OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

IDS-493 E-PORTFOLIO

Personal Narrative

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Opening

Embarking on this narrative, I delve into the journey of a childhood fascinated by a family friend's enigmatic ability to rejuvenate sluggish computers with the guidance of YouTube tutorials and online forums. As Nguyen (2013) aptly notes, "Narrative identity provides a framework for exploring college students' changing sense of self and others in the context of ePortfolio programs." This early introduction to technology kindled a deep-seated passion that became a defining element of my life. Trips to bookstores, particularly Barnes and Noble, further stoked my love for all things tech as I voraciously consumed technology-related books and magazines. As Smith (2017) wisely observed, "Our identities and experiences are constantly shifting, and storytelling is how we make sense of it." My college adventure commenced with the allure of electrical engineering and its creative challenges, but a persistent aversion to mathematics led me down the path of programming. The enchanting world of coding, inspired by IT expert blogs and Navy ITs, propelled my determination to excel in this domain. My foray into cybersecurity marked a turning point, and I dedicated myself to staying on the cutting edge of threats and crafting innovative solutions to safeguard computer systems and networks, with the ultimate aspiration of becoming a prominent cybersecurity authority. While I briefly explored computer science, I found my true calling in cybersecurity, primarily due to its more accessible math requirements.

Early Life Influence

I was utterly fascinated by the concept of self-taught individuals who harnessed modern technology to expand their knowledge and capabilities. Learning that my family friend relied on YouTube tutorials to master troubleshooting techniques had a profound impact on me, echoing the words of McAdams (2021), who stated, 'It is during adolescence and young adulthood that people are most preoccupied with forming their identities.' His resourcefulness and determination inspired me to embark on a similar path. I eagerly delved into online resources to educate myself on resolving technical issues and, in the process, became more self-reliant. As I immersed myself in this digital self-learning journey, I found myself not only fixing technical problems but also acquiring a deeper understanding of computers. I became familiar with technical jargon, and my newfound knowledge allowed me to take on more complex tasks. One of my proudest achievements during this period was the successful assembly of my own computer, which deepened my appreciation for the intricate relationship between its various components. These early experiences not only ignited my curiosity but also fostered a profound love for technology that continues to drive me forward in my journey. Moreover, this selfdirected approach to learning was not entirely new to me. Prior to moving to America, I had a friend who had followed a similar path, albeit in a pre-YouTube era. He had a remarkable talent for fixing battery-powered toys and was my go-to person whenever I encountered any technical malfunctions. What impressed me the most was that, despite being not much older than me, he possessed an incredible aptitude for troubleshooting and problem-solving. I've always admired his technical prowess, and his influence, combined with that of my family friend, further fueled my passion for technology and the boundless possibilities it offered.

Experience With Other Studies

A couple of years later, I embarked on my college journey. Initially, my choice of major was rooted in my high school experience. During high school, I had the privilege of being part of the Science and Technology Program with a specific focus on engineering. Among the diverse engineering paths available, electrical engineering held the most allure for me. This fascination was sparked by the hands-on projects we undertook, which delved into the intricacies of electrical systems. These projects ranged from crafting a robot from scratch to engineering a controller for motor functionality. We worked on a complex ensemble of circuits, allowing the robot to navigate certain distances, and even had the opportunity to compete in Baltimore, testing the limits of our creations. The exhilaration of seeing these projects come to life initially drew me toward electrical engineering. I even joined the robotics club in high school and participated in even more competitions. However, as I began my college coursework, I realized that my aversion to mathematics, despite my initial enthusiasm, posed a considerable challenge in pursuing this field. I had an abundance of fun and fulfillment in the engineering classes I undertook during my college journey. With each project we tackled, my passion for engineering deepened, and I felt increasingly certain about my chosen path-or so I thought. The hands-on experience and the challenges we overcame solidified my belief in the field. In fact, my enthusiasm led me to even consider architecture as a potential career option, partly because it was an integral part of the curriculum and partly due to my aptitude for drawing. The creative and technical components of architecture piqued my interest, and for a time, I considered a career in engineering and design. However, my journey took an unexpected turn when I decided to temporarily pause my education and join the military to pursue educational benefits due to financial constraints.

Time in the Military

I joined the Navy shortly after my second year of college. During my service in the Navy, I found myself in a challenging situation during my days off. With no barracks nearby, my only options were to spend time outdoors or in the ship's common areas. Given the constraints and the fact that I hadn't made many acquaintances in my new surroundings, I made a commitment to use my free time more effectively. As a result, I sought refuge in bookstores and the internet for tutorials and online forums. This became a weekly ritual that I eagerly anticipated. I immersed myself in the realm of technology, particularly computers, in the quiet corners of the bookstore. I spent hours every weekend and any free minutes after work that weren't consumed by promotion exams reading technology publications and books. As I delved deeper into these texts, my understanding expanded, but so did my bewilderment. The vast amount of information about computers felt overwhelming, and the more I studied, the more I realized the enormity of what lay ahead in mastering this field. In the midst of this flood of information, I had an insight. The subject of cybersecurity has emerged as a highly enticing alternative, providing not only financial potential but also the adaptability necessary in an ever-changing economy. While I had first hoped to become a "jack of all trades" in the IT industry, the scope of my aim became evident. Nonetheless, the appeal of cybersecurity's earning potential, as well as its compatibility with my enthusiasm for technology, led me to a new and fascinating career path

Conclusion

In reflecting on my journey, it's evident that my passion for technology and my drive to excel in this dynamic field have been shaped by a multitude of experiences and influences, illustrating Nguyen's observation that "The student narratives integrate mimesis into how they remember their past and connect it to a desired future" (2013). The seeds of curiosity were sown early, inspired by a family friend who demonstrated the incredible potential of self-directed learning, even through the unconventional medium of YouTube tutorials. This early exposure ignited my passion and set me on a path of continuous self-improvement. Similarly, my high school experiences in the Science and Technology Program and my ventures in engineering, including joining the robotics club and participating in competitions, deepened my connection with the field. However, a crucial turning point in my academic years occurred when I struggled

with the mathematical demands of electrical engineering, encouraging a change toward computer technology. This path of exploration reached a turning point when I discovered my liking for technology in bookstores like Barnes & Noble, immersing myself in technology-related reading. During these solitary hours, the appeal of cybersecurity became evident, giving a route that aligned with my passion and the limitless potential of the digital world. My interest in cybersecurity demonstrates my determination to adapt, evolve, and excel in this ever-changing environment. The appeal of cybersecurity's earning potential, as well as its compatibility with my passion for technology, strengthened my resolve as I continue to carve my route to becoming a cybersecurity specialist and contributing to a safer digital world. This journey, formed by different experiences and anchored in inquiry, is a tribute to the transformational power of passion and self-directed learning.

References

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