

Reflective Essay

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## **Introduction**

As a soon-to-be graduate of Old Dominion University's Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program, I have developed a balanced set of technical, analytical, and communication skills through coursework, professional work, and an internship experience. The interdisciplinary approach of my program combined technical courses in cybersecurity and networking with classes in communication, ethics, and problem-solving, preparing me to handle complex challenges from multiple perspectives.

Throughout my time at ODU, I learned how different disciplines contribute to solving cybersecurity related and organizational challenges. Technical courses sharpened my problem-solving and analytical skills, while humanities courses like philosophy encouraged me to think critically about the broader implications of decisions. Communication focused courses gave me the confidence to present ideas clearly and adapt my style to different audiences. This variety of learning experiences taught me to be adaptable, resourceful, and open to new perspectives, which is essential in the fast-changing cybersecurity industry.

This reflective essay focuses on three marketable skills I have cultivated: **Technical Support, CompTIA Security+ CE 701 Knowledge, and Professional Communication**. Each skill is supported by three artifacts that demonstrate my growth and readiness for a career as an Information Security Analyst. The selected artifacts come from academic projects, certification preparation, internship achievements, and professional experiences. Together, they showcase my ability to solve problems, apply industry best practices, and communicate effectively in technical and professional environments.

## **Technical Support**

Providing effective technical support is a cornerstone skill for my future career. I have refined this skill through academic coursework and my internship at Intellidyne LLC.

### **Artifact 1 IT 416: Network Server Configuration and Administration**

Server configuration project. In this advanced course, I configured a Windows Server environment by creating user accounts, managing storage, implementing group policies, and setting up access control lists (ACLs). I also configured backup and disaster recovery systems to protect organizational data. This project demonstrated my ability to plan, implement, and manage secure server environments in line with industry standards.

### **Artifact 2 Troubleshooting portfolio compiled during my Internship at Intellidyne LLC**

During my internship, I provided Tier 1 Help Desk support to government end-users, addressing issues such as Microsoft 365 errors, VPN connectivity failures, BIOS update requirements, and Active Directory account creation. One notable example was resolving a high-priority VPN outage for a senior executive by diagnosing authentication token issues, resetting multi-factor authentication, and verifying network routing. In addition to resolving technical issues, I learned the importance of detailed documentation in each ticket, which ensures accurate communication between team members and creates a reliable record for future troubleshooting.

### **Artifact 3 CYSE 250: Basic Cybersecurity Programming and Networking.**

A network diagnostic lab. This assignment required writing scripts to test network connectivity and analyze packet transmission. It simulated scenarios where network latency or configuration errors were present, and I used systematic troubleshooting to locate and fix the problem. The lab

reinforced both my technical problem-solving process and my understanding of network protocols.

### **CompTIA Security+ CE 701 Knowledge**

The second skill is my Security+ CE 701 knowledge, which combines certification-level understanding with hands-on applications learned through academic courses.

#### **Artifact 1 CS 464/564: Networked Systems Security.**

A wireless security assessment. This project involved securing a test wireless network by enabling WPA2 encryption, implementing MAC address filtering, and disabling insecure protocols. I documented vulnerabilities, recommended remediation steps, and provided evidence-based reasoning aligned with Security+ objectives on network security and authentication controls.

#### **Artifact 2 CYSE 300: Introduction to Cybersecurity.**

I evaluated a fictional small business, identifying physical, network, and software vulnerabilities, then proposed layered security measures. The report included a basic cost-benefit analysis for security investments. This assignment connected directly to Security+ domains involving risk management, incident prevention, and business continuity planning.

#### **Artifact 3 IT 315: Introduction to Networking and Security.**

A network architecture security proposal. Working from a given network diagram, I recommended segmentation, firewall placement, intrusion detection systems, and secure

protocols. This proposal demonstrated my ability to integrate Security+ knowledge with network design principles to build a more resilient infrastructure.

### **Professional Communication**

The third skill, professional communication, has been strengthened by coursework and professional experiences that improved my speaking, writing, and interpersonal abilities.

#### **Artifact 1 COMM 101R: Public Speaking**

Presentation assignment where I delivered speeches in multiple formats, focusing on improvised speaking. This class significantly improved my ability to organize ideas, articulate them clearly, and maintain a steady speaking cadence. Through repeated practice and constructive feedback, I gained confidence in speaking to an audience, learned to manage pacing effectively, and developed the ability to use tone and emphasis to engage listeners.

#### **Artifact 2 PHIL 230E: Introduction to Ethics.**

Ethical case analysis, in this course, I explored the ideas of various philosophers and studied how they approached questions of morality and human behavior. By engaging with perspectives such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, I learned to examine issues from multiple viewpoints rather than relying solely on my own assumptions. This process strengthened my ability to think critically, recognize the reasoning behind different opinions, and develop well-rounded arguments. It also taught me the importance of understanding and respecting perspectives that differ from my own.

#### **Artifact 3 Sales and Project Management**

My professional background in sales, I learned how to listen actively to client needs, tailor solutions, and build long-term relationships. As a project manager, I coordinated multiple teams, set milestones, and communicated progress to stakeholders. These roles enhanced my interpersonal skills, teaching me how to collaborate across departments, manage expectations, and resolve conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

The skills and artifacts presented in this essay demonstrate my readiness to enter the cybersecurity field as an Information Security Analyst. Technical Support shows my ability to troubleshoot complex issues and maintain system functionality. Security+ CE 701 Knowledge reflects my grasp of industry's best practices and my ability to apply them in real-world settings. Professional Communication highlights my capacity to explain ideas clearly, speak confidently, and understand diverse perspectives.

The interdisciplinary nature of my degree has been essential in developing these abilities. Technical courses taught me the foundations of security and networking, while communication and ethics courses strengthened my ability to address human and organizational factors. As Reynolds and Davis (2014) note, portfolios are valuable tools for connecting diverse experiences into a coherent professional identity. Likewise, Nguyen (2013) emphasizes that ePortfolios serve as living documents that evolve alongside one's career, making them ideal for showcasing both technical skills and reflective learning.

As I transition from student to professional, I will continue to expand my knowledge, adapt to emerging challenges, and maintain the strong communication skills that allow me to connect

with others. I also recognize that technology will continue to evolve rapidly, and my ability to learn new tools, adjust to changing environments, and approach problems with an open mind will be key to my success. The skills I have developed at Old Dominion University, supported by my internship and work experiences, will serve as the foundation for a successful and meaningful career.

## References

Nguyen, C. F. (2013). *The ePortfolio as a living portal: A medium for student learning, identity, and assessment*. Stanford University.

Reynolds, C., & Davis, J. (2014). *Portfolio keeping: A guide for students*. Bedford/St. Martin's.