

Capstone Reflection

My starting point

I Began my journey at Old Dominion University in the fall of 2022. Fresh out of a high school called Varina high with a lot of confidence coming into my first semester. I was really good at math, loved computers and coding, had interest in teaching and was really excited to see what ODU could teach and help me on this journey. My goals going in were pretty simple, mainly just networking more with people either in my degree field or not, try and get straight A's at least once. The obvious goal would be getting my degree in cybersecurity which I will be obtaining in the spring of 2026 along with a minor in computer science. Some expectations I had when I first started was not to quit. Coming to ODU and hearing how tough the cybersecurity program is along with getting my minor which was also challenging really became tough to handle and many times I contemplated on whether to stay or drop out, but stayed focused on the goal and didn't quit.

The Journey

During my journey at ODU, several courses, projects, and experiences helped shape my growth as a student and aspiring cybersecurity professional. Many of my cybersecurity and computer science classes challenged me to think more critically about how technology works and how systems can be protected. These courses introduced me to

concepts such as networking, programming, cryptography, and information security frameworks. One example of my learning can be seen in my portfolio artifact discussing the CIA triad, which focuses on confidentiality, integrity, and availability. This framework is foundational in cybersecurity and helped me understand how organizations structure their security policies and systems. In my portfolio, I explained how these principles guide the protection of information and help identify weaknesses when security incidents occur. This project represents the type of analytical thinking and research skills I developed throughout my program. In addition to coursework, my internship experience also contributed to my growth. During my internship at Dominion Energy, I gained exposure to professional environments and began working with tools such as Power BI while observing experienced coworkers. This experience allowed me to see how technology, data analysis, and security practices intersect in real-world organizations. I also began learning about software quality assurance and how testing, verification, and security considerations help maintain reliable systems. The journey was not without challenges. Some classes required long hours of studying and problem-solving, especially when working on programming assignments or technical projects. At times, balancing multiple demanding courses was stressful. To address these challenges, I developed better time-management strategies, sought help when necessary, and collaborated with classmates when appropriate. Over time, I became more confident in my ability to tackle difficult problems and adapt to new technologies. Through these experiences, I developed several important competencies. Technical skills such as programming, networking concepts, and security analysis improved significantly. Equally important were soft skills such as communication,

persistence, and problem-solving. Learning how to break down complex problems into manageable parts became one of the most valuable skills I gained during my academic journey.

Mean-making

Going through my artifacts and reflections in my portfolio, several themes emerge. One major theme is the importance of understanding systems from both a technical and strategic perspective. Many of my projects involve analyzing how systems operate, identifying potential vulnerabilities, and developing solutions to improve security or efficiency. This reflects my growing identity as someone who is interested not only in using technology but also in improving and protecting it.

Another theme is continuous learning. Cybersecurity is a field that constantly evolves as new technologies and threats emerge. Throughout my coursework and portfolio projects, I learned that staying informed and adaptable is essential. The ability to research new topics, understand security frameworks, and apply them in different situations is a critical part of being effective in this field.

Several moments stand out as turning points in my learning. One was realizing how foundational frameworks like the CIA triad shape modern security practices. Another was gaining professional exposure through my internship, which helped me see how classroom knowledge translates into real-world applications. These experiences reinforced my interest in cybersecurity and helped clarify the direction I want to pursue professionally.

Looking forward

As I prepare to graduate, I plan to apply the knowledge and skills I have developed at ODU in my future career in cybersecurity. My education has given me a strong foundation in security principles, computing technologies, and analytical thinking. These skills will allow me to contribute to protecting systems, analyzing potential threats, and helping organizations maintain secure digital environments. Although I have learned a great deal during my time in college, I recognize that there are still areas where I want to continue growing. Cybersecurity professionals must constantly update their knowledge as technology evolves. I plan to continue learning through certifications, professional development opportunities, and hands-on experience in the workforce. My portfolio will also serve as a living document of my growth. As I gain new experiences and develop new skills, I can continue adding projects, reflections, and accomplishments to it. This will allow me to track my progress over time and showcase my abilities to potential employers.

The eportfolio experience

Building my ePortfolio in IDS 493 was an important part of reflecting on my academic journey and organizing the work I completed throughout my degree program. The process helped me strengthen several skills, including reflection, storytelling, organization, and digital presentation. Creating a portfolio required me to think carefully about which artifacts best represented my learning and how to explain their significance. For example, including projects such as my analysis of cybersecurity concepts allowed me to demonstrate both technical knowledge and the ability to communicate complex ideas

clearly. Developing the portfolio also helped me improve the visual organization of information and present my work in a professional format. The reflective nature of the portfolio helped me better articulate my professional identity. By reviewing my projects and experiences, I was able to recognize patterns in my learning and understand how different courses contributed to my development as a cybersecurity student. It reinforced the idea that my academic work, internship experiences, and personal interests all contribute to the same long-term goal. For someone beginning their own portfolio, I would recommend starting early and consistently documenting projects and experiences. Keeping records of assignments, reflections, and accomplishments makes it much easier to build a comprehensive portfolio later. Another important strategy is focusing on clarity and organization so that viewers can easily understand the purpose and impact of each artifact. Ahead, I may continue updating my portfolio as I gain professional experience. New projects, certifications, and career accomplishments could be added to reflect my continued growth. Even if I do not maintain it regularly, the portfolio will remain a valuable record of my journey through college and the skills I developed along the way.