Interdisciplinary Studies:

ePortfolio Reflection

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Reflection Essay Introduction

Throughout my time at Old Dominion University, I gained skills that I believe have prepared me for my career goals. By combining different fields like cybersecurity, digital forensics, writing, and communication, I developed a stronger understanding of how multiple disciplines can work together. This reflection highlights the skills I built through my courses and artifacts, how the process helped me grow academically and professionally, and how the lessons I learned are going to help me in my future career. I will also discuss how my experiences in classes like IDS 300W helped me create a more focused and confident portfolio, and why interdisciplinary thinking is such an important tool for any career field today.

Research and Writing Skills

One of the biggest skills I developed was research and writing. Creating papers like my Job Analysis and Career Reflection Essay taught me how to find, understand, and put together information from different sources. In IDS 300W, I learned how to break down big topics and organize them clearly for readers, which wasn't something I was confident with at first. I had to get better at using APA format, pulling from academic journals, and connecting ideas from different classes. Research skills are essential for the cybersecurity field too because being able to quickly find solutions, understand new technologies, and explain them clearly is something employers often look for (Smith, 2021). Writing these assignments showed me that communication is just as important as technical knowledge.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Another major skill I built was critical thinking and problem-solving. Projects like my Cybersecurity Policy Proposal and Theory Application Papers made me think through real-world problems and come up with practical solutions. For example, in the proposal, I had to figure out how to apply ideas like reintegrative shaming theory to real legal policies. This wasn't just about repeating facts—it was about looking at issues from different points of view and figuring out what actually works. Being able to think critically is a key skill in cybersecurity because not every situation will have a clear answer. According to Nguyen (2019), interdisciplinary learning helps students be better problem solvers because they are trained to look at issues from multiple lenses, and I can definitely see how that is true based on my coursework.

Digital Literacy and Technology Skills

The portfolio also helped me grow my technology skills. Building my ePortfolio website, uploading artifacts, editing layouts, and making sure everything flowed properly taught me basic web design and digital presentation. Even small things like embedding links, avoiding broken tabs, and formatting resumes for online viewing taught me skills that are useful for working in IT. Creating artifacts like my Digital Forensics Case Study also helped me practice technical writing, which is different from academic writing. In cybersecurity and IT careers, it's common to write reports after investigations, and these skills will help me do that. Research from the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Careers and Studies (NICCS, 2023) stresses how important strong digital communication is for cybersecurity professionals.

Communication and Teamwork

While a lot of my work was independent, there were moments where collaboration mattered too. In peer reviews for my portfolio drafts and discussion posts throughout IDS 300W and my cybersecurity classes, I had to give and receive feedback in a respectful, helpful way. Learning how to talk about improvements without being too harsh, and accepting feedback without taking it personally, is something that will help me in professional environments. Teamwork is important in cybersecurity roles, especially when responding to incidents or working with people who aren't technical experts. According to McAdams (2001), understanding different perspectives strengthens communication and identity-building in professional environments, and I saw that play out even in small group assignments.

Interdisciplinary Knowledge

One of the best things about this program was realizing how many different subjects connected together. For example, in my Cyber Ethics Paper, I connected cybersecurity law with ethical theories I learned in another course. It made me realize that technical fields still need social sciences and humanities to address real-world problems. Interdisciplinary thinking gave me a broader perspective and made it easier to see the bigger picture in my assignments. A study by Klein (2017) on interdisciplinary education shows that students with interdisciplinary training are more adaptable and creative in the workforce, and I believe that's true based on my experience.

Portfolio Development Process

Building the ePortfolio was a bigger project than I thought, but it made me realize how important presentation is. Organizing artifacts, writing reflections for each one, and connecting everything back to skills took a lot of planning. It wasn't enough to just have good work—I had to explain why it mattered. This forced me to think deeper about each course and assignment. It also helped me see patterns in my own growth that I hadn't really noticed before. Making sure there were no broken links, keeping the design simple, and writing everything in a clear way taught me attention to detail, which is another important skill in cybersecurity roles (Jones, 2022).

Skills Connected to Career Readiness

Looking back at job ads for cybersecurity roles, I noticed they often list skills like research, technical communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving— all skills I can now show proof of through my portfolio. It's not just about knowing how to use a tool or run a program. Employers are looking for well-rounded candidates who can research policies, write reports, collaborate with non-technical departments, and think through ethical problems. This degree program helped me build that kind of well-rounded background, and the interdisciplinary style helped me make connections that will be useful in any IT or cybersecurity role I pursue after graduation.

Conclusion

Overall, my academic journey through the interdisciplinary program has been about more than just taking classes—it's been about building real skills that I can use in my career. Research, writing, critical thinking, teamwork, and technology skills all came together through the different artifacts and projects I created. Courses like IDS 300W helped lay the foundation by teaching me how to communicate clearly and organize my ideas, while my cybersecurity courses gave me the technical knowledge I needed. Being able to think across disciplines will make me a better professional because real-world problems don't come from just one field. Employers need people who can understand both the technical side and the human side of issues, and I feel like this program prepared me for that. Interdisciplinary learning pushed me to be more flexible, creative, and reflective, and I know these skills will continue to be important throughout my career journey.

References

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