

Personal Narrative Essay

Janae Craig

Old Dominion University

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Personal narrative essay

My name is Janae Craig, and currently, I am currently a senior at Old Dominion University, majoring in cybersecurity. My major selection journey has not been smooth and straight; it was steered by a strong burning passion for technology and the urge to protect people's personal information from any cyber threat.

I grew up in Stafford, Virginia, with a very supportive family—my parents, Gail and Walter Craig, and my siblings—all of whom gave me many lifesaving skills. My parents have been supporting me since my childhood by encouraging me to follow through with what interests me and later study what attracts me. They taught me the importance of hard work and dedication, with a focus on perseverance.

I've always been interested in how things work, even when I was younger. I remember disassembling toys out of a curiosity for their inner workings. That same curiosity turned into an exploration of what my first computer could do when my parents bought it for me. I devoted numerous hours to exploring its operating systems, evaluating different programs, and learning the fundamentals of programming. I had no idea at the time how these formative encounters would subtly influence my future professional goals and lay the groundwork for my eventual career path.

My academic journey began in high school, where I was very active in extracurricular activities. I was a member of the National Honors Society, participated in state and national science fairs, worked with countless community service projects, and was a part of the cheerleading team. I served as captain of the varsity cheerleading squad from my sophomore to senior years. All pointed to the development of responsibility, leadership, and commitment, but none in one exact direction.

High school was my age of exploration. I did many things just to see where my real interests lay. In particular, involvement in the National Honors Society was fulfilling because it placed me amidst a group of similarly-focused students who were all relatively driven toward academic excellence and giving back to the community. Another activity that sparked my interest was participating in national science fairs. These competitions have made me realize that my interest lies in problem-solving and analytical thinking.

Cheerleading has also taught me some equally useful lessons regarding teamwork and perseverance. There were many obstacles to overcome while captaining the cheer squad for three years. It took a lot of work to maintain team cohesiveness, balance practice and academic responsibilities, and remain motivated when faced with challenges. Though these learning experiences were not directly connected to technology, they influenced my character and work ethic.

The Turning Point

I recall that, like many of my friends, in high school, I did not know what major to pursue in college. I took many aptitude tests; however, none of the majors suggested seemed interesting to me. I had spent hours reading about different majors and possible careers, only to get more frustrated while each day passed. Everything changed when I came across the term "ethical hacker."

What initially intrigued me was the concept of ethical hacking. I've long held a deep fascination with technology, especially computers, and have been concerned about the security of personal information for quite some time. To know that there existed a career path that deals with beating cybercriminals at their game by hacking for the protection of essential data took it to a different level altogether. I realized that this field combined my love for technology with a

meaningful purpose: protecting individuals and firms from cyber threats. What attracted me most was the sense of outsmarting all those cybercriminals at their own game but in a way that aids the community. At that moment, everything just clicked, and I knew I had found my calling.

Old Dominion University

For me, Old Dominion University was the choice of college for a number of reasons. As much as anything else, what drew me most to ODU was its strong emphasis on technology and innovation with a comprehensive Cybersecurity program. This made the university special for me because of its commitment to practical learning experiences and state-of-the-art facilities. The location of ODU offered easy access to a good number of technology firms and government agencies for internship and job placement opportunities in cybersecurity.

I was both thrilled and anxious when I entered ODU. The transition from high school to college was huge, yet I also looked forward to being a part of the world of cybersecurity studies. My first courses at ODU built a great base in computer science, programming, and network security.

My goal is to obtain my bachelor's degree in cybersecurity at ODU, with the development of relevant technical skills in hacking, problem-solving, and programming. Several experiences have helped me to learn more about cybersecurity. One of the most influential experiences at ODU was being part of events that have provided me with great exposure to hands-on knowledge regarding real-world cybersecurity challenges and solutions. Upon completing my degree, I plan to gain a professional certification called CompTIA and or Certified Ethical Hacker, CEH. This will present me with the opportunity to specialize in ethical hacking and sharpen my skills in the IT - tech field.

In the long term, I would like to achieve professional status as an ethical hacker and then design security features for companies. I hope to work with one of the top cybersecurity firms or for a government agency where my skills will protect critical infrastructure and sensitive data. Cybersecurity is undergoing constant change—an area that requires one to continue learning within the field if one has to remain ahead of cyber-criminals. I want to remain ahead of the constantly changing trends, technologies, and threats in the broader cybersecurity landscape.

In conclusion, if one were to look through my trajectory, it shows that my path into cybersecurity was laid out from a mix of academic pursuits, personal interests, and family and mentors for their unwavering support. Every step in this path reaffirmed my interest in the chosen field, giving me excitement towards this venture. I wish to contribute positively to society by safeguarding digital information and keeping people informed of the status of cybersecurity. I hope to achieve all the objectives I have set and stay ahead of cybercrime.