working on fixing broken laptops and devices. The other reason I decided to intern at the ODU iLab is that I was taking a full course load for the spring term, so the flexible schedule with a lighter workload allowed me to focus my attention on classwork while still being able to get enough hours.

My learning objectives for this internship were to learn and apply the design and possibility space framework in current and future projects, build professional design and communication skills, demonstrate professional teamwork and collaboration, and to learn how to succeed through failure. Each of these learning objectives were created with the goal of expanding my professional development by letting me build my professional communication skills, professional teamwork and collaboration mindset, and to learn how to succeed through failure. The professional communication and collaboration skills picked up from this internship will help me properly convey my ideas, present my work clearly, and allow me to collaborate effectively with my colleagues. The rest of the other learning objectives will assist me in my future career as well, by giving me the skills needed to properly tackle potential problems, work within a team, and embrace any potential setbacks as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles.

General Overview of the iLab

The ODU Innovation Lab is an educational business that works to encourage students and communities to be creative, innovative, and curious by providing hands-on learning experiences that fosters critical thinking, a design mindset, and problem-solving. The ODU Innovation Lab also provides opportunities for students to further their STEM education by offering resources and activities to empower communities to explore, experiment, and develop the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world. The ODU Innovation Lab used to be located in Brooks Crossing and was originally named the Brooks Crossing Innovation Lab. The Innovation Lab was relocated in June 2025 to the Peninsula Center near the Virginia Peninsula Community College.

The Innovation Lab provides a variety of services to local communities and schools, including STEM-focused summer and spring break camps, field trips and experiences, professional learning and team building exercises, and community outreach events. The iLab also offers cutting-edge tools and machinery like 3d printers, hydroponic gardens, and much more to advance student learning through STEM experiences. The iLab also offers its classrooms, conference rooms, and learning spaces to communities so that individuals, organizations, and educators can gather, collaborate, and engage in meaningful learning experiences. The major demographic for the iLab's services is K-12 students; it also offers services to adult organizations through its professional team building and learning exercises. A notable fact about the ODU Innovation Lab is that the staff commonly attends around twenty to thirty outreach events outside of the iLab itself, with over fifty events taking place in the iLab itself within a single term of college. Each event usually consists of around 10 - 40 students, and sometimes can even go beyond that range.

Initial Orientation and Training

My first few days at the ODU Innovation Lab were initial orientation and training. When I first saw the building I was a bit concerned with its size, as I was worried I might get lost while trying to navigate the building. When I reached the iLab I was immediately surprised by the type and quantity of technology that was there, it was a spectacular sight to behold. The first day started with an introduction to the management and fellow staff through a few different icebreakers. After the icebreakers, we were told to memorize some main rules for the facility and classroom. These rules were what they called the comprehensive design framework and the three design rules of the iLab. After a few questions I started to get a basic understanding of the rules and how to apply the design framework. Then they brought in some comedians to help reinforce our understanding of the rules, and gave us the chance to use the rules through improvisation. During the improv we would get feedback from the comedians on how we could improve, it was very helpful to my understanding of the rules. At the end of the first day I was given a tour of the labs, and given a quick rundown of how to use each technology in the labs.

The next day, I was taught how to use most of the technology in the iLab's textile lab in more depth. I learned the safety procedures and how to properly maintain each piece of equipment I would work with in the textile lab. It was quite a comprehensive process, and I started to get confused with each of the tools that were covered. The training continued, where I was shown how to operate some of the technology within another lab, which consisted of Sphero robots, the 3d printers, and a carbon dioxide laser. After the training was over, we were given some hands-on work to see if we actually understood how to use each machine. I was put on the textile labs equipment, making decals for shirts that were going to be given to the iLabs partner

schools. After a lot of mistakes and questions, I had started to find my rhythm with the machines when the day and training had officially ended.

Management Environment

The management environment at the iLab is relaxed and supportive, with very little direct supervision outside of the first few weeks or occasional task assignments and events where the managers are assisting. This relaxed atmosphere is due to the flexible schedule, as a lot of the management works either part-time for another company or is attending events and meetings. That said, the relaxed environment doesn't mean that your questions will go unanswered, as a quick trip to the managers or supervisors' offices can get any questions you may have answered. The general management structure of the ODU Innovation Lab begins with Kaitlyn McCoy and Gary Skeen, who serve as the Directors of the iLab. Kaitlyn McCoy is the program manager who is at the top of the ladder, making her the main boss. Beneath them are the support staff and graduate assistants, who handle the main day-to-day management of schedules, events, and much more. Then the structure is followed by the makerspace technicians and the program assistants.

The management environment in the Innovation Lab was quite effective for my internship, as the relaxed atmosphere allowed me to learn new skills and do more research on the various machinery within the iLab, including printers, robots, and much more. The general management structure was also effective for my internship, as having clear and coordinated management meant that I knew exactly who to ask if I ran into problems or had questions. Overall, the environment was very effective for my internship and allowed me to have a productive experience that contributed to fulfilling my learning objectives.

Major Work Duties, Assignments, and Projects

As a program assistant at the ODU Innovation Lab, my work duties ranged from day-to-day tasks outlined on an intern task sheet to attending outreach events and helping facilitate field trips to the iLab. My day-to-day work duties on the intern task list consisted of a variety of tasks. Some of the daily duties on the task list included deep cleaning and performing maintenance on the various machinery, sanitizing and cleaning the devices and tables within the classrooms, organizing and restocking the outreach cart, and printing brochures for the outreach events.

The work duty of deep cleaning and maintenance of the machinery consisted of regularly wiping down and removing excess ink and other debris from the 3D printers, DTG printer, and heat presses. The deep cleaning and maintenance were necessary for the Innovation Lab, as keeping the machines in proper working condition prevents any unexpected breaks due to improper upkeep, and allows the lab to continue using the machines without having to worry about replacing or sourcing any expensive replacement parts.

The work duty of sanitizing and cleaning the devices and tables within the classrooms consisted of wiping down the whiteboard tables that the iLab uses, wiping down the chairs, sweeping the floors, wiping down the iPads used to control the Sphero robots and rovers, as well as the Sphero rovers and robots themselves. The cleaning of the classrooms always took place either directly after the field trips or the next day, as sometimes the field trips would end right as the iLab was supposed to close for the day. The work duty of sanitizing and cleaning the devices and tables within the classrooms is necessary for the Innovation Lab, as maintaining clean and sanitary classrooms ensures that the space is always ready for any incoming field trips, outreach events, and usual daily operations. This work duty also helps maintain the professional

appearance of the iLab, as the classrooms being clean demonstrates our diligence in ensuring the space is well-maintained.

The work duty of organizing and restocking the outreach cart consists of packing up the necessary technology for the activity at the event, such as the Spheros and ensuring they are charged, printing more flyers and brochures, ensuring that the banner and tablecloths are folded neatly in the cart, and ensuring that the cart is stocked with the information pamphlets and gifts that are given out at the outreach events. The work duty of organizing and restocking the outreach cart is necessary to the iLab, as with an outreach cart that's unorganized and understocked, the staff using the cart for the events would be unprepared or missing crucial materials for the event, which would reflect poorly on the Innovation Lab.

Outside of the major work duties on the intern task sheet, there are a few assignments that each intern was put in charge of. These assignments were designated to one intern but could easily be temporarily reassigned to another if the original intern was absent. I was tasked with looking after the Babylon hydroponics garden, specifically its daily maintenance, replanting, and general care. The task of maintaining the hydroponics system is quite challenging, as the hydroponic system's water requires a specific mineral count and pH level to grow optimally. The water's specific requirements are difficult to get right, and even a small deviation can greatly affect the plants' future growth. As for the task of replanting the hydroponics system, I would gather input from the fellow interns, staff, and managers on what plant would be grown next. After getting a consensus, I would plant those options in the seed germination chambers within the hydroponics systems and ensure they were watered well before leaving them for about a week to sprout. Then came transplanting them to the bigger tray within the hydroponics, which would allow them to grow out and eventually be harvested for the staff in the office. In regard to

the task of performing maintenance on the hydroponics system itself, I had to clean out the hose used to connect the tub of water to the actual hydroponics system and had to clear the filter and the tub after each replanting cycle. The assignment of the Babylon hydroponics system is necessary for the Innovation lab as it provides a renewable source of fresh vegetables and herbs for the staff, which are commonly used by them for lunch and breakfast. Additionally, the hydroponics system is necessary for the iLab since it serves as an engaging and educational talking point that showcases a design that is both sustainable and innovative.

Another assignment that all interns were tasked with was assisting in facilitating field trips and attending outreach events. The assignment of facilitating field trips consisted of helping the management run the field trip by answering questions, giving demonstrations, and providing small tours around the building. There were a few occasions when the interns were tasked with running the whole field trip; on those occasions, we collaborated with each other to create the lesson plan and activity for that day. This assignment was necessary for the Innovation Lab as it involved the very mission that the iLab is trying to achieve, the mission of encouraging students and communities to be creative, innovative, and curious by providing hands-on learning experiences.

There was only one major project I was assigned to for the ODU Innovation Lab. The project consisted of finding supplies for a mobile lab trailer. This project consisted of brainstorming ideas for equipment in the mobile lab, searching various online stores, and gathering prices for the equipment. The project of finding supplies for a mobile lab trailer is necessary for the Innovation Lab, as it will be used to provide hands-on learning experiences with the local watershed environment and used for STEM education for the K-12 students. These

were a majority of the daily work duties, assignments, and projects I had while interning at the iLab.

Use of Cybersecurity Skills or Knowledge

In my internship with the ODU Innovation Lab, I've only had to use my cybersecurity skills and knowledge on a few occasions. As a junior in the cybersecurity program at ODU, I have learned and developed a variety of cybersecurity skills throughout my coursework. Some of the courses I have taken include Windows systems, Linux systems, networking, security, cybersecurity techniques, and cybersecurity strategies. These courses gave me a deep understanding of the information covered, so when the opportunity to apply my skills arose during my internship, I was well-equipped to handle them.

One occasion where I applied my cybersecurity knowledge was when I was troubleshooting the connection issues with several of the iLab's Sphero robots. To resolve this issue, I used my technical knowledge of Bluetooth connectivity along with the general knowledge and skills of troubleshooting and problem solving. Another occasion where I applied my cybersecurity knowledge and skills was when I was troubleshooting the WiFi and Internet connection to the Promethean boards that the iLab uses. I resolved this issue by using my knowledge of Windows 10 and 11 network settings to identify the source of the connectivity issue and restore the board's internet connection.

During my internship, I had to learn a lot of different skills, some that fit perfectly under the cybersecurity skills and some that are more loosely related. I've had to learn how to perform the skills of basic IT support and professional communication to sort out and explain issues with the laptops, iPads, and other various machinery the iLab uses. I've also had to learn the skill of professional collaboration, which has allowed me to work cohesively with varying-sized groups

of people. I've known how to do a few different skills in cybersecurity from my courses prior to the internship. Some of these skills include programming skills in languages like Python, critical thinking, basic scripting skills, and much more.

My on-the-job experience working at the Innovation Lab has deepened my understanding of the skills and knowledge I have developed through my cybersecurity courses. While most of the cybersecurity courses I have taken have provided me with a strong theoretical foundation, this internship allowed me to apply those skills and knowledge in a real-world setting. This application of the skills and knowledge greatly deepened and reinforced my understanding of the content area in ways that the classroom alone cannot fully replicate.

To give some examples of how my understanding was deepened, I will reference the occasions where I applied my knowledge during the internship. Troubleshooting the Sphero robots and applying my knowledge of Bluetooth connectivity deepened my understanding, as in my courses, we only saw diagrams and theoretical applications of this knowledge. Troubleshooting the Spheros let me actually work hands-on with the knowledge I was taught, and it allowed me to understand that troubleshooting and properly understanding real device's Bluetooth connections requires critical thinking and adaptability that can only be developed through hands-on experiences with them and similar devices.

Another example was the troubleshooting of the Promethean board where I applied my knowledge of Windows 10 and 11, the internet, and WiFi connectivity to resolve the connection issue. After troubleshooting, I realized that actually working with the device allowed me to deepen my understanding of cybersecurity, as I now understand that diagnosing and resolving network and connection issues require a deep understanding of how devices interact with one another, which can potentially go well beyond the theory that the textbooks and courses

provided. Overall, I'd say that this internship has provided me with some useful skills for my future career and has deepened my understanding of cybersecurity.

The ODU Curriculum

I would say that Old Dominion University's curriculum prepared me for my internship at the ODU Innovation Lab, as the majority of the skills and knowledge I've applied have come from the courses taken within my major and general education. Courses such as Windows System Management, Introduction to Cybersecurity, Intro Networking and Security, and Cyber Techniques and Operations have given me a generalized understanding of the major components of technology and its connectivity. The general education courses required by ODU also assisted in preparing me for my internship, as they laid the groundwork for my communication skills through the public speaking and writing courses.

One connection I made between my coursework and my internship was through my Windows System Management and Intro to Networking and Security courses. I made a connection with the knowledge gained from these courses as it directly translated to the real world when I was troubleshooting the Wi-Fi connectivity issues with the Promethean boards and the Bluetooth connection issues with the Sphero robots. When I was troubleshooting the Promethean boards, I used the knowledge from the Windows System management course to identify the source of the problem of the board. The knowledge from this course was almost identical to the system I was troubleshooting which allowed me to use the methods and techniques discussed in the course to pinpoint where the connection issues stemmed from. This was similar to the Sphero troubleshooting where the knowledge from the course aligned close enough to confidently identify the source of the problem.

There were some experiences that I would say reinforced a few of the concepts and theories I had learned in school. Throughout my coursework the concept of human centered cybersecurity was very present, and working for the iLab had reinforced that concept. There was a moment at one of the outreach events where we had let the students who visited our booth use the iPads to control the Spheros. The Spheros can be remotely connected to and piloted, but before it would switch to another device it would prompt the device currently connected to disconnect. We had an incident where a student clicked the disconnect button and when one of the other students noticed, they showed me the message as I watched one of the Spheros drive off toward a student who had connected to it using his phone to pilot it remotely. This reinforced the concept of Human focused cybersecurity, as the weakest link of security tends to be humans as we are too trusting or easily manipulated to circumvent any number of security measures.

I would also say that there was only one experience or skill that was not covered in any textbook. The skill of explaining complex cybersecurity measures and techniques in layman's terms to students and adults who aren't well versed in technology. This skill was something that was revealed to me when I tried to explain proper password security to some of the adults that visited the iLab. They were very confused when I started listing terms and methods on how to protect their passwords, and I realized I didn't know how to explain these methods in simpler terms that a non cybersecurity personnel would understand. I tried to explain it in basic terms, making sure they knew what I was talking about and gradually explained more as I went, this method worked well allowing them to successfully understand the methods to protect their passwords. This skill was something that I have not yet encountered in school, as the courses I've taken have only taught the methods and vocabulary without explaining how to pitch it to someone who isn't in the cybersecurity field. Besides the skill of explaining complex

cybersecurity measures and techniques in layman's terms, there were not any other experiences that revealed new techniques or skills that I have not yet encountered in my coursework.

Outcome of Learning Objectives

When I first started my internship, I outlined some learning objectives I hoped to complete throughout my time working for the Innovation Lab. As mentioned previously, my learning objectives were to learn and apply the design and possibility space framework in current and future projects, build professional design and communication skills, demonstrate professional teamwork and collaboration, and to learn how to succeed through failure.

Regarding the learning objective of learning and applying the design and possibility space framework in current and future projects, I can confidently say that the internship fulfilled this objective. The Innovation lab fulfilled this objective by teaching me the design and possibility framework and providing me opportunities to apply it in my tasks. I was able to use the design and possibility framework to make software and designs for t-shirts that the managers liked. With this new perspective and approach to completing tasks, I feel confident to apply this framework to any future projects or tasks that I may get in my future career.

Regarding the learning objective of building professional design and communication skills, I can confidently say that the internship fulfilled this objective as well. The Innovation Lab has taught and allowed me to develop professional communication skills from the initial orientation, as they consistently covered the rules and expectations for speaking professionally with other adults, children, and students. I was able to develop these communication skills as it was used throughout the iLab on fieldtrips, outreach events, and daily interactions with the other staff. These professional communication skills will greatly help me in my future career as they

will allow me to professionally communicate ideas, projects, and much more with my future coworkers and colleagues.

The learning objective of demonstrating professional teamwork and collaboration was also fulfilled throughout my time at the iLab, as the program assistant team and management had to consistently collaborate and work together to perform the daily tasks and assignments. One example of this teamwork was during the field trips where the fellow program assistant team and I had to work together to keep the students engaged and the field trip running smoothly. There were also occasions where the interns were tasked with planning and running the entire field trip ourselves, which required us to professionally communicate and collaborate with one another to develop a lesson plan and activity for that day. These occasions allowed me to properly develop the skills of professional teamwork and collaboration, as it was taught and needed throughout my time working in the iLab.

The final learning objective of learning how to succeed through failure was also fulfilled throughout my time at the iLab. Learning to succeed through failure was taught early on in the Innovation Lab through my multitude of failures in printing 3D designs, decals, heat pressing shirts, and much more. I've also had the privilege of assisting others in learning to succeed through failure, the various groups that come to the iLab all experience failure. For example the recent voyage to code spring break camp had the students model and design boats meant to float and hold small metal objects. The students had to constantly redesign their boats as they realized their design was insufficient, through this they learned to succeed through their failure. I believe that watching the students and my own experience at the ODU Innovation Lab has allowed me to develop the skill and understanding that failure isn't something to fear and to push past failure to eventually succeed.

The Motivating Aspects of the Internship

The internship at the Innovation Lab had many motivating and exciting aspects. The most motivating and exciting aspect of this internship was working with the students and witnessing their excitement and enthusiasm for learning STEM. Watching them brainstorm ideas on the iLab's whiteboard tables after being asked a thought provoking question was one of my favorite parts of the internship. I found the brainstorming sessions the most enjoyable, as it truly reminded me of the childlike sense of wonder most people have experienced when they were allowed to let their imagination run wild. The ability to help kindle students and even adult's excitement and enthusiasm for STEM was one of the best parts of this internship, I found myself actively wanting to come in on my off days during these events just to be a part of the experience and contribute to sparking that curiosity and enthusiasm for STEM in the students and visitors.

Another motivating aspect of this internship was the variety of technology available at the Innovation Lab. The Innovation Lab has a significant amount of technology that gets used on a daily basis. A small selection of this technology includes 3D printers, laser printers, carbon dioxide printers, Spheros, Dobots, 3D pens, VR headsets, decal printers, sticker printers, heat presses, and much more. The opportunity to work with all of these unique pieces of technology, some of which are not commonly available to the public was truly spectacular and a memorable aspect of my internship. I greatly enjoyed coming in and being able to work with something like the CO2 laser, as being able to operate such a powerful piece of technology was an experience that I had never had previously to this internship. Another exciting part of working with the variety of technology available at the Innovation Lab, was seeing the student's ideas come to life through the laser cutters, 3D printer, and even the decal printer. Watching their faces light up

with joy when they received their designs was something that made me want to come into work everyday.

The team dynamic at the Innovation Lab was also a motivating aspect throughout my internship. Being able to work with such a fantastic and supportive group of people made coming into work each day something to look forward to rather than a chore. I greatly enjoyed the discussions and planning that went into each activity and task for the K-12 students, and I enjoyed the collaborative atmosphere that made the tasks feel like a shared effort rather than a one man job. I believe that working with such an amazing group of people has made it possible for me to succeed within this internship, as their collective knowledge, support, and positive attitude and outlooks created an environment that allowed me and the other interns to feel comfortable asking questions and even growing professionally. Overall, the team behind the ODU Innovation Lab makes coming into work an exciting idea instead of something to dread.

Finally, the environment of the Innovation Lab itself was another aspect that I found both motivating and exciting. The creative environment that the iLab creates is something I could always look forward to when coming into work. Stepping foot into the iLab constantly made me want to try my hand at printing t-shirt designs, 3D printing, and even coding the various robots and Spheros. This environment created by the iLab isn't one to shut down creativity or design, in fact they encourage it. I remember one of my fellow colleagues created a 3D printed lion to give out to the students who came to visit the Innovation Lab on fieldtrips. He had gone through a few different colors, prototypes, and designs before eventually creating something that made the students and even the adults smile widely when they received it. Another aspect of the environment that was exciting was the relaxing atmosphere of the lab spaces. On the slower days, the lab spaces became a place where ideas were bounced around, as plans were made for

future outreach events, fieldtrips, and even future designs for merchandise. This environment led to my constant motivation to come into work, as I greatly enjoyed the space to creatively think and sometimes relax to simply brainstorm ideas.

The Discouraging Aspects of the Internship

The internship at the Innovation Lab had a few discouraging aspects. The most discouraging aspect involved the flexible schedule that the internship had. On certain days the iLab staff is tasked with heading to a location for an outreach event, these events can take place anywhere and at any time. The discouraging aspect of the flexible schedule was when the outreach events were cancelled, as at any point they could be canceled and any plans previously made would have to be abandoned as there would be a shift in the schedule. This led to a multitude of problems during my time at the iLab. One scenario of this was when me and a few of the other staff were gearing up for an event at the Virginia Air and Space Museum. Half of us were getting ready to start driving to the building when we received the email that the event had been cancelled. That experience was very discouraging and demotivating, as the sudden cancellation left us feeling like our time and effort that we had put into preparing for the event had gone to waste.

Another discouraging aspect of the internship was the repetitive tasks, such as mass printing over one hundred and eighty designs for t-shirts. That experience can be greatly discouraging and demotivating, as the repetitive nature of the task can slowly break down your focus after a while. There was one occasion where I spent the whole work day in the textile lab printing out the same designs for t-shirts, and the next day I did the exact same thing. That experience made me very demotivated and had me dreading going to work until we eventually managed to knock out the printing.

The Challenging Aspects of the Internship

The iLab only had a few challenging aspects throughout my time working there. One of such challenging aspects was trying to get certain students or people to engage with the activity. This was a particularly challenging part of the internship as a constant change of approach is needed to figure out what works best for each student who didn't want to engage with the activities. On one occasion the whole intern staff team tried to get a student to engage with the activity through a variety of methods. This took a lot of different approaches and eventually we managed to get them to engage by tying the activity into their favorite sport. Although this was one of the more challenging aspects of my internship, it was not the only one.

Another challenging aspect of this internship was learning to balance the variety of daily tasks and assignments. On some days the daily tasks and assignments could be quite difficult to manage, this can happen due to a number of reasons like deadlines for decals, field trips being scheduled back to back, and much more. On one occasion, the intern team was split four ways with one group working to assist a fieldtrip, one group 3D printing designs for the last field trip and the current field trip, and one group was printing decals for shirts and fannypacks. This culminated in a struggle of trying to keep up with the demands of each task simultaneously while ensuring that everything was completed accurately and on time.

The last challenging aspect of this internship was the initial learning curve of how to interact with the students. I personally found this to be very challenging as I had rarely interacted with K-12 students prior to this internship. Interacting with students in lower grade levels, specifically grades 4 to 8 can be quite draining as maintaining their attention requires a significant amount of energy and patience. On one occasion, the whole staff team was so drained from the Voyage to Code spring break camp that the moment it officially ended, the whole team

took a well deserved break for the weekend. Overall, these challenging aspects could have most likely been avoided with proper planning.

Recommendations for Future Interns

For future interns planning to work with the ODU Innovation Lab, I have a few recommendations. The first recommendation I can offer is to come in with an open mind and be ready to learn. The Innovation Lab has a large variety of different machinery and technology and is constantly getting new technology, which means you will constantly be learning new things about the technology and machinery that the Innovation lab receives. This mindset will help you out significantly in the long run of this internship, as that open mind and willingness to learn will allow you to adapt quickly to the new technology and tasks that will come with said new technology.

The second recommendation I can offer is to volunteer for the outreach events, as these events will give you some of the greatest experiences working with people, interacting with crowds, and much more. Attending the outreach events will help you grow your communication skills and allow you to make connections and network to people and companies from all around the country. I myself took advantage of this and managed to get some connections within a few companies such as Babylon Farms, The Newport News Shipyard, Virginia Air and Space Museum, and many more. The connections this internship gives is not something to take lightly, I highly recommend following this recommendation if you don't follow any of the others.

The third recommendation I can offer is to not be afraid to ask questions. There will be quite a few moments in the internship where you will encounter unfamiliar technology, tasks, or situations that you have never dealt with before, and asking questions is the best way to ensure mistakes are kept to a minimum. It is always better to ask questions when faced with uncertainty,

as by not asking you risk damaging equipment, missing important details, or completing a task incorrectly, all of which could have been prevented by simply asking for some guidance.

The next recommendation I can offer is one that is widely agreed upon by the Innovation Lab staff, and that is to always come in with a positive attitude. A positive attitude is important to this entire internship, as when students arrive for the field trips a positive attitude can set the tone for the entire field trip, making the students feel welcomed, excited, and more willing to engage with the activities. A positive attitude also greatly affects the team dynamic and overall atmosphere of the iLab, as an angry or agitated person appears more unwilling to collaborate and can bring down the mood of this relaxed and welcoming environment. This is another recommendation I would highly insist on following, as the iLab is a space where teamwork and communication is vital. Without that innate willingness or approachability that comes with a positive attitude, it would be harder to coordinate certain tasks and assignments.

My last recommendation I can offer is to properly manage your time. As daily tasks are covered and started, you will find that certain tasks can be left alone to work on another. An example of this would be the Babylon Farms hydroponics system, as it has to fully drain before new water can be added and put to the required pH and nutrient level. In the time it takes to drain the water back into the storage tank, you can complete a few other tasks like organizing the outreach cart. This recommendation is very vital, as being able to manage your time can help in a variety of ways. Some of these ways include, giving some break and breathing room on long days, and speeding up the completion of daily tasks which can assist in preventing a backlog of assignments and projects. Overall, I'd say that following these recommendations will get you a pretty good headstart on managing the internship at the Innovation Lab. The staff at the

Innovation Lab are a very friendly and supportive group, so do not be afraid to ask for help or time off if you need it.

Conclusion

Looking back on my internship experience as a Program Assistant for the ODU Innovation Lab, I can say with utmost certainty that this internship has changed me for the better. This internship has given me the opportunity to develop the valuable skills of professional communication and collaboration, which is something that is needed for any future career I may choose to pursue. This internship has also allowed me to see just how important STEM education truly is. In this world of constant technological advancements, STEM continues to grow in importance everyday.

This internship experience will greatly influence the rest of my time at ODU, as the internship has provided me with a new outlook on education and the generalized workplace experience. This new outlook has revealed to me that my knowledge of networks is lacking, and has influenced the courses I plan on taking with the remainder of my time at ODU. This experience also influences my choice of potentially getting another internship for the remainder of my time, as I genuinely enjoyed the busy work and I need more work experience to get hired at other companies. This internship experience will also greatly influence my future professional path. With the skills developed from this internship and the deeper understanding of cybersecurity, I can approach my future career with confidence. This experience has also given me a new found love for working within communities, and may sway my decision of career choices when I finish college.

Overall, I would say that the internship experience required by the ODU curriculum was quite important in my learning process. I honestly believe that more majors and students should

take the time to get an internship and immerse themselves into their careers outside of their coursework.