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Reflection Essay

My academic journey and professional experiences have given me a well-rounded foundation in cybersecurity, cloud technology, and leadership, preparing me for a dynamic career in the field of IT security. As a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity student at Old Dominion University, I have excelled in technical coursework, including network security, cloud security, and cryptography, while maintaining strong academic performance as a Dean's List student. My real-world experience has complimented my studies, most notably through my internship at The Ducats Group, where I conducted cybersecurity audits, performed vulnerability testing, and implemented best practices for cloud infrastructure security. Certifications such as AWS Cloud Practitioner and my ongoing pursuit of Security+ have further validated my expertise in managing and securing complex systems.

Beyond technical skills, my experiences as an NCAA Division I swimmer and a contractor in mechanical repair have honed my leadership, time management, and problem-solving abilities. Participation in events like the COVA CCI Cyber Con has also

enriched my understanding of the cybersecurity landscape, connecting academic theories to real-world applications. My experiences reflect a blend of interdisciplinary learning and hands-on experience, all of which contribute to my career readiness and ability to adapt to evolving challenges in the cybersecurity field.

One of the most valuable skills I developed is my expertise in cloud computing, demonstrated by my AWS Cloud Practitioner certification. This certification highlights my ability to understand and work within a cloud environment, focusing on infrastructure, security, and best practices for managing AWS services. Earning this certification required me to engage with technical concepts and apply them in real-world scenarios, blending knowledge from computer science, cybersecurity, and project management.

One artifact that supports this skill is an example lab from the 11 labs I completed during the AWS Academy training. These labs provided hands-on experience with AWS services, teaching me how to configure and deploy resources like EC2 instances, S3 buckets, and IAM roles. These activities demanded critical thinking and troubleshooting, skills I honed in my IT courses. Another key artifact is a document I created during my internship on best practices for managing AWS Identity and Access Management (IAM). This document served as a guide for onboarding new employees, ensuring they understood secure user and role management. Writing this document allowed me to synthesize technical knowledge with clear communication, a skill I

refined in technical writing courses. Lastly, I created a network diagram that illustrates cloud infrastructure, modeled after one I designed during my internship. While the original diagram contained sensitive information, the recreated version demonstrates my ability to design secure and scalable architectures. Together, these artifacts showcase my technical proficiency, problem-solving abilities, and readiness to excel in IT security and cloud computing roles.

Another significant skill I developed is leadership and time management, which I demonstrated through my USA Swimming certification. Coaching taught me how to lead and mentor individuals, adapt to challenges, and foster teamwork—all of which are transferable skills for any professional role. My experiences as a coach required balancing academic responsibilities with leadership duties, instilling discipline and focus.

One artifact that supports this skill is my Red Cross CPR and Water Safety Certification. This certification highlights my commitment to safety and learning, as well as my ability to adapt to high-pressure situations. Another artifact is my profile on the ODU swimming website, which showcases my ability to manage multiple responsibilities. While pursuing my degree, I dedicated time to coaching and mentoring, demonstrating my ability to multitask and maintain a strong work ethic. Coaching has also given me practical experience in communication and motivation, skills that are essential for both personal and professional success. By connecting these

leadership principles with my coursework in psychology and communication, I gained a deeper understanding of how to build trust, inspire confidence, and achieve collective goals.

A third skill I have developed is my understanding of military operations and historical analysis, which combines research, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary learning from history, political science, and cybersecurity. This skill is particularly relevant to my career goals in cybersecurity and strategic planning, as it highlights my ability to analyze complex situations and derive actionable insights.

One artifact that supports this skill is my role in promoting my father's military history podcast. Through managing their social media presence and engaging with their content, I gained insights into military history and operations. Reading the books they review further deepened my understanding of historical military strategies and tactics. Another key artifact is my paper on the Chinese cyberattack on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This project required me to analyze geopolitical factors, cybersecurity principles, and historical case studies, connecting these fields to explore the broader implications of cyber warfare. Finally, my article on the IDF's 98th Division demonstrates my ability to analyze military operations and organizational structures. Writing this article required extensive research and interdisciplinary thinking, as I examined the integration of conventional and special forces to

understand their operational efficiency. These artifacts collectively illustrate my ability to synthesize information, analyze strategies, and communicate findings effectively.

Creating my e-portfolio has allowed me to reflect on how my academic experiences and professional opportunities have shaped me into a well-rounded and career-ready individual. My education at Old Dominion University provided a strong technical foundation in cybersecurity, cloud technology, and critical problem-solving. These skills were further enhanced through real-world experiences, such as my internship at The Ducats Group, where I applied vulnerability testing and cloud infrastructure management techniques, and through earning certifications like AWS Cloud Practitioner.

Beyond technical expertise, my experiences as an NCAA Division I swimmer, legal researcher, and contractor have developed my leadership, time management, and adaptability. These roles taught me to navigate challenges in diverse environments while balancing competing priorities. Building this e-portfolio has reinforced the importance of showcasing a balance of technical and interpersonal skills, demonstrating my ability to connect academic knowledge with practical applications.

As I prepare for the next steps in my career, this portfolio serves as a testament to my growth and readiness to contribute to dynamic teams. The process of reflecting on my achievements and organizing my artifacts has shown me the value of both

academic rigor and hands-on experience in building a successful professional identity. I am confident that the skills and insights highlighted in my e-portfolio will allow me to excel in the ever-evolving field of cybersecurity and beyond.