OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

# REFLECTIVE PAPER

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My e-portfolio comprises the experience I have gained from my time as a contractor for the United States Navy and as a student at Old Dominion University (ODU). Creating an e-portfolio is the best way to showcase your skills and knowledge as a professional rather than reading lines on a resume. An e-portfolio contains examples of your best work and can paint a picture for your audience so they can better visualize your skills as a professional. The time I spent digging through my old assignments helped me reflect on my past exploits and how far I have come in my professional and academic career.

Self-reflection on my work has allowed me to realize my true professional skills and provided greater insight into My top three marketable skills. My professional career as a cybersecurity specialist and a system administrator taught me that to be successful, you must have an inquisitive and tinkerer's thought process. This thought process allowed me to learn quickly and adapt to different challenges at work and school. My work and classes have shaped who I am as a professional and an individual.

My proficiency in Cybersecurity has experienced significant growth throughout my years as a contractor and a student. Through hard work and dedication, I earned CompTIA SecurityX and CompTIA Security+ and wrote the paper "Is Cyberspace at Risk of being Militarized?" for my CYSE 426 Cyber Law class. The CompTIA certifications are more than just fancy titles; they provided me with the necessary tools to excel in academics and my career as a cybersecurity expert. A good example was my previous position as a System administrator, I was tasked with implementing security technical implementation guides (STIG)s. STIGs are Department of Defense (DoD) security baseline requirements that are developed for the sole purpose of hardening software and hardware from being exploited. My technical knowledge from studying for the certification exams gave me the necessary knowledge and insight to complete my task

with expedience. From my experience of applying STIGs, I was able to use an interdisciplinary approach utilizing Cybersecurity, communication, and computer networking. The STIG process, from a cybersecurity standpoint, says that all the STIG checks should be applied to the system, but from the view of the computer scientist, this isn't plausible because the changes some of the STIGs require will disable the system's functionality. The discipline of communication is precipitated by both Cybersecurity and computer science by documenting why you are unable to implement a STIG by explaining in layman's terms the negative impact it will have on system functionality to those who are not as tech-savvy. My experience from the STIG process taught me that you cannot solely focus on the cybersecurity discipline but also consider the functionality of the system in computer networks.

System Administration has been my primary focus for most of my career in the U.S. Navy and as a contractor for the DoD. CYSE 270 allowed me to formally learn how to use the various Linux commands I picked up over the years in the Navy. The CYSE 250 programming class challenged my skills as I had never touched on Python scripting before in my system administration career. The previous contract under which I was employed required me to attend a VMware VCP Data Center Virtualization class to reinforce my knowledge and then use that knowledge to earn the certification and equip me with the necessary tools to excel at my job. CYSE 270 Linux in Cybersecurity class equipped me with the necessary Linux commands to understand and troubleshoot VMware's specific version of Linux called PhotonOS. This knowledge correlates to my skills as a Cybersecurity expert and Senior System Administrator.

I received a letter of recommendation from my former supervisor detailing my achievements during our collaboration as work colleagues. When the previous government contract I was

attached to ended, he offered his assistance in my search for a job by writing a letter of recommendation. The letter itself not only reinforces my technical ability as a system administrator but also speaks to my academic discipline and work professionalism. My mentor emphasizes my ability to gain hands-on experience troubleshooting VMware virtual environment problems as well as being able to collaborate with others to achieve a shared goal.

What is especially meaningful about the letter is its intent to bridge the gap between academic excellence and my performance as a system administrator. As an individual who has almost completed a degree in Cybersecurity and already has a degree in Psychology, the letter highlights my critical thinking, problem-solving, and ability to adapt, which apply to academic and professional careers.

During CYSE 280 Windows System Management and Security class, I wrote a research paper called "Zero Trust in a Windows Environment" which required me to apply both my technical knowledge and strategic thinking to apply the Zero Trust methodology built on the "Trust but always verify" core concept into a Windows enterprise environment.

Research for this paper deepened my understanding of security frameworks, contributing to my overall knowledge of Cybersecurity.

Part of my Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) Engineer job requires handling trouble tickets from an enterprise-wide help desk. The sheer volume of trouble tickets makes it extremely difficult to handle and perform the other tasks my job requires. To minimize the writing of emails to users, I drafted up a signature in Microsoft Outlook to contain the standard set of questions for the customer to answer and provide information to speed up the troubleshooting process. The email template is a prime example of the communication discipline streamlining the exchange of

information between the troubleshooter and the customer to quickly identify the cause of the error and then rectify it with the appropriate fix action.

As I reflect on my professional and academic journey, I realize that it has been more than just gaining technical skills—it's about growing into an individual who can think critically, adapt quickly, and lead with purpose. Whether managing complex virtual environments, diving deep into Zero Trust frameworks, or pushing through late nights balancing coursework and patch cycles, each experience has shaped me into the professional I am today. The letter of recommendation reminded me that hard work doesn't go unnoticed, and that academic discipline really does lay the foundation for professional success. I'm proud of how far I've come and even more excited about the future that has yet to come.