#2 Writing Assignment: Narrative

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ODU

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As long as I can remember I have been interested in technology, like many kids I got my introduction to the world of technology through video games. The main title that revolutionized everything for me was Minecraft. Having a world I could do anything I wanted to in was super appealing. This led me down a rabbit hole of filling my moms work laptop with viruses when I would try to download mods for minecraft. The banner ads that said download now often tricked me a lot. Eventually I found a mod for Dr.Who that I wanted in minecraft so I watched a youtube video on how to download it and add it to Minecraft. It took me two hours of messing around in the systems files before I was able to add the mod to the game. I was overjoyed when I was able to add Dr.Who to the game. Learning how fundamentally I can change games sparked a love for messing with technology.

Shortly after that I was taking apart old computers and putting them back together learning as much as I could. Everyday I would try to change or learn something about technology like messing with my phone my parents got me, changing something about the xbox, or trying to get the family computer to run faster. My Mom got wind of this love for technology and started sending me to a camp in the summer at Blue Ridge Community College called learning can be fun. This camp opened up avenues to making lego robots and game design from what I can recall. It was a lot of fun and I learned a lot about technology. The camp also gave me the opportunity to make friends with other kids my age who had similar interests. It was a great experience overall. Doing this led me to choose electives in middle and high school that allowed me to learn more about computers. In the tenth grade I was able to go to Massanutten Technical Center for half of my school days and take my first cyber security class. I immediately loved the teacher and classroom. We had a huge led display that took up most of a wall and all of the computer wires ran under the floor. My cyber class looked like a place the CIA would work. This

was my first introduction to cyber security. I was able to take apart computers in the class and put them back together at the beginning and it slowly got more advanced. One of the activities I was the most fond of believe it or not relates back to minecraft. We had one team who tried to defend a minecraft server and another team that tried to take it down via hacking it. THe ultimate goal was to be able to play the game with no interruptions. I liked the idea so much because I was able to learn through a game and competition with classmates. This was the first time I felt truly engaged with a class in high school. It was a rewarding experience that I will never forget. It was a fun way to learn and I was able to apply my knowledge in a real-life situation. I will never forget the thrill of trying to outpace the defense and take the game down. This competitive nature for class made me want to do more cyber competitions. This led to me entering online competitions that let me explore skills and earn points for my "team". I was the best at researching and cracking passwords and I was able to get most of the other tasks done. This led to new challenges like being able to use python code to exploit things in these challenges. This experience made me realize the potential of cyber security and the potential of my skills. I decided to focus my career in cyber security and it made me realize that I want to expand my knowledge in the field.

After highschool graduation I wanted to save money so I decided to go to Blue Ridge Community College to start pursuing my degree. I loved being able to take classes that related to the degree I wanted and this allowed me to engage in school more than I ever had before. I really enjoyed being able to learn more, especially about the backend of websites and programs like learning how to code with html and python. I enjoyed learning about cyber security because it felt like I was slowly gaining new skills. For instance when I would get assigned to a lab where I would have to edit a linux machine in the command line, being able to just type commands and

understand what they did was super gratifying and being able to understand I was seeing results has kept me motivated. Being able to keep this momentum through my time at BRCC seemed almost impossible to me and I can not thank my instructors enough for inspiring me. I was fortunate enough to share my experience as a graduation speaker at BRCC when I concluded my time there.

Leaving BRCC I knew I wanted to go to a four year college. I was not that picky with the college I chose. I originally wanted to go to Florida State, but out-of-state tuition is insane. THis led me to in state college where I wanted to be somewhat far from home but close enough for the holidays. I chose ODU for two reasons: the gym was nice and they had sushi on campus. I did not know but they also had an amazing cyber security program. It seemed fate had my best interest in mind. Ever since I have come here I have loved my classes and learning about cyber security here and making connections with other people. Being here has helped me understand what cyber is and make my life far more fun by pursuing this degree and being able to expand my knowledge. I am looking forward to the future and how I can apply what I have learned to my career. I am confident that ODU has given me the best opportunity to develop my skills and excel in cyber security. I now plan to pursue a masters degree in cybersecurity at Old Dominion to further grow my expertise and be able to pursue my life long goal of eating sushi for every meal.

Throughout my life technology has been a huge part. Being able to learn and grow as technology does the same has led me to have a great love and passion for it. Being able to learn about one of my biggest passions in school has been amazing. I loved being able to challenge myself by learning how to mod minecraft. This led me down a path that made me where I am today. It is extremely empowering to be able to have real world skills that I can use in the future.

These courses have led me to love learning and want to be a lifelong student. I have grown so much as a person and being able to see that is extremely rewarding.