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Throughout my time at Old Dominion University, I have had the chance to grow in ways that connect directly to the work I already do in the Air Force. My classes brought together ideas from cybersecurity, leadership, writing, and communication, and each area taught me something different about how to handle problems, work with others, and stay organized. When I look at everything I have completed in life, school and in the military, the three skills that stand out the most are Cybersecurity and Digital Literacy, Leadership and Operations Support, and Communication/ Relationship Building. These skills are reflected in the artifacts I chose, and they have shaped the direction I want my career to go.

Skill 1: Cybersecurity & Digital Literacy

One of my first signs of growth came from my early cybersecurity ePortfolios. These assignments were some of my first chances to apply cyber ideas in real projects. They helped me learn the basics, how to protect information, how networks work, and why cybersecurity matters. At the time, everything felt new, but the more I worked through each project, the more confident I became in my own abilities. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn, the opportunity to be surrounded by experts and those just alike. We all have our own journeys, so seeing that there are many individuals at my pace and or similar was refreshing. We learned together , and grew together.

The most effective in my opinion is my Air Force experience, which pushed me and these skills even further. Originally looking for stability in the middle of a legit global shutdown, the Covid-19 pandemic. It gave me structure, stability, drive and a mental/physical reset. I was at a

point of pursuing other professional interests , but they urged me to strive for more, to discover more, to remain curious and hungry. Especially if they are funding it, it just removes more excuses from succeeding. It has opened my eyes to the world, allowing me to explore it at the same time. I am grateful for the opportunity to step outside my own bubble, my own comfort zone, and be able to see, know, touch, and feel that there is more to life beyond the hometown. More to life beyond the home country, more to life across waters. There are infinite possibilities for a professional career, especially within cyber. Thatv was satisfying and relieving to know. Especially because when I first took a chance on pursuing this line of work, I thought it was straight out of the movies, that to me was the scary but thrilling part of this journey, at least at the start.

As a Knowledge Manager, now Data Operations Specialist, I have worked in several Communication units while traveling to different bases like Hickam AFB, Robins AFB, Muniz ANGB, Destin, and JB Andrews every month. These trips gave me hands-on experience with cyber tasks, troubleshooting, and supporting real world wide missions. When I first joined the Air Force, I was young and unsure of myself. Over the years, especially through these TDYs, I have grown into someone who can handle responsibility, adapt quickly, and communicate clearly in busy environments. I didn't even know what an active security clearance was, nor what doors they could open. I used to be so childish and unsure of myself and my ability. The professional, personal, and overall boosts from constantly learning allows room for reminiscing of my own self growth.

The best work environment, hands down, is a comm squadron/ IT work environment. Regardless of how busy and stressful it can be at times, the people make everything worth it at the end of the day. I've yet to experience any low morale work environment in any IT or cyber field. That's just a bonus to the availability to constantly grow and adapt like the times and competition continue to evolve and grow at a rapid pace..

I also continue to complete regular Air Force cyber training and CCAF coursework. These certifications remind me that learning in the cyber field never stops. They also match the skill requirements I often see in job postings, continuous training, digital literacy, and understanding cyber policy. Altogether, these experiences show how my academic work and military background support each other.

Skill 2: Leadership & Military Operations Support

Another major skill I developed is leadership. One supporting artifact for this is my work helping organize shared digital resources for my unit through Microsoft Teams and SharePoint. Setting up clear communication channels and organizing information taught me how important structure is for a team. This connected directly to concepts I learned in both leadership and tech-focused classes.

My Airman Leadership School (ALS) graduation is another important piece of my development, and one I am extremely proud of. ALS pushed me to think differently, more like a supervisor and less like a brand new Airman. I learned about giving feedback, understanding expectations, and working with others in difficult situations. Being part of Warrior Flight and

performing well both academically and physically showed me how far I have come. I also included a FOIA/PII reference because protecting sensitive information is a big part of my job and leading others reflects both leadership and my cyber roles. Knowing how to handle data properly is something many employers look for, and it reflects professionalism and trustworthiness.

Skill 3: Communication, Experience & Connections

The last major skill I want to highlight is communication. A letter from my supervisor, TSgt Gardner, helps show how I interact with others as an Airman, teammate, and friend. Communication is something that happens in conversations, group work, and everyday interactions, not just in writing. Through my experiences at JB Andrews and other TDYs, I learned how to talk to people with different backgrounds, how to ask better questions, and how to lead without being overbearing.

My previous reflective writing assignment also demonstrates this skill. Writing has helped me understand my own experiences more clearly. It has taught me how to express ideas professionally but still honestly. Strong communication skills show up in almost every job listing I come across, which makes this skill just as important as my technical abilities.

Conclusion

When I look back at my coursework and experiences as a whole, I can see how important the interdisciplinary structure of my program has been. My classes helped me connect leadership, technology, and communication into one clear path. Courses like this one helped prepare me to think across different fields and approach assignments with confidence.

Thinking in an interdisciplinary way is especially important in the cyber and military environments because no job ever fits into just one category. You need to understand people, technology, policy, and communication all at the same time. This program helped me grow into someone who can handle that challenge and continue building toward a strong career.