Personal Narrative Essay

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IDS 493: Electronic Portfolio Project

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3/31/25

Abstract

This paper will look to give an overview of my academic journey, internships and experiences that have occurred throughout my lifetime, which have shaped me into the individual that I am today. This paper will also go over my early interest in the field of technology, and my how experiences at Old Dominion university have helped further shape my passion for pursing a degree in the field of cybersecurity and preparing myself for future challenges in my career path.

Introduction

When it comes to choosing a major in college, it does not come easy, as there are many different career paths that an individual, such as myself can take, before deciding what fits best for them. When it comes to my career path, I was first majored in the field of business, then switched over to mechanical engineering, and then finally found myself into the technological field of cybersecurity. However, from a young age I always had profound interest in learning more about technology, since it was fascinating to me.

Youth Interest in technology

 My interest in technology occurred at a young age, since it was always around my household growing up, whether that would be computers, laptops, iPads, or even the Xbox 360. These technologies played a crucial role in developing my passion for tech and where devices that always had me curious for how they operated and carried out daily task. Which is why one day at the age of 11, I decided to take apart my mother's laptop she used for work, using a bunch of tools such as screwdrivers, pens, and even a kitchen knife to unfold how this laptop was operating from its hardware. I was surprised at what I had seen, since there where so many components involved in the laptop's layout, and they all had an important criterion, they satisfied for the laptop being able to function. While my mom did get angry with me about this matter, it was her and my fifth-grade teacher Mrs. Gordon who where my biggest supporters, in loving technology at a young age. The way in which Mrs. Gordon inspired me, is that she would give me the opportunity of looking into projector issues within class or would provide me recommendations for my future project ideas. This

heavily sparked my growth, within my academic journey and helped me believe in my ideas at such a young age.

Middle school importance in growth

When it came to entering middle school, at first there where a lot of issues in me furthering my interest. This was due to me not making friends in the beginning, and being interested in topics, people my age really didn't talk about. However, after constant searching, I was able to find my group of friends, that grew to be my long-term friends. My group of friends and I would constantly have competitions between one another on using various technologies, within Microsoft 365, and would display to one another new tricks we learned on the internet. This helped me establish a motive for learning different software technologies, and how they aid in everyday use. Which further helped me in receiving good grades on my report cards, when I used these software's to my advantage. While this was a small characteristic of my academic journey, it helped to create an impactful event in my technological journey.

Highschool importance in growth

Upon entering high school, I thought my career interest was all decided, but I was completely wrong. There were many barriers my freshman year of high school and sophomore year, that pushed me from my passion of expoloring technology, due to the lack of opportunities that my high school presented. Which kept me in elective courses such as music and theater, that I ultimately failed, since they were not my passion, outside of my

core classes. This was a huge turning point in my academic journey, because I had never failed a class, in my life before this point. Which really frustrated me, since I thought there was no way for me to get on track, and further explore my technical capabilities. This setback also concluded me having a sense of falling behind from my fellow peers and being detached from my academics. However, my junior year of high school allowed me to get back on my technical focus. Since my high school counselor, decided to give me a chance working on specified task within the counseling department. This included task such as fixing up student laptops, and helping to set up testing environments, which proved to be very beneficial. Since this allowed me to gain understanding in troubleshooting mechanisms and basic networking tactics. However, this opportunity was cut short, due to the covid 19 outbreak that took away my remaining junior and senior year of high school. Although, I was given a situation that could not be controlled, the next step in my journey would be heading to college. Which is when I decided to continue my education at Old Dominion University in the fall of 2021.

Importance of Interdisciplinary courses in career path

Upon my second semester in the spring of 2022, being at Old Dominion University my freshman year. I was still not sure what career path, was the best fit for me. Until I decided to take an introduction to cybersecurity course, which was also known as 200t. This was a interdisciplinary cybersecurity course, and one of the top classes that got me interested in the field of cybersecurity. This course gave me the knowledge to understand what cybersecurity was overall about from a technical and non-technical aspect and further enhanced my knowledge about the field. This course also displayed to me that the reason

cybersecurity is a interdisciplinary field, is because it pans out to many different disciplines such as nursing, engineering, law, and psychology. This was of interest to me since I , was able to learn about different disciplines, and how they viewed the field of cybersecurity. Which helped stimulate my passion for the field of cyber, since it was needed in all disciplines in some criteria. However, this was not the only interdisciplinary program that sparked my passion for the field of cybersecurity. The spring of 2023, I was selected to participate in an interdisciplinary program called the Innovate cyber challenge (Innovate Cyber, 2025). This is a competitive undergraduate cyber challenge aimed at all disciplines ,students working together, for 10 weeks to solve one complex cyber issue. This program allowed me the opportunity to collaborate with other fellow peers and learn the human centered skills that are needed to succeed within the cybersecurity realm (Innovate Cyber, 2025). I was also able to build up on my leadership skills, during this program, since I had cyber knowledge to guide others, with little familiarity of the discipline, and further enhance their skillset.

Importance of Internship experience in identity

Although the internship experience that I, have received has been very minimal within the cybersecurity realm, it has however played a significant role in shaping my identity. The internship experience, that I look to highlight on would be my internship experience as a cybersecurity ambassador in the spring of 2023, within the Old Dominion University, cybersecurity department. This experience gave me the opportunity of being able to administer, change and improvement within the cybersecurity department, through being a

voice for all students. This allowed me the opportunity to communicate with students, through club meetings, and other cyber events, to articulate the change they would want to see within the department, that could have a positive impact on their learning. The feedback that I would gather, would then be relayed back to staff to implement, to better improve student learning. The characteristics that I, developed during this internship was not only my communication and leadership skills, but also helped me learn, the motive I have in being a cybersecurity professional, that looks to establish continuous collaboration and change within a environment.   This relates to McAdams third level of personality concerns, that emphasizes "the process of constructing identity, and building up on something that gives individuals such as myself purpose in their life (McAdams,2001). Which it was my purpose, to help others around me, grow in the cybersecurity realm and understand the importance of the technological field. Furthermore, I would relate my Internship experience to McAdam's, literature of autobiographical memory, since this internship experience helped me in defining how my ongoing life story, is strongly oriented towards my life goals(McAdams,2001).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am looking to finish out my time at Old Dominion university in the spring of 2025, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree, in cybersecurity. Which leads me to my next journey, in continuing my education in Old Dominion Universities cybersecurity master program, with a concentration in AI security. This next chapter of my academic endeavors will aid me in making a difference within the cyber realm, and help others around me, in understanding the importance of cybersecurity.

Sources

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