

Personal Narrative Essay

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Abstract

I am a senior at Old Dominion University (ODU), I will be graduating in the Spring of 2025 with a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity. This paper will be used to cover my path through education and influences that lead me to choose this career path. This paper will be a first person narrative on my career path from choosing a career and the education that has gone into this career. The goal of this paper is to cover my personal story around cybersecurity while implementing concepts that I have learned along the way at ODU. I will also cover some goals that I have moving forward in the cybersecurity career field.

Get to Know Me

In order for this personal narrative to make the most sense I feel that I need to explain a little background information about myself. I am from Winchester, VA and have always been a very family oriented person. I have been blessed with great family and friends around me my entire life that have influenced me in great ways leading me to be very family oriented. Growing up with my mom and older brother really helped me develop some core traits with the most important ones being responsibility, integrity, and respect. These traits still have a heavy influence on me today as well as self-accountability. Having these great role-models gave me people to look up to. They have also always helped push me to be my best and that is where a lot of the influence in my life has come from. Now with some core values out of the way we can jump into the rest of my personal narrative paper about my career path in cybersecurity.

Influences on Choosing Cybersecurity

Growing up in the 2000s technology has always been a part of my life and part of my educational experience. This exposure to technology early on is what created my interest in furthering my education in this field. I have also been exposed to the information technology (IT) career field my entire life with my mom working in many different IT positions. This is how I learned about different careers in IT and with technology growing rapidly in our world it has always been a safe lucrative career option. During the summer of my freshman year in high school I was offered the opportunity to volunteer with the IT team at Valley Health. In this time as a volunteer I got to work with different teams doing basic IT office work and most of my time was spent with the PC techs. This allowed me to expand my knowledge and ultimately a major

factor in finding out that this was something I wanted to do with my life. Being able to see the critical work they do for the healthcare facilities first hand was a fantastic experience. After deciding I wanted to be in IT my next step was to further my education to learn more about the field and different career paths that I could possibly take.

IT Career Path

My first exposure to the educational side of IT was through electives that I took in my high school years. These were very basic classes but they did provide a deeper knowledge of some computer hardware and some software. In one of the classes we were able to get certified in multiple Microsoft applications such as word, power point, and excel. While these were very basic they helped me understand more about the field and they helped me clarify that this was indeed what I was interested in as a career.

I graduated high school at the height of the pandemic and decided to stay home close to family by attending Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC). For the first time I was taking more in depth classes in pursuit of my Associate degree in Computer Science. During this time, I took multiple coding classes that allowed me to learn how to utilize different scripting languages like Python, Java, and C++. I was also able to take some hardware classes that furthered my knowledge of basic IT hardware. During this time, I was also able to learn much more about different areas of IT but one of my best qualities that came from this was sharpening my problem solving skills. This came from your Physics and Calculus courses that made me use my mind in different ways to solve different types of problems. I believe this has helped me tremendously through my schooling and early career because it is very rare when there is a simple plain

answer, instead you have to look at problems from different points of view and use your mind in different ways to find the solution.

After I graduated with my Associates in Computer Science I had a goal to further my education while I began the process of looking for a job in the IT career field. Through the course of the year, I completed my CompTIA certifications for A+, Network +, and Security +. While doing this I had a few interviews for entry level positions for different IT companies but none of which ever worked out. Instead of getting discouraged I used this as motivation to continue getting my certifications and using all these interviews as a learning experience. I learned so much valuable information through this year and after completing the CompTIA certifications I was much more confident in my knowledge. These experiences and certifications are what pushed me to continue my education into a bachelor's degree. I ended up pursuing Cybersecurity after the CompTIA Security + certification had extremely piqued my interest.

At this point I was transferring my credits to ODU since they offered the best value on a Cybersecurity degree and they allowed me to complete all my courses online. This was very important to me because I was able to stay close to my family and was able to obtain a job for Valley Health working in the Network Operations Center (NOC). Having my core classes already out of the way I was able to dive into Cybersecurity course in my first semester at ODU. These course really taught me a lot about Cybersecurity technology and programing as they provided great material and hands on labs which for me is the best way to learn. Some of my favorite course during my time at ODU have been Cryptography, Digital Forensics, and Cyber Law. All of these classes have only grown my interest in Cybersecurity and I have to thank the professors for providing all the materials, labs, and feedback to help me best in my learning experience. This was perfect for me since doing these classes online really helped me show my

responsibility and self-accountability to get everything done on time and in a presentable way. It also provided me the opportunity to continue working full-time in the NOC where I could see the stuff I was learning first hand, while being able to learn more information on the hardware and data center side of the IT field.

Conclusion

I have been very grateful to have great opportunities to further my education and gain hands on skills that will benefit me throughout my life. Through all my years of schooling especially my time at ODU I have been able to deepen my knowledge of the IT field specifically in Cybersecurity. ODU has given me the ability to sharpen some of my core values of integrity, responsibility, and self-accountability. After I graduate from ODU I plan to continue my education through obtaining more certifications. I also plan to continue my IT career by obtaining a job in cybersecurity that will allow me to use everything I have been able to learn through school. I am very excited to be able to not only put my current knowledge to work but also for the opportunity to grow it even more with so real life on job cybersecurity experience!