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Introduction

Last school year around this time, I was questioning whether or not I would be graduating this year. At times I was preparing to stay an extra semester or extra semesters because of the uncertainty. What could have possibly caused me to do all of this? Finding an internship so I could graduate, was almost a second job in my life at the time. After many dead-ends with finding an internship, I became fixated on some additional questions. Why did I even need an internship to graduate? Why doesn't the university itself provide on campus internships for students even though many of the programs require one. Why can't I get paid for the internship if I'm required to travel to and from? There was a point where I was applying to any Information Technology or Cybersecurity internship that I could find and ended up getting denied. After a while, my mindset shifted from possibly having to stay extra semesters to maybe I can get one over the summer after my last semester and still graduate on time. The stress of trying to secure an internship and the uncertainty of my graduation status really put a strain on me for a while. Fast forward to August 2023, I was the recipient of a very unexpected gift. While attending staff training for my job with Housing & Residence Life on campus, I met Sergeant Chavis with the Old Dominion University Police Department, and after a short conversation, she offered me an internship with the department. Naturally, I accepted which opened the door for me to explore two professions that I have always been interested in, Law Enforcement and of course Information Technology. From this internship, I wanted to get some hands-on experience of the information I had been learning about the past four years. In addition to that, I wanted to be able to the skills I knew I possessed and not be assigned tasks that had no merit. Finally, I wanted kind of test my knowledge of what I knew, and what I had been learning. As I come to the end of the internship, I was able to accomplish what I wanted to accomplish, got some meaningful experiences, had some great conversations, and met a lot of nice people in the process. I can definitively say, as I've said before, I chose the right place to complete my internship and will forever be thankful for the opportunity to work with them.

At one point, before I started the internship and towards to beginning of it, I was questioning whether or not or to what extent I would get to engage with my main interest of Information Technology and Cybersecurity. This was mainly due to the fact that the internship wasn't related to my major. To my surprise though, I got to engage with it way more than I originally suspected. Some of the most unsuspecting areas of the department are very heavily IT and or Cybersecurity involved. In addition to that, the underlying IT & Cybersecurity infrastructure of the department is actually somewhat complex in nature. Throughout my time with the department, I was required to rotate between different areas of the department, all of which used IT in their everyday operations. Not once since I started my internship with the department have, I regretted it. From the very first day there, I was welcomed by everyone in the department from the Chief of Police on down. This whole semester, I've actually looked forward to going into the office and finding out my task for the day. There were times where I wished I could have stayed a bit longer that day, but due to my class schedule and other time constraints, I unfortunately couldn't. As I've probably mentioned before, I've thoroughly enjoyed my time

with the department. I got to challenge my knowledge, learn some new information, and get experience with working in a professional office setting, which is undoubtedly a part of my near future. This paper will discuss in detail what I've experienced during this internship and hopefully give someone else some insight into what they should expect of the department should they look into or secure an internship here as well. Hopefully, they will enjoy it as much as possible and as much as I did.

The Department & My First Day

As I mentioned previously, this semester, I completed an internship with the Old Dominion University Police Department. This department provides first responder and emergency services to the main Norfolk campus as well as Old Dominion's secondary locations like the Higher Education Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia and the Tri-Cities Center in Portsmouth, Virginia through various means. This department provides twenty-four hour a day and seven days a week coverage and protection to the students, staff, and visitors of the campus. Not only does the department provide protection to the campus but surrounding areas of the campus which includes neighborhoods adjacent to campus and certain areas of the City of Norfolk. The very first ODU Police Officer was hired and sworn in 1967. This person, Ralph Davis, was a former military police sergeant from the area who was hired as part of a research study to figure out whether the campus needed a police department. (Huckless & Hayes, n.d.) Since then, the department has grown significantly and has come a long way. The department employs approximately 55 sworn police officers, who are assisted by unarmed security officers, 911 dispatchers, as well as civilian employees, which includes those in the IT department who specifically respond to the department's technological needs. Within the department itself, there are several subsections. The White-Collar Crime Unit, which houses the departments detectives, which also includes two digital forensics detectives. The Public Information Office, which is responsible for communicating information and events for the department to the public through social media and official press releases. The Community Policing Unit which is responsible for engaging with the public to bridge connections and make the presence of the department known. The Canine, K9, unit, which includes one emotional support dog and two detection dogs. The Recruitment division which is pretty self-explanatory. Since its founding, the department has earned many certifications including its most recent one of CALEA Tier 2. This is a national recognition of just how well the department is ran from its officers down to simple paperwork.

This internship with the department officially started, for me, in January 2024. After a slight delay at the beginning of the semester due to some unforeseen circumstances on the departments side, I was finally able to attend my first day and orientation on January 29th, 2024. My very first day was fairly short compared to how long I was supposed to be there that day. It consisted of an orientation with my supervisor, a brief meet and greet with whoever was in the office at the time, and quick talk to discuss what I would be doing. My orientation itself consisted of the typical introduction of yourself to the others in the room, which was followed by expectations of the internship, the organization of the department, and going over my schedule. One thing that did surprise me during the orientation is that my supervisor not only stated what was expected of me, but also gave me the opportunity to voice my expectations of her as well. This made me feel as if I would be heard throughout my time at the department. One of my initial thoughts of the department was that the physical building was very small in nature

compared to the amount of people and stuff inside. Every corner I turned, that was a someone at a desk or what I believed was a random item. The IT office was not exception to this either. Inside that office was boxes on top of boxes of old computers, radios, ethernet cables, a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Some of those things didn't even have boxes and were just sitting on top empty desks. My assumptions regarding that were correct as it had been reiterated to me several times throughout my stay at the department that that indeed was the case, and they were in the process moving into a new space in the coming years. With that in mind though, I did notice that the department was well organized despite having limited space. This came in the form of many things such as secure access points, secured rooms that only certain people could access, which included the server closet that only the IT department had keys too, and dedicated storage areas for evidence etc., or applications within their department online management systems that only certain people could access or could only do certain functions within the application. One thing I never did, though, was think anything negative about the department, and as I am writing this paper, I still haven't.

The Department From My Perspective & It's Structure

My initial impressions of the internship included confusion on what I would be doing. Going into the internship, it was my understanding that I was there to complete an Information Technology and or Cybersecurity internship. After looking at my schedule, in addition to the IT department, I saw that I would also be getting some work with some of the subdivisions that I mentioned earlier and became a little disappointed. After a quick conversation with my supervisor, I was reassured that I would get more than enough time with the IT department and that me working with those other areas were essentially side quests for me. After some time, I realized that that was a rush to judgement on my end, because indeed did get enough time with them. In the end, I learned some new information and IT terminologies, got brushed up on information I knew, and actually felt apart of that department. The driving feeling behind that concern is that on paper, it looked like I would be doing more of the law enforcement side of the internship, which brought back those original concerns I had before getting the internship. Once I got passed that, I got another initial feeling about the internship, which ended up being true. This is that I would enjoy my time there. As I am sure I have mentioned before, I felt very welcomed from the time I stepped inside. As I've also mentioned before, as a part of my orientation, my supervisor gave me a tour of the department and introduced me to anyone who was in the building at the time. Every person who I was introduced to, no matter what rank they were or how long they had been there etc., welcomed me and shook my hand. I was asked my name more times than I can recall, which to me said I wouldn't have a problem fitting in there. From then on, every morning when I walked in, I was spoken to and greeted as if I had been working there forever. Usually when starting a new job, it takes me a while to warm up to people, but here it didn't take as long as I thought it would because of small things like this.

The organizational structure of the department was more extensive than I would've thought it would be. Inside the department there are many people "in charge," but everyone has a boss or someone they answer to directly. Each area of the department I was during the internship, and in general, always had multiple levels of management I knew I could go to if I had problems with anyone. In addition to having my direct supervisor, I also had them. Because of the multiple branches management, I never felt as if I couldn't voice any concerns I had because I knew there

was someone who would listen to me and take what I was saying seriously. To further that, often times, I was provided with personal phone numbers to many high-ranking persons in the department, just in-case. This helped me feel at ease and made me feel comfortable while I was working.

My Day-to-Day Operations

Because of the fact that often times police work is more reactive than anything, I never knew what my task for the day would be. This was also the case while I was full time with the IT Department. Not often did I do the same task(s) on consecutive days, it really just depended on what needed to be done that day. For my first month of my internship, I was with the departments IT department. Everyday was a different adventure of what we would get into. The first thing I always did when I came in was login to the universities ITS Ticketing system ServiceNow to see if any tickets had been put in for our department and check to see if anything needed to be put in. This is a necessary part of the department's operations due to the fact that the department bears the majority of the responsibility for the safety of the campus. For instance, one of the first tickets that I remember putting into the system was brought to our attention from a patrol officer. This officer informed us that a panic button in one of the buildings on campus was not working properly and not connected to the campus IT infrastructure. Normally, once that button is pressed, it will pop up on the screens of the dispatchers who would then dispatch officers as needed. In the event that the panic button legitimately needed to be used, but wasn't working properly, the department wouldn't know anything is going on and wouldn't be able to respond and potentially save someone's life. Once I put the ticket in for that, it was fixed promptly. As the door to this department was almost always wide open, multiple times a day someone would walk in the door with a new task for us to deal with and we responded. This was important because much of the department is ran off computers as a result of the technological era that we are in, and not having needed resources available can lead to a non-functioning police department and a lapse in safety for the campus. When we weren't doing any specific tasks, my supervisor in the IT department would test my knowledge and when I didn't know something would make sure to give me a quick overview of it as if we were in a classroom, which I appreciated. In addition to that, I would get assigned small tasks such as, taking apart computers or laptops and identifying parts or playing around with hard drives that were malfunctioning. My time with that I learned a lot and learned that I knew and could do more than I originally thought.

During my second month, I was switched to the White-Collar Crime Unit I mentioned earlier. Also, as I have mentioned in a previous reflection paper, I was paired with digital forensic detective. This was a perfect fit for me as was the IT department as my minor is Cybercrime. Some of the courses I took for my minor were specifically for digital forensics & digital forensics as it pertains to the law as well. As with the IT department, I never knew what I would be assigned or what had already happened before I got there, or on my days off, so everyday was a new adventure. One task I did enjoy doing was updating the forensics software the department uses. That consisted of me downloading the latest version and transferring the download from one computer to another to reinstall the software with a quick trial and error process of trying to figure out why the hard drive I was using wouldn't accept the download despite having more than enough space. This was because of IT security mechanisms in place to ensure the devices they use do not become a victim of cyberattacks and having sensitive information stolen. Keeping

the software up to date is also a way to help prevent cyberattacks. Another task I did often was reviewing security camera footage. These cameras are connected to the campus IT infrastructure which allows the video footage to be reviewed forwards and backwards without having to make physical copies of the footage. These cameras play a significant role in keeping the campus safe and help solve or get leads on crimes that occur, which I did manage to do a few times. The CIA IT Security Triad comes into play there in many forms. One specific example is who is allowed to log into the computers in that area of the department. The answer to that question is, very few people. Though I wasn't taking computers apart with that area of the department, I still was very in touch with IT.

Did My Course Work Help?

During my four years at Old Dominion, I have taken a many of IT and Cybersecurity classes that covered many different topics and concepts. After initially questioning the point of completing an internship, I do now see how easily the information I've learned translated to the workplace. The classes I were able to take through the universities IT & Cybersecurity programs really made it easy for me to make the connections between what I was being told or what I saw. Being provided with the base knowledge of this information through the curriculum sometimes allowed me to catch on to information before it was even said to me. This was also one of the things that again made me realize that I knew way more than I thought I did. It is currently my belief that I just needed some type of reassurance and working this internship has done just that. There was quiet a few examples that I can remember of me making connections between what I was doing or seeing and what I learned from me classes. As I had mentioned in one of my reflections, while I was full time with the IT department, my acting supervisor ran through a mock interview with me to help prepare for future job interviews. During this interview, he would throw out acronyms, such as DHCP and DNS, and ask me to explain what they acronym stood for and define it. In addition to that I was asked to name every computer component off the top of my head, which I did with only missing one or two. Because I had been over this type of information several times, it almost came up as easily as me saying my name. I'm able to admit that I didn't get everything perfectly, but that's all apart of the learning process.

During my time with the digital forensics' detectives, I was asked to explain why you shouldn't do a digital forensics investigation on the original device, which I answered swiftly and correctly. I also got a sense of security controls that had been set in place using IT within the department as a whole. At some point, I noticed that certain rooms in the department and certain buildings that the department has can only be accessed by a specific group of people. Using myself as an example, I could use my access card to get into the primary areas of the building and the inner building itself, but I couldn't just scan into places like the IT closets, the Detectives office, the property, and evidence department, or even the dispatch center. This made a connection to the concepts access control lists and keeping data and sensitive information confidential and only available to those who need it. While inside the Property & Evidence department, I made an unexpected connection to one of my digital forensics classes that I have taken. While getting a brief tour of the area, I was shown what is known as a Faraday bag. This is an extremely valuable tool in the digital forensics world as it prevents the device inside of it from being remotely wiped or corrupted before a full analysis is done of it by blocking out external signals. Overall, though I let some of the courses I've taken stress me out a little bit more than I

should've, I can definitely say that it was somewhat worth it. As I am starting Old Dominion's Masters Cybersecurity program in the fall, I am confident that the information has already learned combined with the information I will learn this upcoming school year will prepare me for industry certifications and my future career.

Internship Up's & Down's

There were many factors that motivated me to keep showing up to my internship and giving the department the best version of me. The main two factors were that I felt recognized and respected. As I'm sure I've mentioned twenty times in this paper by now, no matter where I was or who I was talking to, I always felt that way. There were several insignificant things that helped with this. Every time I was introduced to someone new, my supervisor or the person I was with at the time made sure to address me by my preferred name and never was I just the intern. I shook hands or spoke with people of all ranks and roles in the department and they always made me feel welcomed. Often times, I received compliments from people for the quality of work I was doing. Also, while doing my work, the people I was working with made sure I knew what I was doing several times before they sent me on my own and were always open to questions if I had any. The mix of knowing that I was doing an excellent job and being reassured that I was, along with the overwhelming feeling of being welcomed really gave me the boost that I needed to keep going. The exciting part about working with the department is that, as I mentioned, was that I never knew what I was going to do that. Because of the fact that so much stuff can happen in a short span of time for a police department, didn't feel very stagnant and there was also something new to do. Another encouraging part was that I was given tasks and assignment that actually contributed to the operations of the department. I was never given work that had no reason behind it, filing and stapling things of that nature. It always felt like I was helping out in some way. One of the most discouraging parts of the internship is that sometimes there was literally nothing for me to do. During those times I would just sit at my assigned desk and twiddle my thumbs or just watch movies. The discourage came in because I felt like I was losing time when I could've been doing something worth-while. At some point, though, I did realize that I did not need to be working all the time and for hours on top of hours for me to feel like I'm doing something. No one is meant to work like a machine, and everyone needs a break at some point.

One of the challenging aspects of this internship was making sure I was following all the departmental and internship policies and procedures to avoid losing my internship experience. Because the department handles a lot of sensitive information and have a lot of federal standards they have to follow, I wanted to make sure I was following every rule as strictly as possible. Once I did make a mistake of logging into a computer that I wasn't supposed to, which I had not been made aware of until that moment. Though I didn't get in trouble or anything, it was still a reminder for me to make sure that I was following all the protocols to prevent anything like that from happening again. One recommendation I do have for anything thinking about getting any type of internship with law enforcement is to go in with an open mind and not to judge everyone based off the actions of some. Once on the other side, you get a whole different perspective of what goes on in the law enforcement world, and also meet some incredibly good people.

Conclusion

To wrap this all up, I can say that I had fun this semester working with the Old Dominion University Police Department. Overall, this internship helped me feel as if I could make it in the professional world which is not too far away. I was given the opportunity to explore career possibilities, learn new information, put my skills to use, and left a good impression of myself, which is something I always strive to do. As I'm going into my master program, I can say this definitely helped me confirm that I wanted to do at least one of the careers I picked out for myself. I plan on making the most out of the few weeks I have left.

Works Cited

Huckless, M., & Hayes, H. (n.d.). *Old Dominion University Police Department*. Retrieved from <https://www.oocities.org/odu1117/>