**Why I chose career and technical education and how I will use it to better my life.**

At the onset of COVID, I was building an educational technology company that implemented Virtual Reality worlds to help engage students in high school studies. As public schools, and the world at large, locked down I decided to dissolve my company and go back to school myself. This was a bit intimidating as I am in my late forties. With that said, I am always trying to better myself professionally and love a good challenge. So, I bought some notebooks and a few math courses on Udemy and then researched several software development programs, including Ogden-Weber Technical College and Western Governors University.

Over the past two years, my knowledge of mathematics and computer programming has grown significantly. I completed a degree in analytics at WGU, but it was not until I began the Software Technology program in at OTech that I felt I was really understanding programming and computer logic at the fundamental level that I genuinely needed to begin a career in software. I feel now, about half way through the program, that I am definitely gaining the skills necessary to make a good entry into the industry as a new C# software engineer.

One of the major reasons I chose OTech was the friendly atmosphere and enthusiastic people around Campus. Initially, I was introducing my sister to the Web and Graphic Design program which she will begin next month following the successful completion of her GED. My sister is also in her forties. The gentle, encouraging ladies in the Testing Center have been amazingly kind and I am not sure my sister would have gotten this far without their caring assistance. While meeting more wonderful ladies in the Financial Aid department I was very excited to learn that with the Resiliency Scholarship at OTech, I only needed to pay for the specific books I would use in the software program. But wait there is more, when my entrance counselor found out that I had been in the military, she suggested I see the VA counselor. With the Veteran Services Counselor’s guidance, I was able to get funding to pay for my books and materials, too.

My choice to become a software developer was not made solely on the potential income of the industry, though that incentive was very attractive. Having lost my livelihood through the pandemic, I wanted to find an occupation that was more resistant to such economic hardships. Understanding the bit of information technology necessary to build an EdTech company, I was aware that careers in the software industry were suited to becoming remote positions. We were all working from home where possible and this looked like the ideal job security for potential financial hardships in the future. Not only would I be able to work from home, I could conceivably work from another country or even a cottage on the beach somewhere. What is more, OTech’s brilliant curriculum makes it easy to study hard at home, or even on the bus back and forth to the school using the OTech app.

One of the benefits that I had not anticipated was actually a short-term disadvantage. Earning a decent understanding of the algorithms, or even basic if/then computer logic, necessary to become a programmer can be difficult. There were times in the beginning when I was not sure I was up to the task. Perhaps, I thought, I am just too old for this kind of critical thinking and precise reasoning. When I expressed this sentiment to the Director of the Software program, he kindly shared with me the difficulties he had learning it himself. I needed this kind of encouragement, not only in OTech’s program, but also at this stage in my life. The trials and difficulties I have had learning how to write instructions for a computer have given me a renewed determination toward education that I have not had in years and that I can tell will outlast my time here at school.

As I get closer to the completion of program, I feel that pride of accomplishment that is so necessary to the realization of a good life. I am very grateful to the wonderful staff and educators at OTech for giving me the opportunity to go back to the beginning, in a sense. Not everyone gets to feel like a college kid, and for a second time. The rewards that come with overcoming the difficulties of a new kind of learning domain are priceless. I will be forever indebted to the kind and patient people of Ogden-Weber Technical College.

Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Ryan L Buchanan

