Personal Narrative Essay

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When senior year of high school came, the big question that my mom had been asking me since freshman year had finally arrived. What was I going to major in? My mom, rightfully so, had told me to begin looking into what I wanted to do in college and like a typical teenager, I dragged my feet doing so. I did research on some majors, but I didn't do a lot of in-depth research until COVID hit in March 2020. The realization that my high school experience was over early and that the time for college was rapidly approaching made me do a deep dive to try and figure out what I wanted to do. I inevitably chose to go into the tech field with a focus on cybersecurity, however that decision wasn't due to just looking up random information online. It was a combination of personal experiences in my life during high school as well as the information I learned during this process. From the influence of my favorite teacher in high school, to the opportunities out there, those key factors are what led me to where I am today.

Mrs. Campbell

In my sophomore year of high school, I made one of the best decisions of my life and took Computer Information Systems. The class was relatively new to my high school, and I had also somewhat liked working on computers, so I decided to take the course. This decision had a butterfly effect that led me to growing more love and respect for the tech field and, of course, eventually trying to pursue a degree and career in said field. The class was taught by this woman

named Mrs. Campbell and she quickly became one of my favorite teachers during my time in high school. The class initially was teaching us how to type correctly, however the presence she gave off made me feel like she genuinely cared about me and my peers which made me want to learn from her more and more. Eventually, we began to work on how to use Microsoft Office, especially Excel. This was something that I learned from her in both sophomore and junior year of high school, which led to me gaining a certification in Microsoft Excel. However, her influence really came when we began to learn about different parts and functions of a computer, both software and hardware. That began one of my favorite periods of high school as during this time, since I was a returning student, she would let me give examples of how to do things, such as taking apart and putting back together a computer or how to do certain actions in Excel. She became one of those teachers who leaves a mark by the manner which she taught me. She is one of the biggest reasons why I decided to pursue the tech industry in general. Without her contributions as a teacher while I was in high school, I don't know if I would be where I am today.

Opportunities

Mrs. Campbell's influence in my life was a major stepping stone to where I am now. However, she was just the spark that created the small ember of interest that led me eventually to decide to not just pursue something in tech but pursue a career in cybersecurity specifically. Once I decided to try and join the tech industry for my career, I then began to do research on the different types of majors and careers that are in the tech industry. Originally, I was just looking at Computer Science because it's very broad and I thought I'll figure out the specifics later. It was because I also thought it was the "techiest" major you could think of, so it'd be the safest path to the tech world. However, even after I came to the preliminary decision of majoring in Computer

Science, I still felt like I should look at more options to ensure that I looked at as much information as possible before I made a confident final decision. So, I kept on looking online for more information on the different majors and careers out there in general and especially the ones that deal with computer science. That is where I found out about Cybersecurity. I had heard of cybersecurity before, but I didn't really know too much about it in detail and only thought of it in its most basic concept of "stopping hackers from stealing stuff." I then delved more into it and the different careers in it and that's when I saw the immense number of untapped opportunities in the cybersecurity field especially. Due to the fact that the world is becoming more and more reliant on technology and the internet, cybersecurity has skyrocketed over the years to become one of the top priorities for many companies, corporations, and organizations. Big tech giants, such as Google and Apple, major healthcare organizations, such as UnitedHealthcare and LabCorp, as well as government entities, such as the NSA and Pentagon, all invest in cybersecurity heavily due to the sensitive nature of information and data that they collect and store. They aren't the only ones as there are also plenty of small businesses and startups that also heavily invest in quality cybersecurity. In fact, as of 2024, "businesses allocate around 5-20% of their IT spend to cybersecurity, meaning cyber typically makes up about 3-5% of a company's total annual budget" according to Dot Security. This piqued my interest significantly because it highlighted the significance of the field that I would be entering. Furthermore, I found out about all of the need for workers in this field, especially black men, as well as benefits, such as remote work. Once I found out about the immense opportunities that are available in the cybersecurity field, I decided that I would major in Computer Science with a focus in Cybersecurity, until I found out Cybersecurity was offered here at ODU. That is when the final decision was made, and

I began the path that I am currently on of trying to make my way into the field and slowly began my career.

Conclusion

If you were to tell me when I was younger that I'd be a cybersecurity major trying to find my way into the tech field, I would probably have looked at you funny and said that you're crazy. That sentence wouldn't have even sounded right in my head. However, that is where I currently am right now trying to finish up school and begin my career. Although I may have never thought about it when I was younger, the people who come into your life can influence you so much that you may end up doing something you'd never thought of. If it wasn't for Mrs. Campbell being such an amazing and caring teacher in high school, my life may be in a completely different place right now. Her guidance is the biggest reason I did that deep dive and without it, I wouldn't be the man I am today.

References

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