

Career Reflection Statement

It all started in 9th grade when I took my first computer science course. We were taught about the basics of a computer and how it functions. At the end of that course, I was introduced to the basics of coding then to databases on Microsoft Access. Day by day, I started to despise the whole idea of dealing with computers, to the point where I was going to drop the course. But I am grateful to this day, that my father convinced me to finish it. Since I am the type of person to try everything, I attended workshops and classes for every major, none of which I ended up being interested in. By the end of 11th grade, I became very interested in cybersecurity, especially hacking. The year after, I took my first programming course, Java, and it was very satisfying to witness programs being developed.

I applied for the major computer science, and gladly got accepted in one of the top universities offering the program: Carnegie Mellon University. When I entered, I saw computer science as an applied field rather than a mathematical and algorithmic one, which didn't seem to be the case. When I did my first mathematical logic course, I was not really enjoying it, but I had in mind that I wanted to do cybersecurity. After learning more about the sub-field and the amount of mathematics involved in it, I decided that this wasn't what I was planning to do.

By the end of my freshman year, I started to consult information systems (IS) students and alumni about their major. As time passed, I found out that IS was what I was looking for: programming and development. A month later, I decided that it was finally time to file my transfer application for the information systems major.

At the current moment, I am doing my first information systems course. This course introduces us to the various content areas of IS: applied informatics, social and global, user-centered information design, computing and information systems and technology (CIS and technology). Since I always loved to do programming even in my free time, I chose CIS and technology to be my main content area. Additionally, I am also planning on doing the content area user-centered information design. Acquiring knowledge in those areas allows me to look forward to career opportunities in web development, application design, and/or data security.

Since CIS and technology is my goal, I will have to acquire as much knowledge in programming. I already took a Python language course, a C language course which also included the Bash Command language, and now I am utilizing my time on developing my frontend knowledge through HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Additionally, next year I will do a database course using PHP and an application and web development course using Ruby. And for personal interest, I will do an embedded systems course, which will allow me to be educated more about how hardware meets software. All those courses will allow me to have a well-structured knowledge about front and backend development. When I look back, I see that this wouldn't have been achievable without being part of Carnegie Mellon University.

As a start, I currently work as an IT assistant for the information technology department on-campus. For the next summer, I promised that I and the other assistants will be working on the information technology website as a project. The reason that I volunteered to do this project is that the website contains several dead links which makes it inconvenient for visitors to find a solution for their inquiry.

In addition to studying and working, I participate in clubs that involve programming and idea-pitching competitions (Carnegie Apps and Computing Club). Those allow me to strengthen my teamwork, communication, and innovation abilities. Additionally, I strongly believe that one day, one of those ideas will be life-changing.

Throughout those experiences, there were several hurdles and bumps that I encountered. The first was transitioning from high school to university: people are different, the work ethic is different, goals are different, everything is just different. I was able to adapt to all the following, except for the work ethic one. I found time management very difficult to achieve, especially with all the distractions in university along with its dense course load. Unfortunately, this has led to me not maintaining a high academic standard when it was possible. As much as this was an awful thing to go through, I am grateful that it happened as it was a wake-up call for me. If there is one thing that I learned from this, it is that to set my priorities straight, to the point where I am ready to isolate myself if I had to complete work.

With every career path, comes its risk. But with information systems, the risk increases at an exponential level, especially if I take the information security path. Preserving peoples' privacy is an extremely risky task that could lead to very high costs if the smallest breach occurs. Other than the career itself, I fear that I would go back to the habit of being easily distracted.

As much as the first hurdle is inevitable, the best way to deal with it would be through trying to penetrate your own system yourself. And for every time you penetrate it, you record down the vulnerabilities and patch them. But for the latter obstacle, it is just the best to set goals. Those goals could be short-term ones like "I have to complete those tasks to go out with my friends" or long-term ones such as "I have to work my best to get a promotion".

Of course, to set those goals, you must start by doing what you love. Otherwise, you will feel demotivated and will look for the smallest distraction to take you away from work. Additionally, you will have no long-term goals as you wouldn't care much about what you do. This has been one of the reasons I decided to take the information systems path rather than the computer science one. I saw that I would be overloaded with courses that I have little to no interest in. Now in information systems, I am really enjoying what I do daily.

Now, I am working on a project that has the potential to target one of the problems students face in university: not knowing their current academic standing. After I complete this project, I will work with my professor on researching self-debugging software. All of those opportunities allow me to discover new tools daily that will help me in the long run.