

Reflection Paper

Michael Chase II

Department of Continuing Education

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Professor Carin Andrews

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As this course and my college career comes to an end, I reflect on not only things that I have learned at Old Dominion University but also what life has taught me. My degree is in leadership, but I have had the honor of being a leader in different jobs and opportunities as well. I have had the blessing of being in the US Army being an intelligence analyst, while also taking course in cybersecurity, and studying for cybersecurity certifications. My time as a teacher and pastor has given me the understanding of how to approach problems at different angles with different thoughts. The time I have had at ODU, has given me the knowledge and the confidence to go out into the work force with greater understanding of how an interdisciplinary degree will bring out the best of all disciplines. My current degree is in interdisciplinary leadership, I choose this degree to bring all my knowledge and schoolwork together under one degree. My previous degree coursework included computer science, cybersecurity and business administration.

Over the course of my educational journey, I have worked full time and part time jobs and one of the things that I strived to be and do is lead people. As I choose my leadership degree, I fully thought I would not have to learn much about leading people, but I was wrong. What I thought was leading was just managing. The Army taught me how to manage my soldiers in a micromanaging way so that they would not be able to find themselves in trouble. My time as a pastor showed me how to manage my time and self from a very flexible position. My time as a teacher and coach gave me the most leadership ability, as I had to manage my time and self but also lead and guide students to be the best that they could even when they did not see it themselves. My training in the Army taught me how to best lead soldiers, but my time at ODU had given me the tools to lead people. The courses that I took to get my Professional Leadership Certificate from ODU, showed me the difference between managing people and leading them. It has helped guide my ethics in many things that I never previously thought about. During those

courses I had the opportunity to enhance my leadership ability by taking course on LinkedIn and Hootsuite, that compounded my qualifications and my skills as a leader.

Technology has always been something that I desired to be a part of, I loved how it could bring people together in a way that didn't always cause social stress. As I got older and social media gained popularity, I started to see ways that it was harming people and the amount of data that everyone trusted to be kept safe scared me. After high school I wanted to help keep people safe and gain experience in an analyst position, so I signed up to be an intelligence Analyst in the US Army. After my three months of basic training, I had seven months of in-depth and immersive training for the Intelligence Analyst job that I eagerly desired. After gaining that training and certification, I worked for five years as an analyst for some of the top government agencies in the United States. After my time in the Army, I started school at ODU to pursue a degree in computer science and as I enjoyed learning to code and enjoyed the work, life stepped in and I had to pivot to cyber security. Cyber security was a second choice for me as it closely related to my prior job as an analyst in the Army, however life kept moving me around. I did not want to give up completely the things I was learning as a student in computer science and cyber security, so I entered into the interdisciplinary degree program to ensure that I would be able to take my knowledge with me. The skills of coding that I learned have helped me with other course I that took and opened up an opportunity for me to teach my kids how to start and enjoy the mysteries of digital code. I have been actively working on and studying for several cyber security certifications like, CompTIA security+, CompTIA network+, and certified in cyber security from ISCC. These certifications are to join my others after this semester has concluded to add to my credibility in the Information Assurance and cyber security fields.

I have had some really great influences in my life including, teachers, coaches, boss, and friends, and they all have taught me that if I don't see something done the right way, it is my duty to change it and develop something new. My first thought was to be a teacher, as I seen many things that could be improved on, so when I was in the Army, I took it upon myself to start teaching courses and trainings as much as possible. I was able to develop training and tracking for those courses to ensure that new service members would take the appropriate trainings when they need to. During that time of developing training programs and trackers, me and my friend discovered that our shift work did not align well with programs that were outside of our working hours. Our time off would be in the middle of the week sometimes and we would not have any designated drivers available to get people safely home, this was before Uber and Lyft was available. In discovering this we decided to make a program called Shift Workers Against Drunk Driving, we started this program in the hopes that our friends and coworkers would have a safe place to call in they ever needed it, and it worked well for us, so much so that we were given the Army Achievement Award for its creation. After my time in the Army, I made the choice to become the wrestling coach at the local high school in Floyd, VA. When I took over the program, they only had one kid on the team and he was a senior, but we were able to get more kids to join us and start a workout and training schedule that would allow growth in wrestling and school. What started out with one kid in 2022, we now have 18 working and training to become better wrestlers and students.

The interdisciplinary course work that I had the honor of being a part of has shown me that even when I was not thinking about it, most of the work that I have been doing was never a lone discipline, but a grouping of the things that mattered at time for me. Knowing now that I can think in an interdisciplinary way is opening up doors for me in jobs and my personal life as well.

I am grateful for the staff of ODU in providing me the opportunity to view my work from many different lenses.