

Abstract

Graduating college is a goal that I have had for forever. My college journey has not been smooth sailing by any means. I have failed and I have excelled and that is shown in the work that I have done. I've done everything I can to work towards my goals and I believe that it is reflected in my work and who I am.

Personal Narrative Essay

Introduction

Education has always been a part of my life. For as long as I can remember, I have been in school and learning in a classroom. My academic career has had both highpoints and low points, as I'm sure is the case for most people. My main goals for myself entering college were obtaining my Bachelor's Degree and then to get a job in my field. My college educational experience has been transformative and everything that I have done is me working towards completing my goals.

Senior Year of Highschool

Like most others, my college education started in my senior year of highschool. For most of my senior year, I didn't even know if I was going to college. For me, this school year was definitely a downpoint in my life, especially mentally. There was so much uncertainty in my life at this point, particularly in the academic regard. However, by March, I decided to apply to some schools in an effort to put myself on the path that would lead me to the goals and life that I wanted. Initially, I wanted to major in Cybersecurity but all the schools I looked at didn't offer that as a major. Because of this, I applied to all schools under the major Information and Technology (IT), no longer even checking if they offered Cybersecurity as a major. I ended up choosing to attend Old Dominion University as it is close to home, with me being from Virginia Beach.

First Year of College

The summer before freshman year, I attended the Freshman Convocation where I was able to get a little taste of college. It was here that I realized that ODU offered Cybersecurity as a major. I was so shocked because I hadn't been able to find a college with my desired major in person. After looking at the curriculum, it seemed like the perfect major for me. By the time my first semester of college came around, I was actually looking forward to starting school again. I entered college majoring in IT, but within the first couple of weeks, I officially changed my major to Cybersecurity.

Academically, my first year of college was great. I was doing well in all of my classes and I felt like I had a handle on my college work. Unfortunately, during my second semester of my freshman year, there was a pandemic that shut down the whole world. I'm never someone that has thrived in taking online classes, so this was the worst thing for me both academically and mentally. Thankfully, I was able to finish off the spring semester that had been abruptly moved online, while maintaining my good grades.

Gap Year

The global pandemic really took a toll on me in all aspects of my life. I did try to continue my education virtually during the fall of 2020, but quickly realized that I would not be able to handle the workload and challenges that came from having classes exclusively online. I ended up withdrawing from my courses, and did not enroll in any in the following spring semester. I needed time to better myself mentally if I was going to continue with my higher education.

Second Year of College

My second year of college, the year after my gap year, marked my return to education. ODU went back to allowing students on campus which allowed me to come back. This year, I was finishing up my General Education classes, including public speaking. I had decided to take the course online to try and help with the anxiousness I felt about speaking in front of others and while it was better than I think it would have been if I had to do it in public, it was still an uncomfortable course for me to take. I will say though, that class did teach me important things that I will hopefully be able to use in the future, like in job interviews. This semester was also my first introduction to coding and it did not go how I thought it would. I feel like I usually enter things, especially classes, with the expectation that I will excel in it without putting much effort in, because that was how it had been for me in school prior to college. This class, however, really taught me that interest alone will not have you doing well, but that I would need to put in extra work, like going to tutoring. I am happy that I took the course, and having some knowledge in C++ will hopefully help me in terms of the job hunting process.

Third Year of College

My third year of college is where I feel like I narrowed down which fields in Cybersecurity that I wanted to work in, thanks to the two courses that I took. The fields that piqued my interest were Digital Forensics and Crime Mapping. These courses were where for the first time, I was genuinely very excited to learn all the information. The courses were well organized and I felt like I knew what I was doing. For Crime Mapping in specific, we used a software called ArcGIS, which I feel comfortable using. I did start to try and find internships specific to these areas, but had no luck at the time.

Fourth Year of College

Currently, I am in my fourth year of college. While I was hoping to be able to graduate this spring, that doesn't seem like the likely scenario. A graduation requirement for Cybersecurity students is to complete an internship, which I have yet to do. Due to my GPA falling because of the negative effects the pandemic had on my mental health, I have been insecure. It had been holding me back from applying to jobs, but I recently had a conversation with my father that changed my perspective. You truly never know what employers on the other end are thinking when looking at applications, and although I may be lacking in some areas, I know that I have potential and I just have to show them that. With this mindset, I applied for one particular internship I was extremely excited about, where I would be using the ArcGIS software. Hopefully, I will be able to secure an internship for the summer, and walk across the stage this year.

Conclusion

As earlier mentioned, everyone has highpoints and low points in their life. The best way to think, and the way I have been trying to think, is to keep moving forward, because those academic lows won't always be there. I am working so hard towards my goal of graduating college and getting a job in the field of Cybersecurity. Lowpoints have been a part of my journey, but I have learned so much and worked hard in what I have done.