

Personal Narrative Essay

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Abstract

This narrative essay explores the development of my academic and professional identity through sharing the experiences that led me to pursue a career in information technology. My interest in technology began through childhood experiences with computers and video games which eventually sparked my desire to understand how technology actually works. My education at Tidewater Community College and Old Dominion University provided opportunities to explore areas of technology like networking, cybersecurity, operating systems, troubleshooting, and more. In particular, classes like Linux for Cybersecurity and Windows Systems and Management helped foster my interest in troubleshooting and managing computer systems. Using a narrative format, this essay will explore how my unique experiences helped shape my academic goals, professional goals, and my aspirations after graduation.

Introduction

My interest in technology began long before I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in information technology. Growing up in the early 2000s, the technology around me was constantly evolving, becoming more powerful, and increasing capabilities. Out of the different kinds of technology, computers and video games most interested me and played a big role in my childhood. At first, I enjoyed the entertainment that computers and video games provided me on a surface level. While the inner workings of computers interested me at the time, I did not realize that the interest could guide me to a career. Over time, my education and work experiences gave my beginning interest more direction. My journey through college allowed me to work on computers in a deeper way, expanding my understanding and my curiosity. I learned that I really enjoy tackling complex problems and coming up with solutions through completing several labs along with other hands-on assignments. These experiences have helped shape my narrative identity as someone who looks forward to building a career in information technology.

Early Interest in Technology

My experience with technology began at a very young age and sparked the curiosity I still have for it today. Like many others, my initial experience with technology came in the form of playing video games on gaming consoles. From an early age, my brothers and I would play video games on all sorts of gaming consoles like Xbox, Wii, Gamecube, and more. As I grew older I wanted to try PC gaming so that I could play the newest games at the highest quality. I was given my very first gaming computer when I was fourteen years old and that was the moment that my passion for technology really started. I would push the gaming computer to its limits by playing video games on high graphics settings and doing 3D animation. Eventually, after years of demanding high performance from my computer, it inevitably started having

problems. These problems, while frustrating at the time, helped develop my very early troubleshooting skills and drove me to become more curious about the inner workings of computers.

Beginning my College Education

At first, my educational path did not include information technology. Instead, I attended Tidewater Community College and earned an Associate of Science degree in General Studies. By choosing that major, I was able to give myself time in order to figure out what I really wanted to study in college. The general studies degree was perfect for me because not only did it give me time to decide what to study, but it also gave me exposure to a wide array of disciplines to choose from. After I graduated from Tidewater Community College, one of my friends attending Old Dominion University who majored in cybersecurity shared information with me about the program and what jobs the degree leads to. Equipped with the new information, it only made sense that I major in cybersecurity in order to grow my technical skills, curiosity, and learn how to protect computer systems. The coursework within the cybersecurity major has introduced me to several other disciplines within information technology like networking, digital forensics, system administration, and more. Through these different courses, I gained a new appreciation for all the different disciplines within information technology and how they play into one another. Beginning at ODU, I saw little beyond a computer and its internal parts. Through my time at ODU, I learned that computers are so much more than the individual system but are instead networks of complex technologies.

Different Disciplines

Through different courses at ODU, I've gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of information technology as a whole. The first course that I took in person at ODU, Linux for

Cybersecurity, exposed me to the Linux operating system for the first time. Not only did I learn how to operate within Linux, but I also learned how to use the operating system for cybersecurity means. Learning a whole new operating system was challenging, but was ultimately very rewarding as it broadened my perspective on how different operating systems work. The second course that had a great impact on my knowledge was Windows System Security and Management. The course, similar to Linux for Cybersecurity, taught me how to use the Windows operating system for security and management purposes. I learned how to manage user accounts and permissions through Active Directory in virtual Hyper-V environments. The third course that changed my perspective on information technology was Intro to Networking and Security. The course challenged me to think beyond the physical computer in front of me and instead think of all the communication that goes on behind the scenes. I learned about things like networks, routers, switches, IP addresses, subnets, and other networking technologies that showed me computers are a small part of a much larger environment. Networking remains one of the most interesting and complex topics I have studied to date. The last course that I would like to share is Digital Forensics. Digital Forensics was very interesting as it taught me how to find and analyze digital evidence left behind by cybercriminals. One of my favorite memories of that class was reconstructing a deleted image of LeBron James from a hard drive, quite literally bit by bit. These courses all came together to help shape my education and my aspirations for the future.

Looking Forward

When looking back at my academic and professional experiences, my path was anything but linear. My interest in information technology can be traced back all the way to the days when I would play video games with my brothers. College helped transform that interest into actual technical knowledge and allowed for my curiosity of the subject to grow. Working through

several different courses, I was able to be exposed to all sorts of different disciplines within information technology. While I feel I have come a long way, my narrative identity and my professional journey have really just begun. As I look to the future, I hope to get an opportunity to start working in information technology, specifically in an IT support role. By gaining hands-on experience in a professional setting, I hope to one day transition into cybersecurity and make an impact. Ultimately, my journey began with a simple love for video games and the technology they ran on. What started as an interest has become something I look forward to making a career out of. The experiences I have gained throughout college have helped me understand what I am capable of and what I am passionate about. Each experience along the way has added to my story as I look to begin my career in information technology.