

**Writing Assignment Two:  
Personal Narrative**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines my personal journey into the field of IT, tracing its roots to an early fascination with technology and its transformative potential. High school STEM programs played a pivotal role in nurturing this passion, providing hands-on experiences that deepened my understanding of the field. Motivated by these experiences, I pursued an associate degree in IT, where I developed technical skills in areas such as networking, systems management, and problem-solving. Building on this foundation, my academic path led me to focus on cybersecurity in college, a field that currently aligns with my interests and career goals. As a senior preparing to graduate, this reflection highlights the milestones, challenges, and lessons that have shaped my journey, demonstrating how each step has equipped me to address the demands of the dynamic and critical field of information technology.

## **Introduction**

My journey into cybersecurity began with a simple fascination: understanding how technology works and the endless possibilities it offers. As a child, I loved exploring our household desktop after school, often messing with the settings and configurations to understand their purpose. In high school, this curiosity grew into a passion as I joined the Government STEM program which offered various technology courses that challenged me to think critically and solve complex problems. These experiences inspired me to pursue an associate degree in IT, where I gained hands-on skills in networking and systems management, laying a solid foundation for my academic and professional growth. Now, as a senior focusing on cybersecurity, I reflect on the milestones that have brought me to this point, preparing me for a career in a field that combines my love for technology with the critical mission of protecting digital systems.

### **Early Fascination with Technology:**

My fascination with technology began at a young age, driven by a curiosity about how things worked. While enjoying the game play of different video games, I found myself captivated by the process behind them. I often wondered how these digital worlds were created, how they were compatible with my computer, and what made them run smoothly. I would spend hours exploring video game settings, tweaking controls, and experimenting with different configurations to improve my experience. This curiosity didn't stop with gaming. When not playing games, I found myself exploring the basis of an operating system, where I would dig into the settings, changing permissions for different user profiles just to see how it worked. It was exciting to have control over these small but impactful adjustments, and it sparked a deeper interest in how technology functioned on a larger scale. These hands-on experiences gave me a sense of empowerment and laid the foundation for my future in the tech field.

**High School STEM Programs and Growing Passion:**

As I began my high school career at Heritage High in the year of 2016, my interest in technology evolved into a focused passion, especially through my involvement in business IT programs. I joined clubs like Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), where I gained valuable insight into the intersection of business and technology. These experiences not only strengthened my understanding of IT but also sparked my desire to pursue a career in technology. In addition to FBLA, I participated in the VA STAR (Students Training and Refurbishment) program, which allowed me to refurbish old laptops and donate them to members of the community in need. One of the most impactful experiences was an internship class that mirrored field services for my high school. In this class, I was able to take on tier I support tasks, such as resetting passwords for students and staff and troubleshooting technical issues like resetting a teacher's smart board. These tasks gave me practical exposure to the day-to-day operations of IT support and reinforced my interest in working with technology in a real-world setting. It was during this time that I realized technology wasn't just about solving problems—it could be a powerful tool for making a positive difference in the world. These high school experiences set me on a path toward further exploring the world of IT and, ultimately, cybersecurity.

**Pursuing an Associate Degree in IT**

Building on the foundation laid in high school, I knew that pursuing a formal education in technology was the next step to turn my passion into a career. June of 2020, I graduated from high school, and I decided to pursue an associate degree in Information Technology at Virginia Peninsula Community College, where I would deepen my technical knowledge in areas such as networking, systems administration, and troubleshooting. The coursework was rigorous, but it was exactly what I needed to build a solid understanding of IT fundamentals. I was particularly drawn to the challenges of systems management and security, where I could apply my problem-solving skills to ensure

networks and data were protected. During this time, we were in the era of the pandemic, so there were not many opportunities to for in-person hands-on work, such as internships, work-studies, etc.

### **Transition to Cybersecurity and College Focus:**

As I completed my associate degree in IT, I found myself increasingly drawn to the complexities of cybersecurity. While I had enjoyed all aspects of IT, the challenge of protecting systems and networks from cyber threats felt like a perfect fit for my skills and interests. The more I learned about the vulnerabilities within digital infrastructures and the constantly evolving nature of cyber threats, the more I realized that cybersecurity was the area where I could make the most impact.

Transitioning into my current bachelor's program, I specifically chose to focus on cybersecurity to deepen my expertise in securing digital environments. The courses I've taken in network security, cryptography, ethical hacking, and incident response have not only enhanced my technical knowledge but also sharpened my critical thinking skills, pushing me to approach problems with a strategic mindset. However, this academic journey has not come without challenges. As a remote student, I faced difficulties staying actively engaged in the college community. I was unable to participate in clubs or take advantage of networking opportunities that would have helped me grow beyond the classroom. Despite these challenges, I remained focused on my studies, knowing that the knowledge and skills I gained would prepare me for the evolving world of cybersecurity. This focus has given me a clear sense of direction, making it evident that this is the field I am meant to work in, combining my technical skills with my drive to solve complex, high-stakes challenge.

### **Overcoming Challenges and Gaining Practical Experience**

While my focus on cybersecurity has been rewarding, it hasn't come without its challenges. As a remote student, staying motivated and engaged with my coursework required extra discipline. The lack of in-person interaction sometimes made it difficult to form strong connections with peers and professors, and I often felt disconnected from the vibrant campus life I had anticipated. Despite this, I

remained determined to make the most of my education by seeking practical experience wherever possible. I looked for internships, part-time roles, and freelance opportunities to gain hands-on exposure to information technology and cybersecurity practices in real-world environments. With steady determination, I successfully landed a full-time job as a contractor at NASA at Langley. I became a field service technician that eventually migrated to mobile phone services.

### **The Role of Personal Narrative in Shaping My Career Path**

In *The Psychology of Life Stories*, McAdams explores how personal narratives shape our identities and influence our motivations. Reflecting on my own journey into cybersecurity, I realize that my story is shaped by a series of pivotal moments—from early curiosity with technology to hands-on experiences in high school and college. These experiences not only contributed to my growing passion for the field but also shaped my understanding of how my skills can make a tangible difference in the world. McAdams suggests that our life stories are both a reflection of our past and a guide for our future (McAdams, 2001). For me, the narrative of my academic and professional journey serves as a map for where I want to go, highlighting the lessons learned and the goals I am working toward in cybersecurity.

### References

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The Psychology of Life Stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100–122.

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