Dr. Aaron Koehl

7 December 16

Capstone Reflection

This semester has provided me with an experience that readily prepared me for the work force. Ever since this project, my confidence in myself has been unwavering when it comes to any type of work. The lessons learned, whether it be learning how to properly utilize a MySQL database along with PHP, or in terms of work load necessary to meet a deadline. I now understand I can do what is necessary no matter the project and timeline.

Going into the College Social Forum Mobile App (CSFMA), I had very little experience with PHP and MySQL. It was the first time I would be creating everything from scratch. A great deal of research was done prior to and during this project. PHP mannerisms and syntax was quite difficult for me to become accustom to at first. It is nothing like any of the other languages we are focused on throughout my school career. I learn from example, therefore I utilized examples of the commands being executed. The official PHP website was one of, if not the most helpful tool I discovered during this project. There were countless times I would search on that website for specific methods and read the entire page multiple times. Understanding parameter binding and how to prepare queries so that I may dynamically insert the parameters into the functions was a great experience. This project relying on the database for every single activity resulted in us developing 16 PHP scripts. Since we relied so heavily on one connection and methods we determined a central file with all functions that interact with the database would better suit our needs rather than opening a connection every script. It provided us with a centralized location to troubleshoot and determine where issue was coming from a lot more easily. Additionally, removing the chance of inconsistencies when trying to connect to the database. Another problem when first working with PHP, was understanding how to properly troubleshoot. This is where you came in Dr. Koehl, utilizing print statements allowed us to understand if information was being transferred properly. Little did we know though that print statements also disrupt JSON encoding. Fortunately, after a session with you and some laughs we resolved this blocker. Ultimately, PHP was the main deciding factor in slowing down the project. Combined with my laptop dying, MySQL database crashing, it was not too hectic of a time. If anything, it has now taught me to back up everything, even if it is in its infancy. It was just situationally, I ended up doing most of the backend work at first. My computer was the only one fast enough to consistently test the code utilizing and emulator. Eventually we acquired an android device and I could educate Arya on PHP and we could check each other when working on the scripts in an extreme programming style.

This provided me a sense of accountability in terms of setting up a schedule to timely work on the project. It showed me with a proper understanding and after some trial and error I can very much so be successful in the work force. Prior to this project I wish I went through a crash course, whether it be a YouTube series, or the W3schools course on PHP, I think it would have helped immensely. That or the database course provided here at CNU. I am not discouraged by any project that comes my way, especially one where it may rely heavily on putting extra time to understand the ins and outs. One of the most satisfying moments in my academic career, so thank you Dr. Koehl. The feedback from the career fair was astoundingly positive.