

Personal Narrative Essay

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### Abstract

This personal narrative describes my four-year journey at Old Dominion University, showing how I adapted, persevered, and learned more about myself along the way. The journey begins with the initial challenges of adjusting to college life, maintaining rigorous academic obligations, and balancing personal responsibilities. This essay explores the importance of friendships and hobbies, such as joining a fraternity and DJing, which provided both money and a sense of personal fulfillment. Every year has brought new experiences and lessons, from overcoming the hurdles of my freshman coursework to mastering advanced cybersecurity courses, gaining a meaningful internship in government contracting, and developing a genuine passion in national security work. The author discusses how managing school, work, and personal growth emphasizes the need of self-awareness, perseverance, and the broader understanding gained during their time in college. As graduation approaches, there is a sense of optimism and determination about what lies ahead, emphasizing a focus on achieving goals and finding joy in life.

## Personal Narrative Essay

Looking back on my career at ODU it was sure a wild one. Starting off from day one I honestly did not know what to expect because everything was so different from the environment to the change of lifestyle. When I first moved in my roommates, and I did everything together and that helped me a lot on the not being lonely aspect of things. We went to the gym, library, dining hall, and even pledged together. Then when classes started to get serious with workloads I could tell I was not going to be able to do everything with them anymore because my first semester classes were actually kind of hard but I was used to it because I was fresh out of high school and everything was online due to covid so I was familiar with doing things on my own schedule and getting good grades. My classes to me my freshman year of college were my hardest classes for me because I had to complete math. I did not struggle it just took a lot of time out of my days so I couldn't go out and have fun as much which is totally fine because look at me now about to graduate in the spring. The cyber classes that I took freshman year were the typical intro level classes, but I also had a couple higher level classes. I am glad that I knocked out all the higher-level classes then because throughout these four years everything went smoothly. My roommate's freshman year on the other hand unfortunately had to drop most of their classes and retake them another time. That was the main thing that was hard for me because I did notice them chilling most of the days and I tried to tell them to just do your work first then go have fun, but they did not listen. Anyways most of the cyber classes that I took freshman year consisted of a lot of writing which was not hard, and the English, math, and earth science was not too difficult as well it was more just time consuming. I was happy with my performance freshman year because I adapted so quickly to the college lifestyle, and my parents were very proud and that's all I care about is making them happy.

Sophomore year I moved into a house with some of my fraternity brothers and it was a lot of fun. I noticed that there was a lot more responsibility with bills rent and groceries, but I have a talent that I still do to this day. I started DJing at some spots on campus and Virginia Beach and that was really good for me because it felt like I was at the party, but I am also getting paid. Becoming a DJ has helped me live very comfortably in college s I never really had to worry about money. My first semester of my second year I had the highest GPA of my college career, and I was taking some pretty hard classes which consisted of mostly cybersecurity but the coding side of it and some pretty intensive writing classes. I honestly found joy in completing my work during the day because then it felt like a reward to go out at night and DJ for people. That was basically my cycle. Wake up, eat, grind on homework, DJ, sleep, and then do it all over again. I will say though when I was a freshman and sophomore, I was not to focused on what I wanted to do in life but at least I knew I had to pass these classes with the highest GPA possible. When the spring semester came around, I kept my routine up and continued but my classes got kind of harder. I did keep my GPA above a 3.0, but some of the higher-level classes for cybersecurity really required me to lock in and I honestly think I was doing too much outside of school and that is what caused my GPA to slip. I did not let that get the best of me though as I did start looking for internships and I was fortunate enough to land one the summer of junior year. I also started constantly going to the gym my sophomore year which was really smart to me because it was a confidence booster. Summer of sophomore year I just DJed to make money and that was it nothing too crazy happened.

Then junior year started, and classes got serious. One class that stood out to me was machine learning, it was so difficult, but I got through that. I also took a Cyber Terrorism class which required a lot of writing and paying attention, but I did learn a lot from those. During

junior year I figured out what I would like to peruse come post grad and that is working for the national government. I grew up in northern Virginia and I still to this day cannot get enough of the lifestyle up there. While trying to battle through these rigorous classes I was still in contact trying to get everything setup for my internship and I still remember the feeling of getting the offer letter I was so happy, and it finally felt like everything was paying off. The spring semester of junior year was also very difficult because I turned 21 in the winter, so I was going out a lot more having a little too much fun, but it was ok because I got through the main class of interdisciplinary studies and kept it rolling.

The internship that I landed the summer of 2024 was at a government contracting business called Dan solutions located in Arlington Virginia. It was very serious but a lot of fun as well. I was helping out in the back-office writing sections of RFPs and pulling information for data calls. I also got the opportunity to sit in a lot of meeting with other teaming government contracting businesses. Doing this internship made me realize what it takes to land a job in the government or government contracting and that is basically getting the certifications and years of experience desired for that roll. I choose to do the 40 hours a week role so I could learn and help out as much as possible and it was fun because learning how to commute to and from work and getting used to a normal sleep schedule gave me a taste of post grad. I started off taking the metro everyday but that got a little too expensive, so there was this bus I had to catch from Gainesville to Arlington every day from July to August and all doing all of that made me feel so grown. That was probably one of my favorite summers because I have a lot of friends in the northern Virginia, D.C. area and we would all have so much fun around work ranging from golfing, going out and DJing. I plan to go back to Dan solutions as an actual contractor for a little

bit because they did give an internship, but I will hopefully end up at the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Now it is senior year, thankfully I got all of those rigorous classes out of the way and now there is only electives to worry about. I am prepping to get some certifications like the security + and others but I am basically on cruise control. Yes, the past couple years were hard, but I know my degree will pay off and I am thankful that I have realized that there is more to life than just getting the best grades or just working 24/7. I plan to graduate this spring and travel around the country visiting some of my boys in different cities during the summer. Then it will be time to hit the ground running. I believe in myself to do whatever it takes to be successful and happy and that is all that matters to me. One thing I have learned these past years is to focus on yourself first then everything else.