Jeffrey Koopman

Senior Design – Capstone Assessment

In my opinion, your senior design project is your “show-off” project. Even though we all have the same curriculum and go through the same labs, the same exams, the same everything almost, we all want something different out of computer science. For some that’s cryptography; for others it is mobile app development. The senior design project is a student’s opportunity to display what they wanted to get out of their degree. By taking what you learned and applying to any wide range of ideas, it shows who you are deep-down in the computer mindset. Academically, it is the culmination of our knowledge and our creativity in one single project.

Like I stated above, the computer science curriculum is strict with what classes you take across your academic career, but its what you take from those classes that matter. For me, I focused heavily on software development and any class that taught us how to create applications. Starting from data structures, my software development experience was refined in classes like programming languages and then software development. Learning how to manage user stories and build large scale repositories is going to be at the forefront of this project. Another class I expect will come through for me is technical writing; while most things should be intuitive to a user there will always be the need for good documentation. With all the classes I’ve taken the past 4 years I expect many of them to improve the state of my work.

I spent the first two semesters of my coop developing an in-house tool we called the “Log Analyzer”. This tool would go through log files over a million lines long and extract important information. I then moved onto logging changes themselves, being responsible for the complete overhaul of how our integrations logged changes. I have even recently started to mentor the new coops on how the log analyzer works. My coop experiences have rounded out my software developer skills; I am able to program, push those changes, and accurately express those changes to my team. Since this project is going to be on a time clock, those three items are going to help me and my team in the long run.

This project is motivating because I have had app ideas bouncing around in my head for some time now. But between school classes and coding burnout on coop, I simply didn’t have the time or energy to attempt many of them. Now however, I have time slotted away and more of the college’s resources at my disposable. This being my first major project, even with a team, I don’t expect it to come out exactly how I expect; in fact, it might well be a dud. I expect many issues down the line that are going to force our hands into changing our application pathway. But I am excited to face these changes because I am going to grow from them.

The biggest accomplishment for me will be when we achieve our minimal viable product. That seems like a low bar, and maybe it is, but when I can “hold” the project in my hand and see that its working I will feel a great amount of achievement from it. Since we are developing an app that will be for public use, I think the biggest “tell” when deciding if I have done a good job or not is if I can get people to use it. It does not have to be a lot of people, but just a handful of people to using our application is going to good. It will be tough to self-evaluate contributions, but if the project is successful that is all I will need to know. This project is exciting and I am ready for the final year of school to culminate in a great deliverable project.