

Reflection Paper 1

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ODU Innovation Lab

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Internship Reflection Paper

First 50 Hours

My perspective on cybersecurity has grown as a result of my work on the Newport News public schools course material development team. At my internship I am responsible for creating cybersecurity course material for Newport News high school students. I had to make the content approachable in addition to maintaining technical depth. Finding a way for high school students to access linux machines and learn linux in an engaging way has been my first challenge. That required me to adopt a teacher's perspective and leave my typical role as a student. As I look back on my first 50 hours I see that designing a class is challenging.

The most important lessons I learned were the importance of leadership and teamwork. I don't believe I initially understood how much more productive working in a group may be than working alone. There were moments when I thought that my opinion was superior. However, if someone on the team made a suggestion that I hadn't even thought of, it would instantly make our current situation better. I recall one instance in particular where my teammate's idea initially appeared insignificant, almost like a minor detail I might ignore. Rather, it was the final component that brought our action plan together. Integrating cybersecurity principles into the current course material in a way that students find natural is one of my project's prerequisites. Instead of assigning me extra work, I am expected to co-create interesting, age-appropriate, and

project-based classes, modules, or challenges. Making difficult technical subjects like data security, safe online conduct, and system vulnerabilities understandable while maintaining the depth required for learning is another aspect of my job.

I also learned the true value of leadership. At first my perception of a leader entailed having power or somehow leading others from the top. But in my internship that isn't exactly the case. I was the one to step up when my team needed clarification or when decisions needed to be made. It felt more like taking initiative that no one else wanted to than having control. I was surprised to find out how much leadership is about the simple things, like setting the tempo to keep the group moving forward or arranging meetings. I truly think that without taking initiative tasks would easily drag out for weeks. I was delighted to see that just by arranging a meeting my team was able to meet with the Newport News teacher to present our action plan.

This internship has been a catalyst for my personal development in addition to work. Not dramatically, but subtly for me to realize that I must adapt. I noticed that being proactive helps a lot. I didn't think it would make much of a difference, but I realized simple things like scheduling brief meetings and following up frequently do. Without those habits I realize that progress will stall. I discovered that soft skills are as important as technical ones. Perhaps the most valuable thing I can get out of this internship is the development of soft skills and habits that will benefit me in a future career. How to be consistent, how to hold yourself to a standard, and how to manage my time. I can still work out and get out with friends and family in addition to work and school. I was worried that in order to work, I would have to give up time from my interests. However, I'm glad I don't.

I didn't anticipate how impactful the first fifty hours of my internship would be. One takeaway is that initiative is more important than I had thought, particularly when working in a

group where everyone has different perspectives and levels of energy. Sometimes the difference between finishing something and letting it stall is simply stepping in and getting things going.