Reflections on a Dickinson Education

The first time I arrived at Dickinson, I was filled with excitement, anticipation, and a tinge of apprehension. Like many teenagers, I was uncertain about what I would study and what my future career might hold. Doubts about my abilities, particularly in subjects like math and science, made my initial experience at Dickinson a mixture of trepidation and hope. Additionally, growing up, I had internalized gender stereotypes that portrayed heavy science majors like Computer Science and Math as reserved for men, further emphasizing my insecurities. Little did I know that within Dickinson's liberal arts environment, these assumptions would be shattered, leading to a transformative journey of self-discovery and empowerment. In this paper, I will share more about my academic pursuits and the profound impact of exploration and self-discovery on my personal and intellectual growth. Also, how these growth and exploration benefit back and ford with the computer science major and the mission of a Dickinson College education.

Back in my hometown, women pursuing computer science were often met with skepticism and faced gender stereotypes. I was frequently told that STEM fields were not suitable for women and that I lacked the innate ability to succeed in these fields. These pervasive stereotypes cast a shadow of doubt over my aspirations and fueled my apprehensions about taking classes like computer science or data science. However, upon arriving at Dickinson College, I was pleasantly surprised to find an environment that defied these stereotypes. Here, everyone was encouraged to pursue their passions in every field, including STEM majors, without fear of judgment or discrimination. The inclusive and supportive community at Dickinson provided me with the platform to challenge these preconceived notions and redefine my capabilities.

As I mentioned, my journey at Dickinson College began with uncertainty and insecurity about my abilities, particularly in science subjects, partly due to societal expectations and my own insecurities. Despite initially opting for economics as my major, I struggled to find the passion and spark, and the belief that I lacked aptitude for science subjects only reinforced my doubts. However, Dickinson College offered me the freedom and flexibility to explore a diverse range of subjects. Stepping out of my comfort zone, I enrolled in Computer Science 130, a class that would transform my studies and future career path. Despite a few challenges when learning a new language and understanding the logic of coding, I soon realized that Computer Science was not solely about mathematics and technicalities. It was a field that demanded problem-solving skills, creativity, and critical thinking, which resonated deeply with me. Furthermore, as I progressed to more advance courses in Computer Science, like COMP232 – Data Structures and Algorithm Analysis or COMP132-Object Oriented Design, I had more chances to sharpen my technical knowledge. Not only that with frequent computer science labs, but I also had opportunities to communicate in technical and non-technical and collaborate with other students in this heavy technical field to solving programming problem.

With the opportunities to study various course in many differences major such as Philosophy, Anthropology, and Art, I've come to realize that computer science serves as a powerful tool for contributing to the world. However, I've also recognized the importance of

determining which specific field I am passionate about supporting to ensure that my skills are effectively utilized. Last summer, I had an amazing opportunity to work as a sustainability project coordinator in the Dickinson Center for Sustainability Education, where I could apply my knowledge of computer science to develop technology that promote sustainable living among students. One of my key projects involved creating a website for Free xChange, moreover, I also assisted to run an online market platform for students and faculty call DsonMarket where they could save/make money, reduce carbon emissions, and interact with others in support of sustainability. Additionally, I implemented NFC technology into a check-in system, and am currently working on a carpool platform to further reduce carbon emission on campus. These experience, leading projects helped me to strengthen not only my academic and coding skills, but also provided me with the opportunity to witness the tangible impact of technology on real life and bring realistic results to a small community like Dickinson. Hence, serving as a leader in these projects enabled me to effectively communicate technical concepts to individuals without a background in computer science while also honing my ability to manage resources and collaborate effectively within a team.

In conclusion, my journey at Dickinson College has been a transformative experience that has greatly contributed to my personal and intellectual growth. Through overcoming doubts, challenging stereotypes, and embracing opportunities for exploration and self-discovery, I have made significant progress on the goals of both the computer science major and the mission of a Dickinson College education. In terms of the computer science major, I have developed mastery in problem-solving applicable to a wide variety of disciplines, as evidenced by my coursework and projects in classes such as Computer Science 130, COMP232, and COMP132. These courses have equipped me with a solid understanding of core concepts in computer science, including data structures, algorithms, and computational complexity. Additionally, through collaborative projects and technical presentations, I have honed my ability to work and communicate effectively in teams, as well as to present technical and non-technical information to diverse audiences. Furthermore, my experiences at Dickinson have reinforced the college's mission of providing a useful, innovative, and interdisciplinary education in the liberal arts and sciences to prepare students for engaged global citizenship. By exploring diverse fields of study beyond computer science, such as Philosophy, Anthropology, and Sustainability, I have gained a deeper understanding of how everything is connected, finding my mission in life based on the tools that I gain in college and how I can make a difference in the world. My involvement as a sustainability project coordinator exemplifies this interdisciplinary approach, as I applied my technical skills to address real-world challenges and contribute to positive change within the Dickinson community. Overall, my time at Dickinson College has been marked by growth, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning. As I continue on my academic and professional journey, I am grateful for the invaluable experiences and opportunities that Dickinson has provided me, and I am confident that I am well-prepared to make meaningful contributions in an ever-changing world.