Iowa State has done a good job of preparing me for the work place in several areas. I have taken courses that emphasize best practices such as Design Patterns. I have also been challenged in several classes like Algorithms, and the processes and steps to tackle tough problems. Courses such as Software Requirements Engineering have emphasized the real world impact that engineering can have. Specifically, that course did a good job of emphasizing solving the correct problem, and making sure our projects fulfil a specific purpose, whether that's for a particular client or a more general audience.

On the subject of group projects, Iowa State has had several classes that emphasize and encourage group activity. These courses ranged from engineering to English to math, and all have had various ranges of success. Because collaboration is emphasized so strongly, I've had several opportunities to work with peers that I enjoyed and more importantly did not enjoy working with. While not always comfortable, conflict resolution is a skill, and one that both my course work and extra-curricular involvement with the Kappa Sigma Fraternity has taught me. Understanding how to work with people that I don't necessarily agree with or identify with is easily one of the most important things I have learned in my time at Iowa State.

One thing I have done outside of my Engineering degree is pursue a History Minor. My focus has been modern world history, with an emphasis on U.S. history. I think it's extremely important as an engineer to have a realistic world view when addressing contemporary issues. There are several software and cultural concerns in modern times, and understanding the nature of international relationships and cultures is a skill that not many engineers have. My software requirements engineering course told us of many horror stories where engineers would include culturally insensitive material in their product, sometimes costing the company the contract. Having engineers aware of these potential red flags is important ethically, and for the company.

Research has been a subject that Iowa State has not necessarily emphasized as well as they could have. In my experience, many of the lower-level classes discourage using outside information. This makes sense when learning the basics of programming, but several higher-level classes require us to know information that is not covered in previous courses. For example, I have learned how to do research from my work. Iowa State never taught me about web applications, html, or javascript, even though several higher-level courses (and a ridiculously large amount of industry professionals) expect us to understand these topics. Knowing how to research is a skill, and it's one I learned from my work experience, not Iowa State.

Outside of my course work, I have been involved with the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. It is the largest Greek letter fraternity in North America. In my time, I became involved very heavily within the leadership of the house. I had a direct hand in growing our chapter from a 15 man chapter to a healthy 50+ man chapter. I spent 3 semesters on the executive committee, most notably as the Vice President in the Spring of 2013. During this time, I worked directly with committee chairs

organizing all of the events that our chapter ran for the semester. The fraternity did not have the best effect on my grades, but I really came out of my shell and grew as a person during my time there. I learned a lot about respect, specifically how to earn it; I firmly believe respect is earned, not demanded or awarded. Overall, my experience with the fraternity has been an exceptional one. I've met an extremely diverse assortment of people that I will care about for the rest of my life.

Nothing is perfect however. If there were some things I could change. In particular, I never really was challenged in high-school. When I reached college, I didn't understand "how to learn". Studying was a challenge for me, especially when learning mathematical subjects. I've gotten much better, but I had to re-take several math courses at Iowa State. I've come to the conclusion that I never really asked for help, and in my early college years I was extremely stubborn or proud when met with a topic I struggled to understand. If I could teach my younger self that it's okay to ask for help, I would. Because of this stubbornness, I was academically dismissed after Spring 2014. Thankfully, I had the opportunity to return and was reinstated in the Spring of 2015. I took courses at community college in my time off, and spent a lot of time reflecting on what went wrong. Upon my return, I got a job with Iowa State's ITS, and have managed to keep a respectable GPA for holding a part time job the entire time since my reinstatement.

In conclusion, my time at Iowa State has been a good one. I know I have grown tremendously as a person. Sometimes I felt like Iowa State was a machine designed to chew me up and spit me out, but these trials helped me realize it was me that needed to change, and I have. Going back to school was a large risk that has put me in considerable debt, but I'm glad to see it paying off, and I anxiously await graduation. I know I have the world experience and technical knowledge to succeed in the future, and look forward to it not with trepidation, but with excitement.