

Personal Narrative Essay

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Abstract

This essay tells the story of how I joined college as a nursing major and ended up as a cybersecurity enthusiast. I will also use concepts developed by McAdams, Nguyen, and Smith on narrative identity, I reflect on academic and personal experiences related to my emerging professional identity. By describing challenges, missed opportunities, and an evolving self-concept, I underlined how I found meaning in technology and the motivation to pursue a future career in cybersecurity.

Introduction

Coming to Old Dominion University for the first time, I felt asked to choose a future that I had in such a short notice. I did what a lot of freshmen usually do I chose my major based on what I thought I should do rather than something that truly resonates deep within me. Nursing seemed practical, stable, and familiar. At that time, I had thought such a choice would serve as a guarantee of a clear path onward. What I did not know was that, according to McAdams (2001), our narrative identity unfolds in understanding our experiences over time. I had not lived enough of my own story yet to understand what direction actually fit me.

Leaving Nursing

My early nursing courses were not at all what I anticipated. Rather than feeling Energized by the content, I felt weighted and drained. More of the sensory details of the time stay with me than the content itself. I remember long nights reading through medical terminology, the strain across my shoulders from trying to force myself to be passionate, and the uncomfortable awareness that something was off. According to Nguyen (2013), our stories help us to identify what aligns with us by showing us what does not align. I feel as though that was exactly what happened with nursing. Nursing helped me to realize that I loved to help people, but I just wasn't in the right field yet.

This change was not something that just came sudden. It came quietly, through the build-up of frustration and confusion. Every week, I would find myself drifting towards technology videos, cybersecurity articles, and random tutorials online. Anything related to technology would catch my eye. At first I thought it was just a small interest but then I realized I felt curiosity and energy when learning about technology, and nursing assignments wasn't

catching my interest as much. After I really realized that I was in the wrong major and actually did something to change that was like taking a long breath after one had been holding it for too long.

Finding Cybersecurity

When I first changed to cybersecurity it felt like stepping into a world where everything finally made sense. I remember my first introductory course. The click of keyboards around the lab, the hum of computers, and the feeling of solving something logical all gave me a sense of excitement. Unlike nursing, cybersecurity did make me feel motivated, rather than anxious. Smith (2017) writes that the stories we tell of our academic choices highlight how we author our own lives. Choosing cybersecurity was the first time I consciously decided to rewrite my story.

Working with Linux and Windows systems really showed me how much I liked working out problems manually. I really enjoyed taking things apart and trying new things out and learning more about how the systems really work. I wanted to keep going even when the work was pretty hard. I'd never felt that way before, and it really showed me that I was in the right academic position.

Growing through challenges

I would say my cybersecurity journey has been far from perfect. Something that I was looking forward to this summer was getting an internship, sadly I didn't get it. I applied to so many programs and I refreshed my email nonstop, hoping someone would reply back to me. When the rejection messages eventually came, it was discouraging. I felt behind compared to students who already had industry experience.

In retrospect, the situation was more formative than I thought then. McAdams (2001) describes that quite often, the times when negative incidents develop into meaningful turning points, described by him as redemptive sequences, serve to grow narrative identity. Not being selected for the internship made me reflect on my skills, build a sound knowledge base, and become better prepared when the opportunity would avail itself later. Instead of giving up, I started to study for my certifications that I plan on taking.

Learning through areas

I believe that even though I changed my major, there are still some things that are similar between the two. I see a nurse as someone who protects people, is careful, and is knowledgeable about all the systems. When you give it some serious thought, the objectives are similar to those of cybersecurity.

My classes at Old Dominion University showed me the importance of this connection. Classes in other areas, like writing and ethics, really showed me the way that technology affects human beings and communities. Cybersecurity isn't just about protecting computers for me, it is about keeping safe small businesses, families, and individuals relying on technology each day. Understanding this made me realize the same drive to help people, which got me into nursing initially, is also what drives me into cybersecurity.

Shaping my path

I can now easily see how my professional identity is developing as a senior in cybersecurity. I was ready to make big change in order to be in the right career field. I'm still building up my skill sets and preparing to start taking certifications. Although I am not certain yet as to what exactly

in cybersecurity I want to specialize in, I learned to take this situation as an opportunity rather than something to be worried about.

After I read from Nguyen's , I learned that the stories we believe and tell about ourselves really play a part in our decisions. When looking into my story, I find curiosity, flexibility, and drive. I also believe my decision to pursue cybersecurity has really made me happy and given me a purpose that I had not had previously.

Looking in the future

As graduation approaches, I am very excited about what comes next such as gaining more experience, growing my technical foundation, and finding what area of cybersecurity best fits me. Whether it be network security, digital forensics, or penetration testing, I know that whatever path I choose will be a career well-suited to my strengths and interests.

According to Smith (2017), the person we are is flexible and changes as we mature. I am currently changing into the person who loves problem-solving, system learning, and information protection. I'm creating a future that combines both my curiosity and my dedication to serving others.

Conclusion

My journey of switching from nursing to cybersecurity taught me that identity is built upon choices and obstacles overcome. Leaving a major that no longer felt right and moving into one

that inspires me was a big turning point. Each obstacle, like hard courses and setbacks with internships, allowed me to get a better sense of myself and also strengthen my path.

Something that is running through my story, at least thus far, is one of growth. It makes me feel a lot better knowing that I am on the right track by continuing my education, preparing for certifications, and entering into employment. I found purpose in cybersecurity, enjoyment in technology, and an even greater understanding of the person that I'm growing into.

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