My Self-Assessment

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Throughout my academic, personal, and professional life I have been fortunate enough to have many early leadership experiences that have shaped and will still improve my skills, strengthen my personal character, and prepare myself for a possible future career in cybersecurity. I find it is important to not only see what you have accomplished in life but also see who you were in the moment you accomplished those things. Through self assessment I can highlight my personal development, outline goals and priorities that guide my work, and most importantly reflect my progress, as there are still many goals that I have yet to achieve. After conducting my own self assessment through my own self reflection and use of tools to better understand where I am personality wise I took away that much of my own development has come from learning to challenge myself, trust my own abilities and strengths, and finally lean into the kinds of pressure that make me stronger. By reflecting on my successes, setbacks, and future aspirations, I believe I can better understand the version of myself I am becoming, and most importantly, the version of myself I still want to grow into.

Looking back through my life I have had multiple opportunities to be a leader and exhibit the qualities of leadership. One of the defining experiences in my early life was being a part of my high school's Air Force Junior ROTC, or AFJROTC, program. I initially thought that when I joined the program I had been making a mistake as I had been a particularly quiet and shy person for most of my life and the thought of being forced to speak publicly and lead people terrified me. But oddly enough I believe that if I had quit early on I wouldn't be the person I am today and wouldn't have been capable of having the achievements I am so proud of today. Being a cadet in AFJROTC stood out to me as it had been one of the first places I felt gave me real responsibility and purpose. Over my years throughout high school I had been driven by my admiration for my leadership to become a leader myself. Through years of work I eventually

became a flight commander. Being a flight commander meant more to me than just giving commands or teaching drill; it meant being responsible for people who were in my shoes four years ago and were trying something new. I remember watching first year cadets struggle and then improve, and realizing that I had helped them get there. I believe watching people thrive through my own guidance was the best part of being a leader and seeing them grow had cemented my love of leadership. The achievement I am most proud of is being color guard commander. Our team had a reputation for never placing at competition, and honestly, some people including myself somewhat doubted that things would change. Again I was motivated by what I really wanted to accomplish and devoted so much of my time studying the routine and getting to know my team and their weaknesses. Leading the team taught me what it means to hold people to a high standard, not out of a regimented strictness, but because I believed that my cadets deserved the change to be great. When state competition came and we placed second in the state of Virginia, it didn't just feel like a win to me; it felt like proof that all of us were capable of more than anyone expected. Outside of ROTC, I've had successes in my personal life that have helped me grow professionally. Buying my own car, reaching the end of college, and helping people through mutual aid are things that I genuinely consider accomplishments, not because they were flashy milestones but because they taught me discipline, patience, and community compassion. I learned to rely on myself and help others, even when I still have challenges to handle.

Speaking now to the present and future, my long-term goal is to work in cybersecurity, ideally for an agency like the FBI. I've always been drawn to the idea of helping people, not just physically, but digitally. The cybersecurity field is competitive, especially when aiming to eventually work for such a secure organization as the FBI, but that challenge is part of what

motivates me. I know the obstacles of my goal: gaining enough experience, earning certifications, and standing out academically. But I believe I'm ready for that. My measure of success is not just landing the job I want, but reaching a point where I can look at my progress and feel confident. I think I can accomplish my goal through building technical skills through finishing school and acquiring certifications, working with internships for experience, and improving my communication skills as a way of building confidence and staying motivated. After self analysis I believe I still lack in certain skills and wish to improve them. These skills include: cementing my cybersecurity knowledge through hands-on experience, continuing to build off my public speaking skills, and really expanding my ability to analyze and compartmentalize complex problems into solutions. My plan is to stay consistent with studying through coursework, pursuing internships, and just seeking out opportunities that challenge me to grow like working in my community or starting long term projects. Moving towards remedying these faults also requires mentorship from those in the field, guidance from people with firsthand experience would help me understand what employers are looking for, which opportunities to pursue, and how to set myself apart. I could also benefit from hands-on experience like cybersecurity labs, research, and even just personal projects working with computers.

I would be remiss if I mentioned professional support without mentioning the person that has had a resounding impact on my philosophy towards leadership and motivation: Chief Patrie, my AFJROTC instructor. Chief Patrie was famous for his from the background tough-love style, if we messed up it was *our* fault and we as cadets had to discuss where we went wrong and how to improve. I retained this mindset fully and I think it really molded me into what I am today. He taught me that leadership is not about wanting authority, but more about taking responsibility and being accountable for everything you do. From this I learned that failure is something not to

discourage you, as I previously have thought, but something to study and really analyze. Failure works as a motivator rather than a detractor, learning from your mistakes helped me self analyze for this paper and helps me build my strengths and understand my weaknesses. Chief Patrie's guidance helped shape my leadership philosophy and continues to influence how I conduct myself academically, socially, and professionally. I am eternally grateful for the impact the Chief had on me. From his lessons I learned to lead my color guard team and bring us to become state champions which is one of the proudest moments of my life. Leading that team taught me the great results from manifesting victory and determination, that belief in improvement is always possible.

Conducting this self-assessment has reminded me of how far I've come, and how far I still want to go. My experiences in AFJROTC shaped my confidence and discipline, my personal milestones taught me independence, and my passion for cybersecurity gives clear direction for what I want to accomplish in the future. By staying focused, seeking improvement, and holding on to the values that shaped me, I am confident I can continue growing into the person, and professional, I aspire to be.