

**IDS493 Reflection Essay**

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IDS493: Electronic Portfolio Project

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### **Abstract**

Returning to college after a long layoff proved to be challenging in the beginning. I had to re-learn study habits and establish a routine that would keep me on track to juggle work, school, and family. Work-life balance was not a concern for me, it was keeping focused in my school assignments that had me apply a little more effort. On the path back, it took a while to see which curriculum I would follow that is closely aligned with my career. It took some searching, but I eventually found the perfect major – leadership. A couple of classes at my pace per year was the most I could commit since mid-career activities would occupy most of my time. Nonetheless, as I trek forward, I will be on target to graduate from Old Dominion University by fall of 2024. I will finally attain the goal that was begun almost three decades ago.

*Keywords:* Major, learning, continuing education, career

### **IDS493 Reflection Essay**

IDS electronic portfolio project (IDS 493) is the current course I am sitting. It introduced me to the e-portfolio project. This class gave me the opportunity to present a well-documented journey showcasing work that has evolved throughout my academic career. This is one of various classes that helped me grasp concepts and apply best practices in a real-world scenario. The aspect that held my interest in this class was that it prepares students to accumulate artifacts that is used to display past achievements. Being a manager in a large organization, I understood its use to promote what you have earned, learned, and applied in life to showcase your current abilities. This is very important in the work force when evaluating candidates in consideration for positions that you will be hiring.

The educational voyage gave me many skills to use in my work life. I have learned to examine artifacts relative to my future goals. All items collected serve as examples of where I was to where I am now and how it applies to where I want to go. They were gathered from previous classes using different citation styles. I have written in MLA and APA standards and still practice both to ensure I remain proficient. The earlier pieces show imperfections and some errors which helped me learn the correct structure for submission. Knowing then what I know now could have resulted in higher grading. Nonetheless, the mistakes have proven to be my moment for improvement. Growing and overcoming pitfalls is a part of the continuous learning process.

One fascinating part of the class was job advertisement analysis. Proficient in drafting job postings with familiarity in this activity, I took in the general views from a scholastic standpoint. Following the process taught, I was able to see the similarities to what I have

understood through my professional experience. The result was identical. Using the procedures made me see how this would relate to an e-portfolio package. I would recognize the type of artifacts that would be relevant to my professional background. Knowing the details and how you compare them to the criteria, accumulating artifacts would be simple.

Many valuable topics were discussed in class. One that stood out, that I thought is very beneficial for students in the real world, are soft skills. These intangible assets make a difference in how you perform in both academics and in the work force. This is a practice that I already implement in my day-to-day activities at work. Learning and mastering these skills could help you develop as a leader and ultimately increase your marketability for future potential jobs (Great Learning, 2022).

The participation in this class provided the proficiency to successfully meet its objectives. The standards and procedures used to develop the e-portfolio, analyzing what pieces can be included as artifacts, and the process of reflection were all facets to the course outline that helped put it all together. I was able to absorb this knowledge and implement it in class discussions and all assignments. Overall, based on my personal experience, what was practiced can be applied in the professional environment. The value of the e-portfolio is simply a way to promote your talents by chronicling your growth and demonstrate acquired competency to desirable employers (Getting Hired, 2023).

I chose the leadership path because it closely parallels my profession. ODU's leadership track is part of its interdisciplinary studies program. This degree focuses on many different parts of being a leader while blending instruction from many different areas of study (ODU, n.d.). From my vantage point, it is a well-rounded curriculum that helps students learn the essentials of

being a competent leader. I have seen a lot of similarities in the foundation that it teaches along with the methods and techniques I have acquired through my years as a mid-level manager.

A previous course that I have recently completed dealt with this subject matter. Interdisciplinary theory and concepts (IDS 300W) first explained the meaning of interdisciplinary studies and disciplines. We then took a deep dive into some of the many specific elements such as critical thinking, analysis, and conflicts. All of these, in my experience, are frequently used in the business world. As a manager, I look for these characteristics when I evaluate job candidates, review my staff, or create employee professional development plans. I tend to provide empowerment to those who strongly display and possess these traits especially if they have the drive to practice and improve themselves. To me, I do not have to worry about complacency and can fully rely on their autonomy. IDS 300W and IDS 493 are identical. They examine qualities beneficial for one to succeed beyond their college career. They touch upon the basic attributes that can be to their advantage in the workplace. Speaking as an experience professional, most of the times applicants are chosen who exhibit progressive soft skills to one who only has hard skills. I typically desire those who can blend well with the human factor.

Critical thinking is a key skill that has served me well. Again, I draw comparison with the class activities, assignments, and student-teacher interaction with what I have known or have become proficient in during my career. I have learned both in class and on the job that critical thinking is helpful when completing tasks, managing projects, or collaborating with others. It has helped me achieve goals and has often instilled teamwork. Being capable of looking at issues or opportunities from different perspectives and arriving at a decision using critical

thinking can be the difference between failing and keeping your business competitive and successful (Hoffman, 2023).

Analysis is another function in which your proficiency in this skill can be essential. Having the competence to take data and information to interpret towards solving a problem would be a big advantage as a team member. This is a strength that is sought after by managers. I have understood this concept as a professional and as a student in this class. IDS 300W provided reinforcement. A lot of my work is heavily dependent on analysis.

Whether it is a group assignment for class or a team project for work, at some point you will face conflicts. Typically, we may see scenarios where differing opinions could often lead to disagreement and alter plans. The way I remediate this issue is like what was discussed in class. I try to understand their beliefs and viewpoints with an open mind. I do not act on impulse when making decisions. We covered this in our class activities. The best way for everyone's input to matter is to find common ground. Politics is a good example where opposing parties have strong opinions on the same issues. To solve differences for the sake of the citizens, they must meet halfway. It was evident in late 2022 where Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Republican Sen. Marco Rubio got on the same page for a resolution to a potential nationwide rail union strike (McFall, 2022).

Most of the points presented through current and previous classes contribute directly to lifelong learning. It serves as areas that give you something to strive for academically or professionally. I collected artifacts that highlight those themes. They touch on all subjects. They are chronologically presented in my e-portfolio to demonstrate my growth and improvement in the short time I returned to school. Each item illustrates my growth from one

class to the other and my content used was borrowed from different sources. I was able to apply subject matter from legal, information technology, English, and science towards my coursework in leadership. I have been able to apply a lot of the aspects to the real-world setting as was taught in the classroom.

Looking far back to the beginning in my freshman year, I have come a long way. I took the unconventional route to my college odyssey. No regrets on that path. I had to keep an open mind and let the instruction provide me the comprehension without the needless comparison to what I think I already know. I have gained an appreciation to the instruction provided. The interdisciplinary studies requirements merged different areas together to forge a curriculum that reaches many disciplines. The e-portfolio project demonstrates that I have that knowledge. My main takeaway from the learning experience is that this degree will be well-rounded and will complement my career. As evidenced in the artifacts collected, you can observe the strides emerge as each work is an improvement from the previous. Absorbing all the knowledge that was available academically and professionally has produced the drive to excel in my work. I know that once I reach my goal, I will realize that the result should be as sweet as I expected.

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