

Deciding my Career Path

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IDS 492 Electronic Portfolio Project

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October 4, 2024

## First Year

I've always been particularly certain about things or go with the flow except for the decision that now seemed to matter most; what to do with the rest of my life. Looking back at my first year and semester at Old Dominion University, I could say it was a boring but much needed experience. This was primarily because I only was taking only online courses during this time, as commuting or moving was too expensive. Despite being online, the classes that I took helped me understand the fundamentals of taking college classes and how they're going to be paced once I actually transitioned into college. Some of these classes that I took included intro to Literature of the Digital Age and introduction to Philosophy. I was attempting to take general education classes because I had an undecided major going into college and they would prepare me for any one I choose.

I had spent the majority of my time sitting in my room doing classwork or playing games to pass the time and not really interacting with anyone. I still did not have a major declared and was not sure what to decide by the time I was in my second semester. I figured a change of scenery and actually talking to peers was needed to help me make this decision. I applied for the Owens dorm for a single room and managed to get a spot to live on the campus. This was a significant event to me because I have not been away from home for longer than a week before. This new experience felt like the first step to pushing myself out of my comfort zone

## Second Year

With my third semester starting, I was going to be living on campus. At this point, I have never even seen what the campus looks like at all, and I was very scared to be on my own for the first time. When I moved into the dorms, I was treated like I was a freshman which I thought was fine because I still didn't have a major declared. The mandatory orientation events also helped me to connect with some of my peers. One of which, Darius, was in the Cybersecurity Living Learning Community and introduced me to different concepts that seemed intriguing, especially topics such as ethical hacking. The Cybersecurity Living Learning Community was a group that met and discussed about assignments and topics which I managed to attend a few that were able to pique my interest about this major. I continued to do research on cybersecurity to see if it was the right fit for me and by my start of my fourth semester, I asked to declare it as my major.

The in-person classes were a lot different than what I was expecting from my experience taking them online. The classes themselves felt really long and were mainly just professors reading off of a screen for an hour and a half. I started taking cybersecurity classes this semester and was eager to get started. I quickly realized that a lot of the subjects are really bland and boring compared to other classes I've had in the past. For example, I took Film Appreciation and an Environmental Health class, and they covered really interesting topics. At this point, I had my first experience with what cybersecurity was actually going to go over in classes and I knew this wasn't going to be easy.

### Third Year

The start of my third year was the beginning of the most influential but chaotic semester I've had so far. I was struggling financially trying to stay in Owens, so I was no longer going to be living in a dorm but in a house with five roommates, all of which happened to be in fraternities or sororities. This was an even bigger change in scenery than before, and I had to make daily interactions with others frequently. Living in that house was emotionally taxing and stressful, however, it was a new experience I needed to overcome. I ended up joining a fraternity called Kappa Delta Rho on the campus which allowed me to not only have fun but also to connect with others pursuing a similar career path as me. This group accepted me for who I was, which meant a lot, and they have strengthened me as an individual. During this time, I was also struggling with wanting to change my major completely or keep studying cybersecurity. This was mainly because I've always wanted to do something medical. I have a lot more interest and knowledge in topics like biology, but it's always seemed like something too difficult to do. I decided to stay with cybersecurity because I know it pays a lot and is a forever growing industry. My peers from the Cybersecurity Living Learning Community as well as from Kappa Delta Rho fraternity influenced my decision to stay.

For a majority of my Junior year, I spent a lot of my time studying for school or doing assignments, but I had also started a job at Chipotle. Finding a balance with working 4-5 days a week and going to class Tuesdays and Thursdays was very difficult. I was able to manage it with heavy schedule planning and making sure I did at least one assignment every single day. Half of my classes were online, while the other half weren't, which made

balancing this an easier task. Working at Chipotle was a fruitful experience because it allowed me to have fun in a work environment. I managed to gain enough skills over the course of five months and got promoted to a service manager as well as achieving employee of the quarter. I stopped working there shortly after the school year had ended due to an unforeseen illness which put me out of work for three weeks. To go forward and pay for my college tuition I would need to find another job next semester.

### Senior year

Four years ago, I walked onto ODU with no idea who I was or what I wanted to do with my life, and now that I'm starting my senior year, I'm still figuring it out. This is the year they expect you to know what comes next and while I'm still unsure, I feel more prepared to face the unknown. I've started another job working as a front of house manager for District Taco which has been giving me more management experience. I've also started my senior year with a majority of the required cybersecurity classes finished besides the remaining 400 plus level classes that have shown to be more intense. These classes are the final stretch that's getting me prepared for what's to come working in the field of cybersecurity.

The Electronic Portfolio Project class I'm taking in my second to last semester has shown me a lot of valuable skills needed to be successful. Such as how to properly create a resume and to properly analyze job ads which both will be incredibly useful when making my career choice. I additionally know what soft and hard skills are and I fully understand how to properly apply them. I may still be unsure about what I want to do with my career,

but after going through college and my work I now have the guidance necessary to do so once I graduate.

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