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IT FND 100 A

Final Assignment

# Foundations of Programming: Python - Lessons Learned

## Introduction

In this write-up, I will be giving a high-level overview of what I have learned over the past nine weeks in our Foundations of Programming - Python course. I will also discuss the reasoning behind my enrollment in the class, my experience with the course, and where I plan to take my knowledge gained about Python.

## Personal Background with Python

Before enrolling in Foundations of Programming - Python, I had no real knowledge of what Python was, aside from being a programming language. When I was attending Central Washington University over a decade ago to get my Bachelor of Science degree in IT, Python was a new language that was just emerging online. I remembered classmates asking about the language during programming courses and our professors said it wasn’t a relevant language in the business world. Things sure have changed since then.

My interest in learning the language was deeply rooted in my desire to join a team of data analysts I had previously interviewed with that used Python, SQL, Django, and R. The supervisor of the team recommended I pursue the Professional and Continuing Education (P&CE) program through University of Washington (UW). I decided pursuing the program would be a good option for me, regardless of whether I joined the team of data analysts or stayed in my current position.

## Challenges

I have friends and colleagues tell me that Python is a great language to learn because it’s easy to use. Well, I disagree with them and have told them so. I understand that for many programmers, Python is an intuitive and easily navigable language because it is so linguistic in nature. I can see the added benefit to users of Python as well that aren’t developers. This linguistic base makes interacting with the language more user-friendly, which is a great feature and allows Python to be applied to multiple user bases. Ironically, this linguistic base is what made learning the language more difficult for me because languages like SQL and HTML come more naturally to me.

Learning online with the weekly lecture and independent learning was not a big challenge for me. I am independent, driven, and capable of staying on task. I enjoy the flexibility UW’s online courses provide, especially given that work full time. However, I did struggle with learning this language a lot and watching videos/reading articles online didn’t help me as well as I had hoped. I believe a more traditional approach with learning Python would have been beneficial for me.

## Accomplishments

By far, my greatest accomplishment with this course is that I have learned enough about Python to have a good contextual understanding of what it is and how it works. I quite enjoyed learning how to program simpler scripts to perform certain tasks and would use that functionality again the future. While I struggled with more complex scripts and breaking tasks apart in functions, I feel comfortable enough with my general understanding that I’ll be able to apply my knowledge to my new work environment.

## Opportunities

During this course my career changed from providing tech support to working as an enterprise data business analysist. I believe my enrollment in UW’s PC&E program was alluring to my new employer, as well as my desire to expand my IT skillsets. While I will not be directly with Python daily in my new position, I am working with developers who use it daily, as well as end-users who utilize the data systems my team supports. My contextual knowledge of Python is already helping me have a deeper understanding of projects I’m joining and will enable me to document issues my team needs to resolve with more accuracy.

## Next Steps

Even though I struggled with learning Python and am slightly relieved that I do not have to use it daily, I am not shying away from the language. I have already worked with my new supervisor to gain access to training software provided by my organization so I may continue learning Python, SQL and R. I also am sitting in on meetings covering projects I am not involved with to gain a better understanding of the work my organization does and the extent of data we interact with and directly support.

I plan on continuing to strengthen and expand my skills as an IT professional. I have decided to delay enrolling in the certificate programs offered by UW through the P&CE program, but plan on enrolling in them next year. Given my career shift and having so much new information coming my way, I feel it would be more beneficial to delay enrolling in the program until I feel more comfortable in my new position. That way I can devote my time and energy into the course without stretching myself too thinly.

## Summary

Even though Python didn’t come as naturally to me as I would have liked, I still understand and respect the power the language has behind it. I am thankful for my exposure to programming with it and look forward to applying my knowledge professionally, academically, and personally.