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My Academic and Professional Career and Path

I am a cybersecurity major at Old Dominion University with one semester left after this current one. I do not currently have a job lined up for when I graduate in December, but I still have time to figure out what and where exactly I'll be when that time comes. I also have a minor in IT and have only two classes left to take in my minor. I am also just about done with my major courses. Because I only have one semester left after this one, my undergraduate career is almost over. I do not plan on doing graduate school immediately after I graduate with my BS in Cybersecurity, but I may eventually do graduate school if a company I work for or want to work for encourages me to.

Arlington

Early on in my life I knew that I would like to do something with computers or at least some kind of technology, I just didn't know exactly what yet. When I was in middle school, I chose to do the electives that involved computers or technology, one was called Tech Ed and the other was usually called typing by most students, but it had a different name. Tech Ed was more of a hands-on engineering like course while the other course involved using computers more. My freshman year of high school, I didn't take an elective that involved computers or technology because I wanted to take a sports marketing course. My freshman year of high school was at Yorktown High School in Arlington, VA.

Stafford

Right before my sophomore year of high school, I moved to Stafford, Virginia where I attended Mountain View High School. Mountain View was where I knew I wanted to do computer stuff instead of engineering. In the first semester of my sophomore year, I took an engineering course that turned into a technical drawing course because the teacher had retired a week or two before school started. I didn't enjoy that class too much and had a cybersecurity course that entire year as well which I enjoyed more and made me consider cybersecurity as an option for my future. Unfortunately, my cybersecurity course got cut a little short due to the Covid pandemic. I also took an elective in my first semester of sophomore year that was with Mr. Cerillo and I had a pretty good connection with him. The class that I took was a pretty basic technology class, but I wanted to take more classes with him because he made classes enjoyable and was a pretty cool guy.

My junior year of high school started on zoom for the entire first semester due to Covid, but most of the second semester was hybrid, so it was zoom then in-person every other day. My junior year was the year of electives for me. I took a programming class, a CIS (computer information systems) class, and the second level cybersecurity class. The programming class was a pretty easy class for me because it was pretty basic and I learned what I needed to very quickly. The CIS class was also very easy, it mostly dealt with learning Microsoft Word and Powerpoint which I was already pretty familiar with. The second level cybersecurity class was probably one of my most enjoyable classes all throughout high school. I learned a lot in this class and while some of it could be challenging, a lot of it was very fun. We had two things on top of our school work for the semester, one was a CTF and one was called brigante. These were fun because we had to solve things using our cybersecurity skills and knowledge. This class was with Mr. Cerillo.

The only technology related class that I took during my senior year of high school was AP Computer Science Principles. This class was somewhat easy except for the final project part for the AP course exam. I enjoyed this class pretty well as it was also with Mr. Cerillo. I passed the AP exam for this class and was given college credits for it. My senior year of high school was the most stressful and challenging year of high school for me, but it turned out to be worth it because it is because of this year that I will be graduating a semester early and will not have to pay an extra semester of tuition. I took three AP courses and a dual enrollment class with Germanna Community College that counted for both of my English credits in college, so I didn't have to take either of the writing English classes here at ODU. My senior year of high school accounted for basically one semester in college. Mr. Cerillo also had a handful of students from this class that included my brother and I that they used to go to the community college and take a certification exam, so we had a little while to study, I don't remember how many weeks we had, but it was the Comptia IT Fundamentals+ exam which was one that did not require much studying at all because it was very basic and easy. The reason the school had us do this was because they were offering that course the next school year, and wanted to test how it would work and they thought it went well, so I think they offered the course the next year, but I was no longer at the school, so I have no idea. Everyone that went to take that exam passed it which was great because we now all had a certification that we had a voucher for, so we didn't have to pay anything for it.

College Applications

When I started applying to colleges, I was applying as a computer science major because cybersecurity wasn't really an option for most schools and I'm not quite sure why I chose computer science over cybersecurity. The main reason I switched from computer science to

cybersecurity was because I knew I was more interested in cybersecurity as it was a more specific major and computer science was a very broad subject. Another thing that definitely helped was seeing on social media how stressful being a computer science major was. Out of the schools I applied to and got accepted to, only Old Dominion University had a cybersecurity program in its own school, some, but not all of the other schools had cybersecurity programs, but not in its own school like ODU. I made my decision to go to ODU before I switched my major, so I am lucky I chose ODU before switching because then I could have been stuck with computer science.

Old Dominion

When choosing housing at Old Dominion for my freshman year, I was lucky to be accepted into the Cybersecurity LLC (living learning community). This LLC was based in Owen's House which is the newest and nicest dorm on ODU's campus. Because I was in this LLC my freshman year, I took cybersecurity classes my first semester which not everyone is able to do because they have to get done with Gen Eds first. Taking those classes in my senior year of high school also benefited me in that way because I've taken cybersecurity major required courses every semester I've been at ODU. After my first year of taking cybersecurity classes at ODU, I knew I wanted to continue doing that. Sophomore year, I still had a few Gen Ed courses, but I took more cybersecurity classes than I did freshman year, and still knew that cybersecurity was what I wanted to do. Spring semester of my sophomore year was probably the most stressful because I had to balance that with being on my executive board of my fraternity and having a job as a Hardware Assembly Technician at IPConfigure. So far, my Junior year has been going well and I am looking to finish strong here. I've had some more hands-on classes with cybersecurity and am getting more confident that I'll be successful in the cybersecurity field once I get there.

My senior semester here will not feature any major requirements as I will be wrapping that up this semester and will be working on mainly my minor in my final semester.

IPConfigure

My Hardware Assembly Technician position at IPConfigure has taught me quite a bit about hardware which is the main reason I decided to take on a minor in IT. Because I had enough free credits remaining, I thought that taking a minor would be a good idea and IT seemed like a good one to do. My current position does not involve cybersecurity, but it is an IT job with a surveillance company that has full-time IT positions in IT support. Troubleshooting hardware is probably going to be the best skill I've learned from this job and internship and the main skill I will be able to use to my advantage in my future.