

## **Narrative Essay**

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### **Abstract**

My name is Nathan Cosendine and I am currently a senior at Old Dominion University. I will be graduating in December of 2024 with a bachelor's in cybersecurity. This paper will share my story and the events that led me to this point in my life. By recounting my struggles and experiences, I hope to share how far I have come and how I came to choose my major and future career path.

### **Narrative Essay**

I am now a college senior with a 3.8 GPA, but 7 years ago I was a high school student struggling to get C's in my senior classes. At this time in my life I was deeply unmotivated to go to school, and would dread going to class each day. I was unsure of what I wanted to do with my life and had no idea of what career path I wanted to take going forward. Instead of doing my homework I would instead opt to hang out with friends or stay inside and play videogames. I would often not do the homework at all or attempt to finish it in class before the teacher would collect the papers. Looking back at this time I know that I was able to complete the work, and proved it by getting decent grades on tests and quizzes. However, I had a problem of lacking motivation; and was failing due to the lack of trying and not due to a lack of ability. I disliked my classes so much I would often stay at home which led me to accrue a number of absences. These absences would threaten my chances at graduating if I didn't stay late to make up the time that I had missed. I could have saved myself a lot of trouble if I had just gone to class. In the end I was able to make up the time and graduated from Deep Creek High School in 2017.

After graduation, I was still left with motivation problems and continued to just coast by while working a part time job. I wanted to do more with my life, but never took the steps required to initiate a change. Before I knew it, two and a half years had gone by and I was still work at the same job while living with my parents. At this point, I felt that I would be stuck in the same place forever, just watching life go by. One day, my dad sat me down and asked me what my plans were in life. He saw the potential in me to do more, but also saw how I was wasting that potential. After pondering on the question my dad had asked me, I decided that I would continue my schooling, but this time I would try my hardest.

Now I had a plan to go to college, but I still did not know what career I wanted to pursue. I ultimately decided on a major in Computer Science, and applied to Tidewater Community College. Growing up I would help my dad build computers, and considered myself to be pretty savvy when it came to computers and technology in general. I didn't choose computer science because I had some deep passion for it, but instead of it seemed like something I wouldn't mind pursuing further. I still didn't know exactly what job I wanted to end up in, but I figured Computer Science is broad enough that I could decide later down the road. Once I was accepted to attend Tidewater Community College in January 2020, I made it my goal to get straight A's. I knew this would be challenge and a far cry from the barely C's I had gotten in my senior year of high school, but I was determined to prove to myself that I could accomplish it if I put the work in. My first couple of months I attended every class and completed every assignment, and felt good knowing that I had the self discipline to adhere to my plan. However a global pandemic would shake up my routine and force me to adapt further.

When the Covid19 virus began to spread across the United States, my college classes would be shifted to virtual classrooms. At this time I was also working at a grocery store, which would become increasingly stressful as it was one of the jobs not shut down during these unknown times. Simultaneously, I was getting used to attending my classes online, which is something I had never done before. With all of this going on, I was still determined to achieve my goal I had set out for myself, and continued to do my work and hone my computer science skills. I had learned the basics of coding and computers, but was still unsure of what career path I wanted to take. My plan was to attend community college, and then transfer to a traditional four year school in order to get my bachelors. I had planned to continue pursuing computer science, but one day came across a podcast centered on cybersecurity concepts.

While working at my evening job stocking at a local grocery store, I would listen to this podcast, called *Darknet Dairies*. The host of this podcast would talk about cybersecurity topics or bring on guests who work in the cybersecurity industry. I was fascinated while hearing stories about people defending companies from hackers or hearing about major security breaches. After exhausting the 100 backlog episodes, I found myself captivated by the topic and decided I wanted to pursue more of it in my academic path. When it came time to transfer to a four year college, I became interested in applying to Old Dominion University (ODU) as I heard that they had a good and growing cybersecurity program. I was excited to find out that I was accepted into the program and started to attend the school in January 2022.

When starting at ODU I was most excited to the classes tied to my new cybersecurity major. These classes were when I found first myself to not just want to do the work because it was what I challenged myself to do, but because I genuinely was curious about the subject and wanted to know more. I originally chose computer science because I did not know what I had a passion for, but after taking a couple classes at ODU I know that I had made the right choice when switching to cybersecurity. I was the most engaged I had ever been with any type of schooling when I was first learning about methods of hacking. In these classes there were labs that allowed me to do firsthand what I had heard about on the podcast.

Fast forward to today, I am in my senior year and have come a long way in my academic and personal journey. My past experiences have led me to be the best version of myself I can be and I have finally found something that I can be passionate about. Every day I hear about cybersecurity incidents that make me realize even more that I had made the right decision and I will be able to make a difference in keeping people's data safe.