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IDS 493 Capstone Reflection

Your Starting Point

When I first began attending ODU, I was a biochemistry major; however, I quickly discovered that my passions were elsewhere during my first semester. From that, I discovered Game Studies & Design, which opened my eyes to possibilities I thought weren't achievable. I had always been locked into doing something STEM-related because it had been pushed on me my entire life. After swapping majors, I had to take a communication course, which I quickly discovered was something I was passionate about. I decided to double major in Game Studies & Design and Communication and in Media Studies. From that point on, I have felt like I found something I am genuinely passionate about and want to build a career around, rather than putting myself in a position where I would be unhappy for the rest of my life. Finding something I feel confident in has helped me explore opportunities and careers I hadn't considered before, and I am glad to have ended up where I am today.

A lot of my goals were different back then, as I was focused on pursuing a career in environmental toxicology. While I still think it's important, I don't think I could truly see myself in that career. I was so focused on academic success, and I still am, but I feel I have more passion for what I produce in my courses now than before. A lot of the work I did back then was very methodical, and I wasn't creating meaningful relationships with what I was learning, unlike what

I do now. I realized that I did feel pressured into a STEM career, but when I took courses that I actually enjoyed and learned from, I understood that I was in the right place for my future.

I switched to Game Studies & Design in the Spring 2022 semester and ultimately decided to double major in the Fall 2023. As a result, I had to go through a lot of changes during this timeframe while also attempting to graduate on time. Additionally, as a commuter student who works alongside school, I have been managing my time throughout my college journey. It was difficult at times, as I had to work late nights to get tasks done while juggling my academics, social life, personal life, and work life throughout my four years at ODU. I was also entering a new environment later on, so I didn't know many people in my major and had to try to make connections, even though others had already met beforehand.

The Journey

Something that shaped my growth the most during my endeavors was my internship at Studio Center. While there, I got to learn about media production and how things worked behind the scenes, as well as hone my own skills. I gained a better understanding of graphic design and content creation during my time in the social media department. Additionally, it gave me a place to really explore my options for the future, as I discovered a multitude of careers that I can pursue with my majors revolving around media production rather than only focusing on game design.

Another course that really shaped my growth is my Media Marketing & Promotions course. I took this course as an applied theories credit for my Communication major. However, I discovered that it is mainly taken by Strategic Communication majors, which is something I don't have a background in, making me nervous. However, through the course, I learned a lot of valuable information, such as marketing strategies, how to apply them to an organization, and

how to properly present these ideas through my coursework. On top of that, I got to base information from lectures and readings on real-world examples, something that helped me better connect what I was learning.

For both of these experiences, I was very out of my comfort zone, applying new skills in an unfamiliar setting. I had not worked in a professional environment such as Studio Center, so I was nervous about what would be expected of me. For my Media Marketing and Promotion course, I had never worked with this material before, so I struggled to learn and understand the concepts we were going over. However, I was able to quickly find my groove at work for both of these experiences after a few weeks.

At Studio Center, I was receiving feedback from my supervisors and building connections with other interns and employees there. They made the experience more welcoming and a place where I could really learn more about the industry.

My Media Marketing and Promotion course covered many of the basics I need to know before delving into the details of what would be discussed and assigned. I asked questions about work I was confused about and looked at examples to help me understand topics and assignments better. Overall, I think this course was the one I learned the most from during my time at ODU.

The competencies I have developed the most through my experiences are professionalism and teamwork. These are tasks that I hadn't been assigned much in my academic career, so practicing them during my internship was invaluable. I got to see how I could work with different departments to create new content, graphics, videos, and more, whether with interns or employees. Additionally, I gained experience in my first professional office setting, something I

hadn't done before. I know what is expected of me in the workplace after my internship at Studio Center, something that I wouldn't have learned elsewhere.

Meaning-Making

Looking at my portfolio, I have curated my artifacts and reflections to align with my career aspirations in the media industries as well as game design and development. I have selected coursework and experiences from both majors to show off my skills in both departments and how they can work together, depending on my career choice. I emphasize my creative works, such as game prototypes, graphics, and content creation, while also including research-based experiences, like the research proposal I did for a course.

These artifacts and reflections relate to my goals professionally, as I am seeking a career in a creative field that requires me to demonstrate my skills. By including these in my portfolio, employers can see what I am capable of doing and what I have learned to determine if I am the right person for the job. Additionally, the projects, essays, experiences, and more all correlate to my own personal interests and values. I have had a lot of freedom to explore topics I enjoy in my majors and to interchangeably use what I have learned in both to create practical work to showcase.

One of the things that stands out to me the most is my internship at Studio Center and the reflection I did at the end of it. I created a separate page for my entire reflection, including links to the work I did and where I appeared. Also, I had photos from my experience and reflected on the skills and knowledge I gained, as well as my professional goals after graduation. I also discuss how it has shaped my passions and the new career paths I discovered during my time interning at Studio Center.

Looking Forward

A lot of the work I have done can be applied to professional pursuits, especially in my career. I will graduate in the Fall 2025 semester, meaning I will begin applying for jobs and apprenticeships soon to further hone my skills in the industries I am interested in. I have learned skills such as graphic design, coding, writing, marketing, analysis, and more that will help me in my career. With these skills, I have an abundance of opportunities to pursue, whether by exploring the analytical side of media and gaming or taking a creative route. I am confident that I will succeed in both choices.

There are still some skills that I want to hone. Currently, I am practicing my 3D modeling skills using Blender and Maya, both of which are commonly used in the gaming industry for designing and developing new games. Having a skill with tangible evidence will benefit my job applications, and showcasing my portfolio will further prove my capability. Additionally, I plan to learn more coding languages beyond those I am familiar with, as they are often required in the gaming industry to secure a job. I will likely get certifications in software I am familiar with and take courses on those I want to learn more about for future learning. I plan to continue updating my portfolio as I gain new skills and knowledge, building on my existing experiences. It will provide me with more opportunities to showcase my skills and who I am to potential employers. I will likely create a tab for my own personal projects and things that I have learned outside of education to show that I continue to learn even after graduation.

The ePortfolio Experience

Through my ePortfolio experience, I have learned new skills as I have progressed through the course. I have a deeper understanding of how reflection on coursework is essential not only for me, but also for employers to see. Through this, they will be able to understand what I did,

what I learned, and evidence of growth in the artifacts that I have shown. Adding a reflection also provides background on the work I have completed and explains why it matters to my future goals. My projects were something I needed to work on before starting the course; however, I have provided a comprehensive overview of each project I chose to include in my portfolio. I am especially proud of my internship page and my game prototypes, as they showcase the most artifacts and skills I have learned during my experience at ODU and professionally. Most of the skills I highlighted in my portfolio come from these experiences, as I was placed in new environments and adapted while learning new information, skills, and knowledge.

Building a reflective portfolio has helped me better articulate my skills by relating them to my professional identity. Before, I didn't have much about my own goals and aspirations on my page, as it was more of an overall overview of who I am, rather than discussing my future goals. Additionally, I wanted to highlight my passions, especially in game design, as that is my major. I aimed to showcase this through my chosen projects, skills, and more.

Based on my experience, it is crucial to understand that when creating a portfolio, it should reflect me and align with my career goals, rather than being general with the information I include. Reflection on the projects will show employers that you care about your work and can properly articulate what you did and learned. Including struggles that you overcame is also incredibly important, as it shows problem-solving skills and how you improved from that experience.

I plan to maintain my portfolio after graduation, as it is a good way to demonstrate my skills to employers. Many of the jobs I want to pursue require a portfolio that showcases my skills. Since I have developed mine here, I would like to continue using and updating it over time. I will create a separate tab to differentiate projects I work on outside of my educational

experience. Additionally, I will likely add a tab for any certifications that I complete. Doing this will ensure that my information is up to date and reflects my skills.