

Individual Reflection

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Reflection

Throughout the duration of my internship at the COVA CCI Cyber Clinic, I can safely say I learned tools and lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my professional life. Although apprehensive at first, I found the experience to be a highlight of my college career, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunities this clinic has opened up for me. I will utilize this paper to discuss my overall experience, lessons learned, highlights, and recommendations for future newcomers.

Overall Takeaways

To be truthful, my experience with the clinic was quite successful, and the setbacks were few and far between. If anything, my own anxieties and concerns were the only major roadblocks I experienced while participating in the clinic. I've never been a fan of group work, and I've never been an outgoing person; consequently, things like public speaking and networking have always been quite strenuous. Once we received our business and group assignments, I was still feeling that same apprehension. Fortunately, my fears were quickly dashed as I met and connected with my teammates, who I am quite grateful for. Even though we were complete strangers to each other just a few weeks prior, it was as if we'd been collaborating on work our entire college careers. This is just one of the many things that went right for us, as we were tremendously fortunate to receive Neptune's Fury Coffee as our business assignment. Matt Rose was a fantastic representative of the business, and he communicated clear expectations for the overall deliverables. After learning about the other business owners and their approaches to the clinic, I can say I was very fortunate to be assigned to Neptune's Fury Coffee. Returning to the teamwork aspect, my group worked in perfect harmony with one another, and the division of labor was equal and fair. Everyone's individual strengths and talents shone

through, and we provided ample support to one another when needed. Of course, we did experience some hurdles as a team. When we first attempted to communicate with Matt Rose with a few questions, we discovered that all three of us had written down his phone number wrong. We recovered quickly and found it on the intake form, but this blip demonstrated just how uncertain an ongoing project can be. After sixteen years of schooling, I have finally learned that group projects can indeed be beneficial, and that I am certainly more hardheaded than I previously thought. In earnest, I wouldn't change anything about my team's approach to the project, but I wish I had adopted a more positive mindset about group collaboration sooner in the clinic.

Objectives Met

The first outcome that I presented in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was to “improve upon teamwork, delegation, and communication techniques.” The cyber clinic greatly assisted me with this objective, and I feel that my ability to work in a team has greatly improved, along with my communication skills. The second outcome, “how to explain and present technical jargon in a digestible format,” was also addressed within the report, and when meeting with the business client. I was most pleased with the third outcome, to “experience and apply cyber risk management frameworks.” Working with the NIST 2.0 Framework, along with tools like the CISA CPGs, helped me broaden my understanding of cybersecurity compliance and gain real-world experience by applying them to Neptune's Fury. The last two objectives, “honing my research skills” and “utilizing prior cybersecurity knowledge in a professional context,” were also addressed during my time at the clinic. All of my learning objectives were met in an approachable and productive manner.

Highlights and Challenges

In my experience, the most motivating and exciting aspects of the cyber clinic were the discussions we had with guest lecturers, meeting with the clients, and working within a team. The guest speakers, including Dr.Baaki and Genevieve Marquardt, were very knowledgeable and informative. The sessions with Dr.Baaki served as great icebreakers and facilitated the groundwork for an empathetic approach to cyber risk assessments and suggestions. From there, I greatly enjoyed the session with Genevieve Marquardt, as she provided the group with valuable tools and resources that small businesses can readily apply to their own infrastructure. The business professionalism session with Kristen Stephens was also enlightening, and I found myself applying her public speaking advice while presenting. Furthermore, getting to tour Neptune's Fury Coffee was fun; I got a free hot chocolate! Once again, my team didn't face any glaring challenges or obstacles while working on our deliverables. The time crunch served as the only real hurdle, but we were able to produce satisfactory results despite it.

Recommendations for Future Teams

Future participants in the cyber clinic program must be ready and willing to communicate and articulate themselves. The program requires that each student contribute to conversations; they should be prepared for discussion before each class period. The student's success is reliant on their willingness to work in a team; it's not possible to coast on the work of their fellow teammates. Simply coming into the clinic with an open mind and being ready to meet new people can be highly beneficial, after all, the experience is quite fun. When first receiving your group assignment, mitigate tasks and set up expectations/deadlines so that no one team member shoulders too many responsibilities. As cybersecurity students, many of our classes are online, so

we don't often receive group assignments and may be ill-equipped to work on them. Regardless, as college students and adults, participants should be prepared for obstacles such as these.

Conclusion

Overall, I was greatly pleased with my time at the COVA CCI cyber clinic, and have recommended the opportunity to many of my friends for the upcoming semester. Chiefly, I have a more solid understanding and grasp of the cybersecurity industry and what sectors I'd like to personally pursue. Working with cybersecurity policy has been highly engaging, and I'd like to continue down this path after graduation. I don't have long left at ODU as an undergraduate student, but I do plan to pursue my masters in a few years. I'll be graduating this Spring, May 2026, and need a break from academia. I'd like to thank COVA CCI leadership, ODU faculty, and Neptune's Fury Coffee for making this opportunity possible.

