Mid-semester Project Update

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Original Project Reflection

My original project goals were mainly split into two categories. One set of goals was focused on applying to graduate school, and the other set was focused on transitioning into the job market and preparing myself for completion of the CSPB program. This update marks the transition point between my two overarching goals, as I am currently shifting my mindset and efforts toward finding a career I am satisfied and happy with. Overall, the goals I originally laid out in my project proposal served me well during the first half of the semester. I completed all the goals associated with applying to graduate school and have already made modifications to my resume, LinkedIn, and cover letter so that I can begin the job search. My progress through the original assessment criteria laid out in my project proposal is shown below.

Original Project Goals

- ☑️ **Resume:** Completed and refined based on feedback (for grad school and jobs).
- ☑️ **LinkedIn:** Updated and optimized for job searches.
- ☑️ **Cover Letter:** Drafted and adapted for multiple job applications.
- ☑️ **Graduate School Application:** All required components submitted on time, including recommendation letters (awaiting decision).
- ☐ **Job Applications:** At least 5 targeted applications submitted.
- ☐ **Interview Preparation:** Practicing technical and behavioral questions to improve confidence.
- ☐ **GitHub and Portfolio:** Well-documented projects, an improved home profile page, and a professional website showcasing my resume, projects, and blog.
- ☐ **Technical Proficiency:** Demonstrated knowledge of Git and Vim.

The accomplishments I have made so far have allowed me to create a strong graduate school application and gave me structure and guidance through the process of preparing materials for the job search. Without this project and the associated goals, I would have been much more disorganized and most likely far more behind than I am now. This has taken immense pressure and stress off my mind. I am going into the next stage of my life with more confidence in my ability to find a career doing something I am passionate about, or at the very least feel like I am progressing towards that goal. The biggest fear of mine has been settling, but this project has given me the push to keep moving forward. I even question if I would have applied to graduate school had I not had this course to keep me accountable.

Modifications to Project Goals

Now that I am further along in the professional development process, I have realized that some of the initial goals I set out for myself can be modified to better aid in my development through the remainder of the semester. The coursework itself also helped me realize this. For example, in the process of creating a website for this course, I realized how much work it can be to create a stunning website portfolio, and as someone who does not find much interest in front-end or UI work, this is no longer a goal of mine. The time

saved creating a beautiful portfolio website would be better suited to a personal project, certification, or learning. Additionally, I have progressed further through my software development tools course and now feel that my goal of becoming more proficient with git and Vim is not the best use of my time. In talking to others, it seems that just knowing the basics of git branching is already more than enough given my career goals. Online forums seem to suggest that LeetCode practice is more likely to help in an interview, since people still care about solving unrelated algorithm questions, as annoying as that might be...

I have spoken about the following in some of my weekly updates, but overall I have realized that I want to wait for my graduate school admissions decision before I begin applying for my top/ideal jobs. I don't want to ruin my chances when I am so close to having a very strong addition to my background and resume. I have not been working for the past 2 years as I have focused on transitioning careers, so the ability to list a Master's on my application can be extremely beneficial, even though I already have this stated in my cover letter. Instead, I am modifying my focus to be more on applying to jobs I am less passionate about to start testing the waters and hopefully get feedback on my application or practice interviews. The new goals listed below are thus focused on preparing me for interviews and allowing me to jump into the job search confidently once I can (hopefully) add the Master's to my application.

New Project Goals

- **LeetCode Practice:** Establish and begin a regular schedule/routine for solving LeetCode problems, beginning with those posted on Piazza.
- **Interview Practice:** Mock interview with at least 2 people, primarily to practice verbally explaining my resume and projects.
- **Job Applications:** At least 5 targeted applications submitted (preferably more, but this is a minimum).
- **Resume and Cover Letter Updates:** Update resume and cover letter once an application decision is received from Georgia Tech's OMSCS.
- **Time Management and Motivation:** Continue to learn and develop skills relating to self-motivation and time management, setting up for a future without the CSPB program

Modified Project Discussion

I underestimated how helpful creating goals for myself as I did in the first half of the semester would be, so the modifications made to my project goals are taking this in mind. The goals I completed helped me to confidently apply to graduate school and spend a lot more time than I otherwise would have on crafting/modifying my resume and cover letter. I have thus shifted the goals for the remainder of my project to be solely focused on my goal of reentering the job market, with the overarching goal of securing a job, rather than bettering myself as a candidate. At the end of the day, if I know that interviewers love LeetCode-style questions, I need to practice that instead of trying to be unique by knowing git or Vim more than the average person. The new goals also shift the focus from personal development to a single unified goal of applying for and securing a job. The first half of the semester showed me that I do much better with a focus on one thing at a time, rather than split between personal and professional development. I am now hopeful that if I put all my effort into this narrowed project scope, I will achieve each accompanying goal and be as confident in my job search as I was with my graduate school application.

I learned a lot about time management during the first half of this project as I learned how to create my own deadlines and schedules, rather than being able to rely on a usual course structure. I will use the knowledge I gained about what works best for me moving forward while continuing to improve my ability to self-

motivate. This is my final semester of the CU Boulder CSPB program, so improving and solidifying these skills is extremely important to not lose momentum.