As I near the completion of my Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science with a concentration in Software Engineering, I find myself reflecting on how far I have come and how much more there is to learn. The program has laid a foundational base of knowledge that has allowed me to understand the breadth of the computer science field. However, it has also shown me just how deep each area goes and how much time and hands-on experience is still needed to truly master it.

Completing coursework at an accelerated pace, two courses every two months for two years, gave me exposure to many concepts, tools, and programming languages. While this rapid progression felt like a “shotgun blast” of information, it helped me explore a wide variety of domains including software engineering, databases, data structures and algorithms, security, and web development. Every class built upon my understanding of what it means to work as a developer, an engineer, and a problem solver.

Though I successfully completed every project, I recognize that many of them came with detailed instructions and scaffolding. I was able to follow these and produce working solutions, but I don’t yet feel fully confident that I could build similar systems from scratch without support. This realization has motivated me to continue my education independently. I am currently dedicating time to improving my fluency in data structures and algorithms, which I understand to be essential for both technical interviews and real-world software development. Mastery in this area will boost my confidence and strengthen my technical foundation.

In terms of collaboration in a team environment, most of my experience comes from outside the computer science field. I spent 15 years in the automotive industry, where I worked in team-based settings and took on managerial roles. These experiences taught me how to work efficiently with others, communicate effectively under pressure, and prioritize tasks which is a skill set that translates well to tech teams even though I haven’t yet had formal experience coding with a group.

Communicating with stakeholders is another area where I lack direct experience. However, my prior role in service management required translating technical jargon into clear information for customers which should be a transferable skill that will be helpful when communicating technical ideas to non-technical stakeholders in future roles.

My exposure to software engineering and databases was often brief but valuable. I built CRUD applications, interacted with MongoDB and Mongoose, and implemented RESTful APIs. While I followed best practices like MVC architecture and schema validation in class, I’m aware that real-world software engineering requires deeper fluency with design patterns, scalability, testing, and DevOps workflows. I plan to gain more hands-on practice through personal projects and open-source contributions.

The area I still find most intimidating is security. Topics like encryption, secure authentication, and protecting web applications from common vulnerabilities feel complex and high-stakes. However, I also recognize the critical importance of this area, especially as software continues to integrate with sensitive user data and infrastructure. My respect for security has grown immensely during the program and I intend to focus more effort in this space moving forward.

The artifacts I have included in my portfolio serve to demonstrate my progression throughout the Computer Science program. Each one reflects not only technical skill but also problem-solving approaches, logical thinking, and a growing confidence in building real applications. Together, they cover a range of domains including front-end and back-end development, schema validation, algorithms, MongoDB integration, and testing.

These projects are representative of the kind of work I want to continue doing and improving upon. While the program gave me the structured opportunities to develop them, I now seek unstructured, real-world challenges to further deepen those skills. My portfolio is a snapshot of where I am today and a promise of the direction I’m going.

Overall, the Computer Science program has given me the tools to begin my career, and my self-assessment is an acknowledgment of the growth I’ve achieved and the growth I still seek. I’m eager to enter the software engineering field and to continue building, learning, and contributing as I gain more experience and sharpen my technical abilities.