

Personal Narrative Essay

Lilibeth Rodriguez Sanchez

Old Dominion University

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Abstract

After a long journey to get to this point, I finally am a Senior at Old Dominion University with a goal to receive my Bachelors in Cybersecurity. I plan to graduate this May 2025 and therefore am working diligently to accomplish that goal. This essay will go over my journey of how I have been able to get to this point and why I am pursuing my degree in Cybersecurity. Throughout this essay I will mainly focus on the journey that I have gone through and what I have learned specifically in my time at Old Dominion University. The skills and concepts that I have learned at Old Dominion University have shaped the person that I am today. Not only will I go over the skills that I have learned but also go into detail on how those skills, goals, and accomplishments will reflect on my future career opportunities.

Being a first-generation graduate has led me to have some changes in my career choices. Cybersecurity was not my top pick of career choices until I had come to Old Dominion University. I went to Northern Virginia Community College and received my associate's in health sciences. I had already had 7 years of healthcare experience and had always thought that healthcare was the career I had choose to do forever until I had my two children. Once I had my children, I started to think about the reality of healthcare. Healthcare professions are normally long hours and mainly spent in a hospital. I felt that after listening to doctors that I would work for and their experiences, it was not worth it for me to go continue my career path in that field. I knew that healthcare would always be something that I liked but I also had a true passion for computers. I knew that IT and the Cyber world was always an interest of mine but never truly thought I could accomplish it due to the complexity of the material. I started ODU and I saw that the Cybersecurity was a program that was offered remotely and said this is my time to prove to myself that whatever I set my mind too, I can accomplish it. I believe that my dedication to

accomplish my goals has led me to pursue my career in Cybersecurity. I believe that anyone who truly knows me knows I am dedicated and a hard worker in any project or goal I set my mind too. I ensure that I am always motivated to accomplish the next goal I set my mind too. I think that having goals is what makes a person successful in life.

Challenges

Throughout my education I have faced many challenges. As you can imagine being a first-generation graduate has led me to face many challenges along the way. Being a daughter of immigrant parents has made me grow up fast. I can remember being around 7 years old and already translating legal documents to my parents since they didn't fully understand the language. Such challenges have kept me motivated to demonstrate that you can accomplish any goal. I started kindergarten not knowing a single word in English and look where I am today. I remember the time I was applying for ODU; I was so lost on how to apply and what career options were available. Was I making the correct decision? Will it be okay getting into debt with student loans to help pay for my education? The process was all so nerve wrecking because there was no one in my immediate family that could help me answer those unanswered questions. They simply just did not know. Those challenges have shaped the person I am today. I am an over-achiever because in the back of my mind I always think about how parents came to this country to provide a better future for me. To ensure that I could accomplish those goals that they once couldn't be due to circumstances out of their control. I hope to continue my career and accomplish high goals to ensure that those sacrifices were well worth it. I believe that Cybersecurity was the correct career choice for me because I enjoy solving complex issue and I feel passionate about ensuring that sensitive information is secure from any cyber threat out there. I think my background resonates with Cybersecurity because I like to challenge myself

and I believe Cybersecurity is the best career for challenges. Due to my upbringing, I believe that challenging myself allows me to grow and provide solutions to complex issues. I also believe that Cybersecurity is diverse and therefore I have many options of different roles that could be perfect for me. I believe that many of Cybersecurity roles are impactful in the world which is why I choose this path. I want to ensure that I have a career that is changing the world in a positive manner.

How I arrived here

I arrived at Old Dominion University after successfully graduating at Northern Virginia Community College with my associate's degree in health sciences. I ended up switching career paths because I felt that healthcare was no longer something I could envision myself doing in the long run. Throughout this time in school, I have done it all while at the same time raising my two children who are 5 and 1 years old. My kids pushed me to accomplish my next goal which was graduating with my Bachelors in Cybersecurity. I changed career paths because I knew that many jobs in the healthcare field that pay a decent salary are positions that require extensive hours at the job. I have already sacrificed so much with being in school, I could afford to keep sacrificing so much time without them to also work long hours. I was always passionate about the evolution of technology worked and figured that Cybersecurity was the best career choice for me. I am extremely happy with the decision I have made, if I was passionate about it then, I am much more passionate about my career choice now. Ultimately, I got to ODU because I was still not content with an associate, I wanted to accomplish receiving my bachelor's degree to ensure a better future for my children and a successful career for myself.

Thoughts, Reflections, and Motivations

I believe that my e-portfolio will help future employers, professors, and others get to know me in a deeper level. Everyone has a story to tell on how they were able to get here at ODU. Allowing myself to open and honest on my portfolio for others to see will help individuals get to know me better from a different perspective. When choosing Cybersecurity as my major, I obviously told friends and family. When I told them they view me as someone that one day is going to make so much money, but little do they know that those salaries don't just come from me getting bachelor's degree. There are certifications involved such as the Security +, A+, and so much more that is required for positions that are paying top dollar. People assume that I am doing this for the salary, but I am doing this because I am passionate about this field. I find myself happy to be able to learn a new concept such as Cisco, Linus, and many other skills I have been able to learn in my journey at ODU. Truthfully, I strongly dislike telling individuals anymore because they expect that will be making top dollar one day when ultimately that is not my end goal. My end goal is accomplishing goals that can grant me more knowledge and be able to become an expert in cybersecurity. I remember seeing on the Forbes website "Students should follow their hearts, not their wallets" (Forbes, 2019). This caption resonated with me because I believe it is extremely important that students should not choose Cybersecurity solely on the expected income that they might receive. I believe that only focusing on the money will ultimately lead you to failure because you might not have a passion in this field and are just doing it for the money. Only focusing on the money will not grant you happiness. Due to how others made me feel when I would mention that I was in Cybersecurity, I ended up not mentioning it anymore because I did not want people assuming I make all this money when fresh out of college I more than likely would not be making those amounts. With top dollar positions comes tons of experience and skills. The biggest misconception with Cybersecurity is that once

graduating you will get those positions and that is incorrect. Getting into the Cybersecurity field has been a major challenge for me due to me only having healthcare experience. I am not only working on getting my bachelor's degree but also plan to work hard to receive certifications like the security+ certification to enhance my knowledge and add it to my resume for future employes to see that I am qualified for the positions available. Throughout these modules Smiths quote "People who believe their lives are meaningful tend to tell stories defined by growth, communion, and agency" (Smith, 2017). This quote resonated to me because I believe that with growth, motivation and determination people will live a meaningful life. What is the point of life when there is no meaning to it? I believe that everyone has a story, a personal narrative to tell that focuses not only on the great such as accomplishments but also on the challenging times that have made you the person you are today.

Present Day

All my challenges, accomplishments and thoughts have all led me to this very moment. My last semester at ODU. I always dreamed of graduating from a four-year college but for some reason always thought it was going to take me much longer. I am now on my last semester here and I am looking forward to finally accomplishing that goal to make my little ones proud of their mother. The main reason why I choose this field was to be able to provide for my family but also be able to be there as mother, not working long hours at a hospital or simply having to take them to daycare center for long hours at a time. My husband currently works as a Mechanic, and I know one day he will get older, and it won't be the same anymore. He works so hard to provide us with all the essential's that we need and much more, but I also want to be able to partake in that and lift some pressure off his shoulders. My time at ODU not only has provided me with the technical skill necessary to succeed but has also taught me the importance of how to

communicate professionally and how through college there are so many life opportunities that can be presented to you along the way. I have also been able to understand the importance of Cybersecurity today and how vital it is to ensure that we all protect ourselves from future cyber threats. These are techniques that not only will help me in my career but also in ensuring a safe environment for me and my family to stay protected from possible cyber threats that could come along our way.

Conclusion

This chapter of my life will always be remembered because I think education is key to a successful life. I always joke around with my family telling them that I might have some PTSD after graduating because of the busy lifestyle of working full time, being a full-time student, and caring for two children and husband full time. But jokes aside, this chapter of my life has led me to this point of my life. Almost graduating, and finally accomplishing a goal that I dreamed of since I was a kid. My past challenges and my dedication to surpass those challenges have helped me succeed in any goal that I set my mind too. I know that with my dedication I will succeed in the Cybersecurity field because that is who I am today. I know that any goal you set your mind too, you can accomplish it and therefore, I will accomplish graduating and being able to find a position in the Cybersecurity work field that help better the future of technology.

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