Reflection Essay

IDS 493

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Abstract

The essay is a reflection of my three most vital marketable skills I have developed throughout

my college career: critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and adaptive communication. These skills

not only constitute the foundation for my interdisciplinary education but also remain the most

substantial assets for career success, primarily in the sphere of cybersecurity. To demonstrate my

growth and competence in each area, I will evaluate a deliberately selected collection of nine

artifacts that span multiple courses and assignments. Three artifacts per skill will display how I

applied them in various academic contexts. Through this reflective exercise, I will analyze how

each project aligns with my degree outcomes and professional goals, and how the process of

designing these projects represents my understanding of interdisciplinary learning. By

highlighting my academic work, skills developed, and requirements in the employment world,

this essay points out ways in which academic life has paved the way for practical use as well as

personal and professional advancement.

Introduction

Throughout my academic career, there have been three marketable skills that have stuck out to me that I have gained and improved exponentially on. The first is critical thinking, as I have learned how to look and understand topics in a deeper way, which has allowed me to better apply my knowledge to a wider range of topics. My second skill is ethical reasoning, and I have gained this skill by conducting extensive research on compliance and regulatory guidelines within cyberspace to ensure legal requirements are followed. The final skill I will highlight is my adaptive communication, which is portrayed through my ability to analyze a topic in various ways to convey and present my research on a particular topic. Within this paper, I look to talk about the artifacts that I included within my skills page and give insight into why I chose them as indicators for the previously discussed marketable skills.

Critical Thinking

For my first artifact, I chose to look at my job analysis essay from my Interdisciplinary Studies class for my ePortfolio. The goal of this assignment was to choose and describe a job posting, then give reasons why I would be a good fit for their position. My thought process with this task initially was chaotic, as I was struggling to justify the points mentioned in the essay. I found the most difficult issue to be how to sell myself as a great candidate for the position, considering that most of my experience has only been from a classroom. It was not until I began using the responsibilities from the job description and then the course objectives that were completed in some of my previous work that I was able to start developing valid judgments for my candidacy for the position. Critical thinking is imperative in the cybersecurity field, and with this assignment, I was able to create reasonable judgments through my ability to analyze and apply the skills I learned in class to the real-world responsibilities of the job.

In my second artifact for this section, I was tasked in my other interdisciplinary studies class with composing a term paper that displayed the connections between multiple disciplines on a singular topic. This paper presented an interesting challenge as I had to take and relate the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and engineering to the topic of adolescent technology use and their future. I particularly felt like I would have trouble with this paper due to my lack of knowledge in the fields of engineering and sociology. However, with support from an article by Emily Lai stating, "background knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for enabling critical thought within a given subject," I was able to gain confidence in my ability to conclude without the explicit knowledge of the disciplines. In my future, this ability is important due to the sheer scope of the cybersecurity field, and I will often not know everything, which will lead to a justifiable conclusion having to be drawn.

My final artifact in this category is from a Philosophy class, where I argued the controversial topic of the existence of God and evil. This project required me to develop well-reasoned and sound arguments, which consumed large amounts of time and consideration. Compared to my typical course study in cybersecurity and English, this paper demanded a more conceptual and subjective approach, pushing me beyond evidence-based reasoning into the realm of abstract thought. Critical thinking was essential since I had to dissect advanced philosophical positions and make informed choices without grounding them in concrete empirical data. As Peter Facione defines it, critical thinking involves "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment," a description of the internal choice-making and self-governed thought needed by this project (Facione, 2015).

Ethical Reasoning

        The initial artifact in this section is related to my examination of the National Cybersecurity Strategy and its overarching goals. In this assignment, I examined frameworks such as NIST and international policies such as the GDPR to determine how cybersecurity efforts work to create an environment in cyberspace that is more costly to attack than it would be to defend. In this analysis, I gained a better understanding of the ethical trade-offs of employing such measures, particularly in balancing national security and the privacy rights of individuals. Making a secure cyberspace means treading a thin line between raising difficult moral questions, such as how much governments should be permitted to bypass privacy walls to prevent cyber attacks. This artifact illuminates growing tension between regulation and innovation in the digital realm and emphasizes the importance of ethical reasoning in shaping the trajectory of cybersecurity policy. In a world where privacy laws and spying capabilities frequently compete with each other, ethical reasoning is the critical vehicle by which responsible and fair decision-making takes place.

        My next artifact of the section was completed in my Cyber Law class, and the objective was to send a message to the governor regarding the concerns of privacy and data protection in the state of Virginia. It particularly involved consumers and their right to control how and where their data was being shared within big corporations and businesses. Ethical reasoning in cyberspace, according to Sorin Matei, deals with "justifying technical choices while considering their negative and positive ethical implications." I found this to be especially important when presenting this artifact due to how it relates to the ethicality of how our data is being used right now, and we may not even know it. Possessing good ethical reasoning is so vital in cybersecurity because there must be some sort of consumer trust in an organization to safeguard data.

The last artifact of the ethical reasoning section goes into a deep analysis of the General Data Protection Regulation implemented by the European Union. This policy shaped a whole new precedent for data holding companies as it required accountability and transparency to consumers of what was happening with their data at all times. It is especially imperative for measures like these since "information ethics concerns the moral responsibilities of those who manage, generate, and disseminate information (Floridi, 2013)." Before this policy, most consumers' sensitive information was at the mercy of corporations with nothing to lose if anything went missing. Therefore, ethical reasoning is a valuable skill in such a dangerous technological world.

Adaptive Communication

In an article by De Janasz et al, they state that "communicating effectively requires that we be aware of our audience's needs and adapt our message accordingly." For the next few artifacts, I would like this quote to be kept in mind, as it aids in the following explanations. My first artifact of this section is an illustrated essay written in my Digital Literacy class that asked me to write about a topic and then have an image that could connect with the chosen topic. This is the most recent of my papers that stem from the topic of digital technology and its looming effects on the world today. Ranging from the laptop that I write this reflection on to the internet you used to access this paper, we all must use it at some point in our day-to-day lives. In regards to how to relates to my skill of adaptive communication, I believe that this paper brings out a more creative take on the issue as it utilizes the image more to attract an audience to the idea presented throughout the paper. It is also much shorter than my other artifacts in this section, which could help give a more time-convenient way to read up on the issue.

In the second artifact of this section, I am presenting a proposal essay made in my first college English class, which asks the question, "What are you looking at now?" This paper is more on the persuasive side as it looks to convince the audience to limit adolescent screen time, particularly by eliminating or cutting back on its usage in schools. The overall objective of this paper was to create a call to action on a concern plaguing all schools now, which is controlling the amount of distractions in the classroom. I enjoyed creating this paper since it is a topic that I have certain reservations about, as it changed my own school experience growing up. As to how this relates to adaptive communication, I believe this artifact is better suited for parents of adolescents rather than the adolescent community like the first artifact was, due to the second one's lack of creativity and color to draw in the younger audience.

For the final artifact of this section, I was tasked to create a research paper over an entire class semester on a topic of my choosing. This time, the topic chosen was narrowed down much further to be the effect of social media on the mental health of adolescents. Since this paper spanned the whole course, it allowed for much deeper research into the topic, as there were proposals, annotated bibliographies, and drafts involved for the whole process. With this research paper, the information was adapted to be geared more towards researchers rather than the adolescents and parents mentioned before. Each of these artifacts required an adapted response depending on who it is targeted at, and this is vital in cybersecurity due to the consumers, bosses, colleagues, and shareholders that will all require differing approaches to being addressed.

Conclusion

Critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and adaptive communication are each key components of my academic journey. However, I will also have to stress the importance of interdisciplinary studies, as it is truly important to effectively grasp and apply the numerous

concepts presented not only in the classroom but in life. The process of creating this ePortfolio was not easy, but it is certainly well worth it to be able to showcase and also reminisce on the great pieces of work that I have completed in my college tenure. Interdisciplinary studies also in a way forced me to think outside of the box with my approach to not only the assignments, but also to thinking in life, as most answers are better when supported by multiple disciplines rather than one. I believe and am excited to take these interdisciplinary skills that I have highlighted in this paper into the cybersecurity field and in life to better understand and appreciate the world.

References

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