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Journal Report

Self-Reflection

At the beginning of this semester I felt inspired and I would conquer everything this semester had in store for me. I had never taken 17 credits before, but because 2 of those credits were first block classes I figured the semester would only get easier for me. In this class in particular I was really thinking I would finally figure everything out because

I had taken this class once before, but I wasn’t really motivated and didn’t get a lot passed off. Last time I took this course I took it in class and felt very verbally abused by the teacher. Brother Larsen has impressed me with his very positive and encouraging attitude while also answering questions without sounding condescending.

Nevertheless, as the weeks went on and I still struggled to find all the time I needed to commit to this class I felt hopeless and was ready to give up on the course again. Thankfully, I have a stellar team mate, whom I give all credit for me getting my head back in the class. I helped him at the start with getting git set up and getting going on doing some of the code, but he really helped me to start enjoying the class and learning about Java. He helped me understand a great deal about how I can get coding topics done and continually encouraged me, especially over the last month, the give the class on last sprint to try passing everything off.

Throughout the last month, I have worked very hard, including spending over 20 hours each weekend for a couple of weekends on trying to get code ready for Brother Larsen to look at. His encouragement in each email was very meaningful and encouraging while still giving me what I needed to improve my code to the point I could get it passed off.

Something really cool has happened over these past few weeks from working so hard on trying to learn everything for this class. I am actually thinking I might want to give being a developer a try. I have been dead set on going into networking and security since I first came to college, and I thought my first Java class was the worst. I never thought I’d be able to understand it. While doing Junit, I actually learned that I like writing testing code. I’ve explored how to use it to test code for a little text-based rpg I started about 6 months ago.

I feel the biggest thing I’ve learned throughout this class is, as I’ve explained, that no matter hard life gets, the only way you fail is if you quit trying. Thankfully, there are people all around that will help and encourage you. Brother Larsen sent me a nice email sympathizing with me about how it’s difficult to have children while in school. I really feel that Brother Larsen and Casey (Team Member) have been part of this class experience for me so I could learn that lesson. I have the opportunity to give this another go next semester while working a fulltime internship.

Another big thing I’ve learned is that programming with a purpose is actually quite fun! I have a hard time trying to just sit down and program something because I don’t feel like I have anything worthwhile to program. With this class, instead of programming a specific program I worked on programming around a specific topic. That is how this class is set up to help us learn. For example, spending time learning how Collections work while using the tools in Java to manipulate those different collections was vastly more fulfilling to me than reading through other people’s blogs looking for a program to try to replicate. There is nothing wrong with doing that, and I’ve done that a lot while trying to learn Python, but taking a specific topic, then just coding things around that topic helped a lot more with learning how it works and giving an idea on how it can be implemented into different projects.

Looking over what I’ve explained already and thinking back on the semester, I had some really good weeks and some weeks I was pathetically week. This class, my teammates, my wife, and my instructor have been a great source of strength and support for me. I’m grateful for them. I feel that coming out of this class now, especially compared to how I was feeling a couple weeks ago, I am ready to learn about new tools to put in my toolbox and become the problem solver this class is aiming students to become.