A True Reflection of my ePortfolio Process

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Old Dominion University's (ODU) cybersecurity program is an outstanding interdisciplinary initiative that has reshaped the once narrow perception of cybersecurity. This comprehensive curriculum integrates diverse fields, encompassing information technology, computer science, risk management, and cybersecurity fundamentals, thereby offering a holistic understanding of the discipline. Key courses such as Linux Systems, Introduction to Cybersecurity, Introduction to Network and Security, Cyber Strategy and Policy, and my Cybersecurity Internship have played pivotal roles in establishing a foundation for my expertise. The program not only nurtured essential hard and soft skills but also refined my critical thinking, technical proficiency, and effective writing abilities. These three skills stand out as the most crucial I have acquired, forming the success in both my academic pursuits and professional endeavors. Graduating a semester earlier than most, my journey was marked by dedication, an open mind, and a willingness to learn, which is reflected in my ePortfolio.

What are the Objectives?

Before delving into my ePortfolio process, acquired skills, and the overall representation of my artifacts, it is crucial to establish the context of my program's objectives. Graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity, positioned as an interdisciplinary program, underscores the importance of integration in the Interdisciplinary Studies framework. These programs demand a blend of knowledge and skills for effective learning. Interdisciplinary studies, especially in cybersecurity, entail incorporating various aspects of different disciplines, necessitating students to integrate and reflect on their learning experiences. In the realm of cybersecurity, this integration is paramount for future success. The program requires proficiency in understanding code from computer science, utilizing writing for crafting policies and

procedures, learning IT for fundamental networking comprehension, and other various specific subjects essential for computer system protection. Mastery of these diverse topics is imperative to function effectively as a cybersecurity professional, requiring a comprehensive and integrative approach for future application. Within my ePortfolio, several artifacts strategically align with the outlined objectives of my cybersecurity major. As stated by Old Dominion University, my degree major aims to "prepare graduates with the skills necessary to protect computer systems, networks, and online data from attack and compromise" (n.d.). Many of my artifacts substantiate these objectives, showcasing my proficiency in the skills essential for a cybersecurity professional. However, in the initial stages, identifying these skills posed a challenge, but I was eventually able to overcome this issue.

Understanding the ePortfolio Process

Two months ago, I would not have been able to easily pinpoint the three most crucial skills I could take away from my college courses. However, at the start of this semester, I embarked on a senior course to create an ePortfolio reflecting on my entire college learning experience. Initially skeptical about its value, I kept an open mind. According to Eynon et al. (2014), "Reflective ePortfolios help students connect and make meaning from otherwise isolated learning experiences" (p. 1) Unsurprisingly, as Eynon predicted, this ePortfolio course proved instrumental in prompting me to reflect on my work across all courses and articulate the skills acquired. Looking back over a more extended period can be challenging, and the ePortfolio process facilitated this reflection, helping me extract valuable insights from my college career to apply in my professional journey. The transferrable skills, including writing, critical thinking, communication, and technical expertise, have transitioned into my full-time career. Without the ePortfolio process, I might not have effectively identified and reflected on the major themes

apparent in my coursework and throughout my ePortfolio. Beginning the ePortfolio process was a difficult one as I had to truly reflect on what I had learned and gained from my program courses. The workload surpassed my expectations, and I am grateful for my organizational habits in saving most of my college work, papers, and other important assignments in folders on my personal computer. Reviewing these assignments caused conflicting emotions because I felt extremely excited about graduating but also a twinge of nervousness, questioning if I had fully maximized my years of education. However, as I continued my reflection, I began to identify my skills and provide concrete examples, which eased these concerns.

Identifying my Skills and Artifacts

Identifying the first and most readily apparent skill gained in my college courses was my proficiency in writing. Across my cybersecurity curriculum, writing emerged as a consistent thread in nearly every class. While not explicitly listed as a degree objective for cybersecurity, it warrants consideration, given the inclusion of two writing-intensive courses and the recurrent need for substantial papers in almost every class. In my ePortfolio, I showcased this skill, demonstrating its versatility in conveying knowledge across diverse subjects such as cyber policy, technical topics, and risk management, exemplified by my reflective internship paper. The next skill I was able to recognize in my academic journey was the development of technical expertise. The cybersecurity program integrated hands-on learning and labs throughout, providing a solid foundation for my future career. My ePortfolio highlights this skill through artifacts like proof of a certification, Linux fundamentals, and specific cybersecurity techniques, including penetration testing. Critical thinking, though initially challenging to pinpoint, emerged as my third identified skill. Despite its intangibility on paper, reflection on various coursework revealed numerous instances where critical thinking was applied. My ePortfolio encapsulates this

skill through artifacts such as an information technology case analysis, a digital forensics lab

plan, and an extra credit password cracking assignment. While each artifact is categorized under

a specific skill, they integrate and involve the other skills listed. Collectively, they signify my

dedication to enrolled courses and an eagerness to explore interdisciplinary subjects within the

program. The inclusion of diverse artifacts, ranging from cybersecurity techniques to policy

analysis, underscores my commitment to understanding the broad spectrum of topics in the field,

even if they may not directly align with my eventual specialization.

Artifacts Deeper Meaning

After meticulously gathering and reflecting upon my artifacts, several common themes

notably emerge, prominently showcased through the narrative essay and this reflective paper

assigned in the ePortfolio class. Primarily, these artifacts underscore my unwavering dedication

to learning and achieving my goals. Beyond dedication, they also illuminate my eagerness to

learn and maintain an open mind, traits evident throughout my academic journey. The ePortfolio

seamlessly weaves these themes together, using the three identified skills as supporting evidence.

For instance, both my narrative essay and internship paper elaborate on my proactive pursuit of

internships, leading to securing a job which is an example of my dedication to the profession.

The inclusion of my Application Web Services (AWS) certification and resume highlights my

ongoing commitment to learning beyond the academic realm, signaling my passion for the

cybersecurity profession. Numerous artifacts serve as testaments to my open-minded approach,

from the diverse courses mentioned in my ePortfolio to the technical skills acquired and

showcased under my critical thinking section. These overarching themes, embedded in each

identified skill, collectively strengthen my belief that they will play a pivotal role in shaping my

successful career trajectory. As someone consistently eager to learn, I remain poised to pursue

additional certifications or higher education to enhance both personal and professional growth. My dedication, evident in my academic and professional endeavors, serves as an indicator to potential employers that I am not only capable but also a collaborative team player. Lastly, fostering an open mind is a quality that extends beyond adaptability. It signals to employers that I am flexible, receptive to new ideas, and embrace change, which is a valuable asset in any professional setting. These attributes, showcased throughout my ePortfolio, not only reflect the person and student I am but also the cyber professional I aspire to become, laying the foundation for ongoing success in my current position and future career growth.

Conclusion

As I conclude this paper, and my college career, it is bittersweet to reflect upon it all. In conclusion, my journey through Old Dominion University's cybersecurity program has been transformative, shaping me into a well-rounded and proficient professional in the field. The interdisciplinary nature of the program, seamlessly integrating various disciplines such as information technology, computer science, risk management, and cybersecurity fundamentals, has provided me with a holistic understanding of the discipline. Key courses and experiences, from Linux Systems to my Cybersecurity Internship, have played pivotal roles in establishing a strong foundation for my expertise. The ePortfolio process, greeted with skepticism, proved to be a valuable exercise that allowed me to reflect on my entire college learning experience. Through this reflective journey, I identified and showcased three crucial skills, writing proficiency, technical expertise, and critical thinking, each playing an integral role in my academic and professional endeavors. The ePortfolio not only served as a repository for artifacts but also as a medium to convey my dedication to learning, open-mindedness, and willingness to adapt which is an essential narrative potential employers look for. As I transition into my full-time career,

these skills, demonstrated through artifacts ranging from certification proofs to critical analysis,

continue to be the pillars of my academic success. The ePortfolio, with its emphasis on themes of

dedication, eagerness to learn, and open-mindedness, becomes a testament to the person, student,

and cybersecurity professional I aspire to be. It is a comprehensive reflection of my growth,

providing a roadmap for ongoing success in my current role and future career endeavors.

Although I won't necessarily miss the challenges, assignments, and stress that came with college,

I can confidently say that I fully embraced and reflected upon the entirety of the experience.

References

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