Brandon Zakaras

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Objective:
Highly motivated and detail-oriented Cybersecurity student seeking an opportunity to apply academic knowledge and technical skills in a challenging professional environment.

Education:
Certification:
Google Cybersecurity Professional Certificate (Completed)
CompTIA Security+ (Completed)
Ethical Hacker (In Progress)
CISSA (In Progress)

College:

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia – Expected Graduation May 2027
Master of Cybersecurity

- Relevant Courses: Cyber Strategy and Policy, Cybersecurity Principles, Advanced Digital Forensics
- GPA: N/A, First Semester

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia – Graduated May 2025
Bachelor of Cybersecurity w/ Minor in Computer Science

- Relevant Courses: Linux System for Cybersecurity, Problem Solving & Programming, Intro Object-Oriented Programming, Cybersecurity, Technology, and Society, Introduction to Cybersecurity, Introduction to Networking and Security, Cybersecurity and the Social Sciences, Cybersecurity Techniques and Operations, Programming with C++, Ethical Hacking and Penetration Testing, Enterprise Cyber Defense, Cybersecurity Fundamentals, Networked Systems Security, Cyber Law, Introduction to Unix for Programmers
- Scholarships: ODU Merit-Based Scholarship, '21 Smithfield VFW Scholarship
- Dean's List Throughout
- Perry Honors College
- *Magna Cum Laude*
- GPA: 3.84

High School:
Advanced High School Diploma, June 2021 --- Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia

- Relevant Courses: Cyber Security I, Cyber Security II, and Cyber Systems, DE English 111 and 112, DE Pre-Calc
- GPA: 4.236

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Hard/Technical Skills:

Mathematics: Have had to apply mathematical concepts and techniques to solve problems using both databases and programming languages, including SQL [database], Java [language], and C++ [language]. Have also used these methods to analyze data and evaluate systems within the context of Cybersecurity.

Technical Research: Many years of experience conducting in-depth research, utilizing various resources, and gathering relevant information to support cybersecurity investigations and decision-making.

Social Engineering: Knowledge in employing techniques used to exploit human vulnerabilities and manipulate individuals to gain unauthorized access to systems or information. This knowledge is used in an ethical manner, and to understand how a potential threat actor may employ these techniques, and how to prevent them from being effective.

Virtual Machines: Experience in working with virtualization software to create and manage virtual environments for testing, analysis, and simulations in a secure and isolated manner.

Computer Networking: Understand the fundamentals of computer networks, including protocols, architectures, and network security, to configure, troubleshoot, and secure computer systems.

Text-based Systems: Have a familiarity with command-line interfaces and text-based systems for administration, scripting, and executing various operations in a Cybersecurity context.

System Infiltration: Practice in penetration testing techniques, vulnerability assessments, and methodologies to identify and exploit weaknesses in computer systems with proper authorization.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Related Experience:

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
Graduate Assistant, August 2025 – Current
- Guided students on the use terminal commands, as well as creating virtual machines both on Windows Operating Systems as well as MacOS.
- Taught students the principles behind partitions, as well as how to partition drives in a virtual machine
- Tutored students on how to create local users, and change file permissions in terminal with chmod and octal notation

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
Summer Cyber Camp Instructor, June 2025 – July 2025
- Created detailed presentations detailing cybersecurity principles, along with ethical hacking techniques
- Led development of an ethical hacking agreement to be signed by all participants to ensure liability, and proactive preventative measures
- Explained complex cybersecurity techniques and principles to those with little to no experience in the field, with minimal difficulties and a high rate of understanding among learners
- Led the camp and participants, and promoted critical thinking among peers and those being taught to foster a culture of learning and curiosity

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
IT Student Work, August 2023 – May 2025
- Work on IT tickets submitted and assisted in fixing technological issues.
- Assisted Master's student with Master's project, which consists of a private server used for ODU Undergraduate Cybersecurity students to practice viruses and other forms of malware on to understand how they work.
- Actively working on the AWS Certified AI Practitioner Certification
- Actively working on the CompTIA Security+
- Built and ran both Windows Server 2022, and Ubuntu Server.
- Learned how to self-sign and authenticate a certificate for a website.
- Enabled SSL for a website

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
Cybersecurity/Drone AI Research Assistant, May 2024 – August 2024
- Researched various potential improvements for the AI used for Drones.
- Participated in a T3-CIDERS workshop, learning about new and future AI applications and how to build an AI from scratch using Old Dominion University's research HPC clusters
- Began research on a new AI that would adapt a drone swarm to maintain visual clarity despite potentially losing members in the swarm

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
Pilot Cyber Clinic Participant, November 2023 – April 2024
- Assisted a law firm with their cybersecurity awareness
- Built a 2-hour presentation on phishing and what it is, along with how to identify attempts and prevent successful breaches, and presented it to the same law firm
- Built a 2-hour tabletop exercise and presented it on a different day to the same law firm, guiding them through how to progress through it

Unrelated Work Experience
Church of the Good Shepard, Smithfield, Virginia
Music Supervisor, 2020 – Current
- Prepare the electronic equipment for use by completing sound checks, connecting media systems, managing computer networks
- Perform musical pieces for mass and selected programs
- Lead 10–12-member choir

Kroger, Smithfield, Virginia
Front End Supervisor/Customer Service, May 2023 – June 2024
- Managed cash control, sales, and cash items and records for the store
- Managed at least 20 front-end associates timetables each day, creating a dynamic yet stable environment where employees were where they needed to be, with no area having too little or too much attention
- Maintained at least 99% customer satisfaction
- In charge of customer service, ensuring that any customer entering the store leaves satisfied and interested in returning
- Promoted trust and respect among both associates and customers, with a positive and energetic attitude.

- Handled large-scale funds including but not limited to, Western Union money transfer, lottery, money orders, and logging all cash coming into and out of all kiosks, including both associate and self-checkout lanes.

Smithfield Swim Club, Smithfield, Virginia
Lifeguard, June 2022 – August 2022
- Managed the safety of all guests and maintained guest records
- Maintained the aquatic equipment, tested water pH, and drained water cleaning systems
- CPR Certified

Chick-Fil-A, Suffolk, Virginia
Front-of-House Employee, June 2018 – December 2019
- Maintained stock throughout the store to assist in increased productivity
- Provided exceptional customer service by adhering to company policies, answering customer inquiries, and ensuring a safe and positive experience.