

Reflection Essay

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Abstract

My name is Joshua Oania. I am currently a senior at Old Dominion University, majoring in Cybersecurity and minoring in Computer Science and International Studies. During my time at ODU, I've acquired numerous skills through coursework, extracurricular experiences, and hands-on real-world experiences. As I embarked on creating this e-portfolio, I've had some time to reflect on those skills and how they can help me move forward. This paper will serve as a reflection on my three most marketable skills: cybersecurity, performing arts, and photography, and how they will help me on my journey ahead.

Cybersecurity

As a cybersecurity student at ODU, one of my most marketable skills is my knowledge of cybersecurity. In addition to my coursework, I refined my skills through a combination of extracurricular activities and real-world experience.

During my sophomore year of university, I participated in COVA CCI's Undergraduate Research Program. Through the program, I was paired with a mentor, and throughout the semester, we worked on publishing a paper titled *Ways To Make Cybersecurity Education/Opportunities More Accessible In The Philippine Public School System* in the ODU Digital Commons. By participating in this program, I developed research skills that are crucial in the world of cybersecurity, as the field is ever-changing and evolving, requiring a willingness to learn new things.

In addition to this experience, I also studied to get my Sec+. Preparing for the CompTIA Security+ certification enabled me to deepen my understanding of key cybersecurity concepts. The study process not only reinforced what I had learned in my coursework but also introduced me to industry-standard practices and terminology that are essential in the professional world. Earning this certification establishes a strong foundation in cybersecurity, demonstrating my commitment to continuous learning and readiness for entry-level roles in the field of cybersecurity.

Lastly, through COVA CCI's TEEM Mentorship Program, I had the opportunity to serve as a peer mentor to a high school student for the semester. During our time

together, I had the chance to mentor him on key cybersecurity skills, such as networking, as well as other essential skills fundamental to succeeding in a university setting, including time management. Participating in this program helped me develop the ability to explain complex concepts in a clear and easy-to-understand way. This is key in the world of cybersecurity because there will be moments when you need to explain concepts to non-cybersecurity professionals, primarily if you work in fields such as incident response and/or risk management.

Performing Arts

At ODU, my involvement with the performing arts did not end there. During my sophomore year of university, I auditioned for ODU's Symphony Orchestra. We played numerous concerts and had the opportunity to perform alongside the Virginia Symphony Orchestra once again.

Growing up, I was always very invested in the performing arts. Whether it be through dance or instrumental performance, I was always very involved in it. However, something that I've grown to love is playing the violin. It first started when my mom signed me up for my elementary school's strings program. Initially, I was against it because I was a pianist at heart, and participating in that program meant giving up my P.E. time, which was a class I enjoyed very much. However, my mom told me to give it a chance, and if I didn't like it, I could quit at any time. So, begrudgingly, I accepted. At

first, I hated every second of it. However, as time went on, I began to enjoy taking violin lessons. I was also pretty good at it compared to my peers. So I figured, why not carry on?

Eventually, I was fortunate enough to be involved in the Bay Youth Orchestra of Virginia. This regional youth orchestra group aimed to develop some of the region's finest musicians. During my tenure with the organization, I refined my skills as a violinist through constant practice and rehearsals. I was even able to perform side-by-side with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

Eventually, that led me to audition for ODU's symphony orchestra during my sophomore year of university. During that time, I had the opportunity to perform numerous concerts and also had the chance to perform with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. I also embarked on multiple personal projects during that time. One of my all-time favorites was my performance during the ODU Filipino American Student Association's Cipher talent show. During that show, my small ensemble performed *A Town With An Ocean View* from *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

Photography

Photography has become something I've become very interested in recently. That inspiration began with someone who was once a very close friend of mine. He had started exploring it after moving abroad, and I was the judge of his work. As I

continued to judge his work, my curiosity grew. However, I was very afraid to leap until my sophomore year of university. It was at the end of my fall semester that I realized it was now or never. So, I started shooting photos. At first, I was terrible at it. But eventually, I got the hang of it.

How It Relates?

Uncle Iroh once said, “It is important to draw wisdom from many different places. If you take it from only one place, it becomes rigid and stale. Understanding others, the other elements, and the other nations will help you become whole.”

Although taken from a cartoon show, his quote encapsulates many of the key aspects of interdisciplinary studies. It’s about drawing wisdom from many different perspectives, whether it be from other nations (within the context of the show) or experiences (looking at it from a real-life perspective). My cybersecurity-related activities will help me advance in the field of cybersecurity, but how do my other two skills contribute to this advancement?

The performing arts, particularly my experience with violin performance, have instilled in me discipline, patience, and the ability to collaborate with others toward a shared goal, skills that directly translate to success in cybersecurity teams, especially in high-stakes environments such as incident response or threat hunting. Performing

music also trains your mind to think critically and creatively, both of which are essential in problem-solving and analyzing complex security threats.

Photography, on the other hand, has helped me develop a strong attention to detail and an appreciation for perspective, both literally and figuratively. In cybersecurity, overlooking a slight anomaly or failing to view an incident from multiple angles can be the difference between prevention and breach. My growing comfort with visual storytelling and creative tools enables me to communicate technical information more effectively, making it accessible and engaging, whether through reports, presentations, or awareness campaigns.

In combining these disciplines, I've come to understand that cybersecurity is not just about firewalls and code. It's about people, communication, creativity, and persistence. Drawing wisdom from diverse sources has not only made me a stronger cybersecurity professional but also a more adaptable and empathetic one.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my journey so far, I've come to realize that my growth has not come from a single source, but rather from a diverse blend of experiences, from academic, artistic, and personal. Cybersecurity has provided me with the technical foundation and discipline necessary in a fast-paced and ever-evolving industry. Performing arts have taught me the value of dedication, collaboration, and emotional expression. Photography has sharpened my eye for detail and nurtured my creative side. Together, these skills have shaped me into a well-rounded individual ready to take on new challenges. As I look ahead to the future, I carry with me not only these skills but the wisdom that comes from exploring many paths.