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IDH 3701

February 6, 2023

My Story Paper

When I was in high school, I took an interest in cybersecurity after taking a few computer science courses. I joined the CyberPatriot team, which participated in the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition, the nation's largest cyber defense competition. As a senior, I led the team to a state championship and regional third place. Along with being in CyberPatriot, I earned "Expert Level" industry certifications from Microsoft in Word and Excel. That experience helped me decide I wanted to do something in cybersecurity and computer science as a career.

I am excited about the career I am pursuing. Every day I see the pain caused by the cyber-attacks that occur in the United States as well as globally. I believe it is one of the jobs of the FBI or the NSA to try and end some of that pain, and I want to be a part of that effort. I am in the process to hopefully intern at one of these two agencies this summer to help me turn that goal into a reality.

Our world today is full of threats; one of the biggest is online threats to just about everything. Daily you hear about cyber threats against businesses, cities, people, and, of course, our nation itself. National defense comes in many forms, and one of those is cybersecurity. Working with the FBI or the NSA will put me on the frontlines of that defense.

With my goal of working in the cybersecurity industry, the University of West Florida was a natural fit.

With the increase in the frequency of cyberattacks, highly skilled analysts are required to create creative defenses against attacks on vital systems. The UWF cybersecurity curriculum

develops students' analytical thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. With the major at UWF, I have the chance to study cybersecurity-related topics in the lab and participate in regional cyber competitions.

The National Security Agency (NSA) has named UWF a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education. The Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC) of ABET has granted accreditation to the UWF B.S. in Cybersecurity program.

The test that surprised me the most was the color test. I am fairly calculated in what I do and how I work, and the career I am looking at demands it. My secondary color was orange, which seems to be the opposite of my primary color, gold. I agree with the general descriptions for gold, but the orange is what surprised me. Oranges are spontaneous and impulsive risk-takers, which is the opposite of what I believe I am.

I was not very surprised by the results of the College Board test. I took the same test as a sophomore in high school, and it has not been updated since then. There was only one question relating to computers in any form, and most of the sciences were working in a lab or on an experiment, meaning that the careers the test outputs are limited. They were not accurate in my case because the only way to get a computer-based career (programming, analyst, etc.) was to say you want to work with math every day, which is not true in most computer-based careers.

During my freshman year, I was selected to be part of the Collegiate Cyber Defense (CCDC) and Collegiate Penetration Testing (CPTC) competition teams here at UWF. Representing UWF at competitions has been an honor. Though we qualified for the World Championships for CPTC in January 2022 at RIT in Rochester, I was unable to travel for the event. Later in the year, we traveled to Atlanta to participate in the Regional CCDC competition at Kennesaw State University. This coming year, I have been selected to be a Cybersecurity

program ambassador, helping promote the program at West Florida. Both of these will help me meet new people with a common interest in cybersecurity. Both of these give me an easy common icebreaker to help me introduce myself to people.

I have always taken my studies seriously. Finding classes and instructors that challenge me to work harder and intellectually push me to be my best. Throughout high school, I always took honors, AP, and dual-enrollment courses. I came to UWF with 40 college credit hours from the dual-enrollment courses and courses I took on my own at Seminole State College, so being in the Kugelman Honors Program was a natural fit for me when I enrolled. The UWF website says it best about the program: “Honors students have access to special classes designed for high-achieving students who enjoy intellectual challenges.” The Honors seminar allows me to explore different ways to approach and think about different things. This will help me as I move forward with my goal of being in the cybersecurity and computer science profession. Especially in the cybersecurity field, one has to be able to look at problems from all angles. The honors program will help me develop those abilities in “cross-disciplinary thinking and to develop multimodal problem-solving skills” that are vital in cybersecurity or computer science.