

My Journey to Cybersecurity

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Abstract

This essay shares the story of how I chose cybersecurity as my major and future career path. It goes through the experiences that shaped my decision, starting from high school and leading up to my college years and internship. I will also explain how challenges helped me grow and how my journey connects to ideas from course readings on narrative identity.

My Journey to Cybersecurity

When I think back to where this all began, I never expected to end up majoring in cybersecurity. Growing up my mother always told me that I was going to become a mechanical engineer, and I was interested in that, however technology has always been a constant interest in my life. This interest grew as I got older, but I didn't know what that really meant for my future. In high school, one of my social media platforms (Instagram) got hacked and it frustrated because I didn't understand how it could have happened. This got me curious about online security, because I wanted to see how someone was able to break into my account without me even noticing.

Starting my Path in College.

When I started college at Old Dominion University, I didn't immediately know cybersecurity was going to be my major. I thought about general computer science at first because it seemed like the safest route and where I could gain the most knowledge. Everything changed when I took my first cybersecurity class sophomore year. The professor talked about real-world cyberattacks, like ransomware and phishing, and led me to going down a rabbit hole. It really interested me that a weak password or a single click on the wrong email link could bring down a company. This same professor talked about real cyberattacks, how companies lost millions because of ransomware or how hackers use social engineering to trick people into giving up information. I couldn't believe how much responsibility and skill went into defending against these attacks.

When I started these classes, I remember it wasn't easy, many late nights of studying and learning new ways to improve. I stayed up so many nights on my computer setting up virtual machines for a ethical hacking class project. The first time I was able to pull off a ethical hacking assignment I was ecstatic. The small wins kept me motivated even when things got tough.

Internship Experience

The next big step in my journey was my internship. This internship taught me that cybersecurity isn't just about fixing computers, but its about protecting people and businesses. I worked with a team of Cybersecurity Analyst to monitor networks and respond to potential threats. One of the coolest parts was analyzing phishing emails and creating awareness for employees.

The internship showed me how connected cybersecurity is to other fields. For example, when creating training materials, I had to think about how people learn and what grabs their attention, which ties into education and psychology. This internship also opened my eyes even more, Cybersecurity isn't just technical but its also about people. You can have the best security systems in the world. But if someone clicks on the wrong link, it can bring the entire network down. Thats why educating employees and making security easy to understand is so important. I liked that part of the job because it showed me how communication skills matter just as much as technical skills.

This internship also gave me so much confidence. I wasn't just learning from textbooks anymore, I was solving real world problems and contributing to a team. It made me feel like I was on the right path and motivated me to keep going.

Facing Challenges and Growing From Them

I wish I could say the journey was smooth, but that is not true at all. One of the hardest classes I took was the networked system security class. It was packed with math, and honestly, I struggled a lot throughout it. There were times I wondered if I belonged in cybersecurity or rather college. Instead of giving up, I spent extra hours studying, getting help from my professors, and eventually I was able to pass. That experience taught me how to push through challenges instead of running from them. Looking back now those moments made me stronger, it proved I could handle setbacks and continue moving forward.

Looking at all these experiences together, I can see how they shaped who I am today. My story isn't just about learning cybersecurity skills; its about becoming someone who doesn't give up an who cares about protecting others. Cybersecurity isn't just a career for me, its part of my identity now.

I know the field is always changing, and that excited me. There will always be new threats and new technologies, which means I'll always be learning.

Who I Am Today

When I connect all these experiences together, I see a clear theme: I want to protect people in the digital world. That's become a huge part of my identity. I feel as if Cybersecurity isn't just a job for me, but a purpose. Right now I see myself becoming a Cybersecurity Engineer after graduating and one day I would like to lead my own cybersecurity team. I want to be in a position where I can make real decisions about how to keep organizations safe.

One thing I've learned is that cybersecurity isn't just about technology. It connects to psychology, education, and even law. For example, when you're designing security policies, you have to think about how people will react to them and how to make them easy to follow. That's why this field is so interesting to me, its technical, but it also involves understanding people.

The field is always changing, so I know I'll have to keep learning as I grow, but I'm excited about that. My story so far has been about curiosity, challenges, and growth, and I believe that I'll keep building on in the future.

Where I Am Now

As I get closer to graduation, I feel proud of how far I've come. When I started college, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but now I have a clear direction. I've gained not only technical skills but also problem-solving skills, communication skills, and confidence. Every challenge I faced taught me something valuable, and every success reminded me why I chose this path.

Looking back at the moment my account was hacked, I can see how a small event changed my entire life. At the time, it felt like an annoying problem, but now I realize it was the start of something much bigger. That's the funny thing about life; you don't always know which moments will matter the most until later.

Conclusion

Choosing cybersecurity as a career wasn't a straight path for me, but it happened through a mix of experiences, challenges, and opportunities. From getting hacked in high school to interning and working on real security problems, everything pushed me toward

this field. Looking ahead, I'm ready to take the next step and turn my passion into a life-long career. Along the way, I learned that success isn't about never failing, it's about not giving up when things get hard. If my story can inspire someone else who's trying to figure out their path, then that makes it even more meaningful.