

Individual Reflection

Shelby Rotella

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CYSE 368: Cybersecurity Internship

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The COVA CCI Clinic has been one of the best experiences in my college career and I am saddened to see that the semester has come to an end. I never could have imagined working for an internship that would actually give me the real-world experience that I was looking for as well as help me build connections with my fellow classmates and staff that could last a lifetime. One of the biggest perks of this internship was the team I was partnered with because I got put with two amazing, talented, and fun people that made the whole experience fulfilling and unstressful. It made working together feel less like an inconvenience and a burden and more like a fluid and impactful experience that resulted in a great report and presentation. If I had to name any negatives of the internship it would be the delay in meeting clients because I believe our group would have benefited from meeting our client a week sooner to get more information from her and to make a more detailed report that could have tackled more of her industry's needs. Another nitpick I want to mention is the lack of examples for the final report and presentation because it left us without much to work with aside from the information we got from our client. While I am proud of what we came up with, some structure and ideas could definitely benefit future interns.

There were five objectives that were given during the beginning of the internship, and I feel like I have achieved the goals of them all. I took everything I learned from this internship such as working as a team and how to create reports for someone's specific and unique needs and applied it to every project I worked on and worked well with everyone on my team and with my TA's and professor. I was faced with cyber threat exposure through learning about the threats VBSRM faced prior to meeting with us and I faced them by creating an incident response plan using the NIST, CISA CPGs, and SWOT analysis simultaneously. I learned a lot about the cybersecurity industry's practices by understanding the practices of protecting people from

threats and understanding the importance of mitigating, protecting, detecting, and reducing the impact of threats if they hit. The last objective focused on building and researching innovative cybersecurity solutions for our client and I believe I have achieved that through my report and presentation with my team.

This internship was so exciting throughout the entire semester, especially during our time with Dr. Baaki and his Design Thinking sessions. Prior to Baaki's Design Thinking sessions, I had normally seen guest presentations like that as corny and unmemorable because they are usually used as padding or filler for classes in the beginning of the year. Dr. Baaki was different because every one of his lessons were important and he made his teachings engaging and fun at the same time especially when we got to play jazz music in a music call during class instead of being in the classroom. Never thought I would get to learn piano in the same class where I was writing about MITRE Attack techniques weeks later, but the unpredictability of the internship is what allowed memories like that to happen which I am so grateful for. On the note of unpredictability, the constant changing of classrooms sometimes became overwhelming especially towards the end of the semester when the unfortunate events of March 13, 2026 forced us to spread out our options to completely different parts of campus. I did not mind it when we just had our guest speakers, but the change to the Health Sciences building caused my team and I to sprint to class and arrive at our first dry run late which was embarrassing and unprofessional. Sometimes the workload would become too much especially when my other classes were also piling on work, but the reason it did not become too overwhelming was because of my time and workload management and the collaboration between my teammates and I to get all of the work done in a timely manner.

If I had any advice for future interns that I did not mention with my team in our final executive reflection, it would be to come into class everyday ready to socialize and become friends with everyone outside of your team. Some of my best memories of this internship was walking around with my classmates and TA's during our meetings, and getting to connect with likeminded people is such an enriching and rewarding experience that is hard to find. Another piece of advice is to not be afraid to speak your mind even if you are facing pushback from your teammates because at the end of the day, this project is your work too, so make your opinions and ideas heard before you get swallowed up by everyone else's ideas. One last piece of advice is to always have your shirt ready to go as well as get a good pair of jeans for your presentations, and keep track of the days you need to wear them so you do not show up to class in the wrong outfit and get penalized for it.

In conclusion, my main takeaway from this internship was gaining real-world experience, connecting with likeminded people, and feeling like I have accomplished something bigger than anything I have ever done in my college career. I have one more year left of college, so I will be taking my team building skills with me when contributing in group projects as well as applying my skills with CS2A as their secretary to build connections with everyone and expand the community even further than we have ever seen before. In my professional life, I will use my report writing skills as well as my teamwork skills to advance my career and make professional connections that can help me find new opportunities to explore that can benefit me in the future. If I had to make any changes to the course itself, it would be to give us more time to interact with our classmates beyond our groups to build more connections as well as give us more advanced notice on deadlines for important projects so we are not constantly wondering when we need to get stuff turned in. Overall, this has been an amazing experience and I want to thank Dr.Duvall,

Carla, Jade, and Joshua for everything you have done for us and I will never forget your hard work and enthusiasm for working with us. Thank you for everything. :)