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**Speaker 1** [00:00:01] There we go. So now we're recording. And so will you go ahead and give your name and your status at OSU as a student? What are you studying?

**Speaker 2** [00:00:14] Yes, my name is Garrett Bruner. I use him and they them pronouns and I am a current 30 year computer science major with a minor in mathematics at OSU, and I'm also in the Honors College, so currently also working on my thesis and stuff.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:29] Okay, awesome. Thanks for being here with us and sharing your narrative. Garrett. And so the prompts that we're asking you to respond to today is to tell your story or the story of your experience so far. As an engineering student. And so you may want to start with your background and what brought you to pursue this program. What got you into the engineering program? What made you want to be an engineer? And then you may want to include your initial impression of the program, how you began to understand how the program fits into your life or may not, challenges you may have. And I can kind of remind you of some of these topics and as much as we go through them, yeah, it's really the prompt is open, so we just love to hear about your experience in the engineering program. What brought you here? Yeah. Have you been experiencing it?

**Speaker 2** [00:01:22] Yeah. So I can start with some background on myself. I grew up a military child. I moved a lot growing up. I was born in Michigan and then moved to Washington, D.C., and then moved to Texas and then moved to Puerto Rico and then moved to Virginia and then finally moved to Oregon. I lived in Astoria, Oregon for one year and then I moved to Oregon City for all of high school. I was very lucky to have all four years that same high school. My brother went to three different high schools. I just went to three different middle schools. But that was all right because high school was I was really happy. I went to the same high school. The more background information and my mother is 60% Hispanic and 40% Native American, and then my dad is 100% white. So I am 30% Hispanic, 20% native, but I don't have any tribe affiliation. So I mostly identify with the Hispanic side. And then I'm half white and I, I guess I can start talking about the Oregon State. So I graduated in 2020, which was during the pandemic. And college was really. Hard to decide on because so in high school I applied to a lot of universities. I applied to like 15 different colleges, only two in state. I only applied to OSU and University of Portland and. I was planning on going to visit colleges after I got admitted because I didn't want to go visit a school and get attached and then not get in and stuff. So I graduated during 2020 and I ended up well, so. Okay, so June 2020, I committed to OSU because I did. There was so much uncertainty going on in the world. I felt like I wanted to be close to my family and I was really excited about the engineering program at OSU and I knew it was really good in high school because I went to school in Oregon. I came to OSU to take a tour of the engineering facilities. I specifically toward the coast because at that time I didn't specifically know what I wanted to do, but I still really like the campus. I knew that it was it was a strong engineering school. So I committed to Oregon State and then I spent my entire first year over Zoom. My impression of OSU during Zoom was. Entirely around the ties that I had and the experiences I had in my introductory course courses. So I guess I can back up a little bit. Going into college, I didn't specifically know. I didn't specifically know what I wanted to study. I knew I wanted to study some general realm of engineering. Like I said, I took a tour of like, CEOs or I want to do something stem related because I really loved math. Growing up, moving a lot and math was like the only constant classroom that I had because moving from state to state, every state has different standard standardization for each grade level. And so I remember. Like I never specifically was taught like now an adjective, verbs and stuff. Because the states that I was moving to, they were like, Oh, we taught that last year or Oh, we're going to teach that next year. And then I would move away. But with math, all of my math classes were labeled like algebra, geometry. And so that was the one consistent thing that I had moving around. And so I knew that I really loved math, but I didn't want to do pure theoretical math in college. And just from the Grapevine and through like the information session that I attended in high school at OSU, I knew that engineering had to do with a lot of math, but I knew it wasn't going to get to the pure theoretical stuff. So I knew I wanted to study some realm of engineering, and I think I specifically decided to study computer science because I really loved using technology. It was a great way that I could keep connected with my friends from previous places that I lived. Like I moved from Virginia to Oregon seventh, eighth grade, and that was like around a time where I had made some friends that I really liked and wanted to keep in contact with. And the literal, only way I could was through technology. And so that sort of sparked my interest because I was like, Oh, technology is a really great tool for me to stay connected with my friends. And so I took since 160 and since I was admitted into the Honors College, I took the honor section with Dr. Jennifer Palmer Marcello, and it was like a 20 person class. And I think because of that social class, that's why I decided to pursue computer science. It was like a 20 person class section. So it was really intimate and I was able to really, like, foster the curiosity that I had for learning about engineering and computer science in general, because so every at least for how it was when I was a freshman, I was just pre engineering when I got admitted and stuff. I didn't specifically know which route I wanted to do. I was interested in environmental engineering, computer science, and then, um, like mechanical engineering with the aerospace option or like getting the minor in aerospace. So I was deciding between and during that first start. Yeah. So took 160, it was a 20 person section. I was really captivated, by the way, that you have to think when trying to solve an algorithm. And yes, it's very in my opinion, I think it's a bit different than how you put problems of things in the normal world or not. But just like in everyday life, like you sort of have a set of tools and you have to use it like coding abilities, like statements and statements loops switch like case statements and stuff, and you have to use those to solve a problem and. I think, yeah, that 160 class. I went to office hours pretty regularly and just sort of asking a lot of questions about what is being a computer scientist look like, what are my career opportunities being a computer scientist, Because I mean, right now I'm ending my third year and I've had I've had an internship last year and I'm having an internship this year, but I still really don't know what I want to do. And computer science is such a broad field that I feel like I can really do whatever I want with it, which I'll get into later. I'm getting off topic here, but, uh, yeah, so coming into our loop back to my time at OSU, so going into my freshman year, it was all on Zoom and I was at home with my parents. And what really made her break the engineering classes and stuff was the tears that I had because 61, 61, 61 and won 62 at the time that was offered. Those are very hard science classes. It's a really high learning curve. And the Tas kind of cautioned us with that. But they said if you are proactive and if you ask for help early, we definitely would help you. And they did that. I mean, they held study sessions that I went to every week. They, however, like, probably were just like every single day. And the professor held like 20 hours of 20 hours of office hours a week. And it was like whatever time slot fit for everyone you could attend. And so that was my first year introduction into the engineering program. And I think what made her or what I really enjoyed about it was the community, I guess, that came from it. Like all the PTAs knew each other. They're all friendly with each other. They all spoke highly of each other when like when I was in one on one with office hours and I was like, they were like, Oh, sorry, I have to go soon. But this other team is holding office hours in like half an hour, and they're really amazing. I had them, I had this class with them and they're really smart. Like, you're totally in good hands. I don't know. I felt like the CSA community and I guess as a whole, like the engineering community, I don't know. I have a kind of a limited view, but it seemed very collaborative and not super competitive and. And in good. Uh.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:54] Yeah. So I think you're definitely staying on topic in terms of sharing your experience and your, you know, what made you interested in being in the computer science program and what you're passionate about and how you see it as, as working for you and, and with your point of view. So I think that's all super interesting. And I'm wondering if you could expand a little bit on how the cultural experience, you know, as someone who identifies as from an underserved population and engineering. So how that or computer science, how that experience has impacted your experience in X in particular, and also your feeling of whether or not you belong in the program. So if you gossip about that, I think that would be really interesting.

**Speaker 2** [00:10:48] Yeah, I would honestly say I have felt that I most belong in the program this year, my third year. I'm also gay, which also means that I come from another underserved group. And I've been really getting involved with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Engineering. I almost every day go there to do homework. I have mostly all of the events that they put on within, like connecting with industry or just. Bringing companies over to talk about their efforts like diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. It's made me feel like I really have a place in engineering because if I'm being honest, I there's not a whole lot of. Queer representation and computer science. And that's just the field as a whole. That is not specifically Oregon State. But I would say I started to feel okay. So running it back freshman year, I don't know. Everything was on Zoom, so it's kind of hard to judge if I like. I wasn't on campus. I wasn't really that involved with any clubs because a lot of the clubs that I wanted to join were they were kind of like, Yeah, we're on pause. A lot of people are coming to meetings and stuff. And so my second year I took two computer science classes and I found a pretty good group of friends that were taking both of them. And then that's sort of where. I started to feel belonging and see us. But then last year I was just sort of taking classes and. I was really uncertain of, like again, what I wanted to do with science and stuff. But this year I've definitely honed in that I want to use the skills and abilities that I've learned to create more space for underrepresented groups. Because I guess another fact about me is that I to and I've seen a lot of instances and I mean, I experience this personally where. Quite a few of the engineering students at OSU fit the mold that engineering is built for. I mean, like. They feel as. They can be the loudest in the room because historically speaking, people that look like them and act like them have been the loudest in the room and were and were. And I don't know if it's encouraged or just not encouraged. They just were the loudest in the room. And that's just how it was. And so I've had many students come to me, and they're really smart and bright, but they're just too scared to speak up. So for an example, I taught a recitation for CSU 61 data structures in the fall this year, and some of the brightest students in the classes were people from underrepresented groups in STEM. They were women and people of color. And they whenever I was trying to teach recitation activity, they weren't speaking up and trying to provide answers because they didn't feel they felt like if they said something wrong, then everyone was going to look at them weird or stuff. And so I don't know. I guess the community that I found out obviously was. The community of underrepresented individuals in engineering or in care specifically because I feel like we all share similar life experiences without even having to really verbalize that we all like when they were voicing their frustrations, I was like, I totally understand where I come from because I felt like that last year. And so sort of getting more involved in tapping into that on campus has honestly made me feel like I definitely belong at OSU and specifically within like the College of Engineering and to X. So I feel like I'm going off topic a lot.

**Speaker 1** [00:14:36] But I'm not. This is such a rich narrative with information I think that is really meaningful for for us to learn about. So I really appreciate everything you're sharing, your willingness to share it as kind of a final prompt and just anything else you want to share there. We were also wondering about if there are specifically strengths or contributions that you feel like you bring based on your unique perspective to the program. And then also, what changes would you like to see happen in the program Or. Yeah.

**Speaker 2** [00:15:23] So I think a strength that I bring is that. I have found something that I'm really passionate about and I'm actively pursuing it. So that first year professor, Dr. Jennifer Palmer Solo, because I talked with her so much and office hours, I've been conducting research with her since the freshman after my the summer after my freshman year, and we've been producing I've been a coauthor on two publications on science education, having, trying to increase engagement and stuff in general in science education. And I recently attended the sixth Conference in Toronto, Canada, to help present a paper with Dr. Palmer. So that is the technical, I suppose. It's the largest technical symposium hosted by ACM and it centered around science education. So I feel like I'm bringing. Also just the unique perspective that I have from moving around a lot. I feel like I was able to take a lot of. Right. Or I was able to take a lot of things from everywhere that I lived because I lived in polar opposite places all the time, like I lived in Texas. And then I would live in Puerto Rico. And then I lived in like Washington, D.C. and then now I live in Oregon. So I feel like just growing up, interacting with such a broad and varying range of individuals, I'm able to sort of bring that to my to my perspective of how I interact with people and how I specifically love to collaborate with people on things. So I feel like I'm bringing that to X. I also feel like I'm bringing a perspective about being unapologetically myself. I don't know. It's pretty intimidating going into a field where there's not a lot of representation that you can look up to, especially strong leadership. Like, I can't really be like someone else did it. So that means I know that I can. I'm sort of really just sort of navigating this space and doing things that I feel like, yeah, I want to do this because I want to. I don't just because like in that in general. So I feel like I'm also bringing that to X. Like I'm going to meet with someone within X Friday to talk about hopefully making a scholarship to four ex-students to attend the National STEM conference, because that is how I personally obtained my internship for my summer after my sophomore year was I attended that conference virtually and I feel like it's a great opportunity for queer people and X And so I think not being I think or not being shy, but embracing sort of my. Underrepresented. The like. Embracing my queerness and my. The past that my mum has carried. It's something that I'm bringing to X like specific, I don't know. I guess an example is like my. Uh, sorry. I'm just trying to think. Um. Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:18:39] I know you've brought so much already. I think that that's really inspirational, honestly. And so lastly, is there are there any specific changes that you would want to see?

**Speaker 2** [00:18:56] I would love to see like a dedicated class in X to talking about diversity and. Just bringing attention to it. So like an example is at my last internship, I worked at a company that was like predominantly white, and I think I was like one of the only queer people that I knew out of all of the interns that were there. And a lot of the people just didn't understand that. Are the majority of people in the company because they were like within that engineering mold. They didn't really understand how intimidating it could be for someone from an underrepresented groups to try to make sure that their voice is heard because sometimes they feel like they're on an island, especially if they're the only individual from an underrepresented group within a team. Sorry happens. But I would I would say I would love to see. I mean, it doesn't need to be much like I'm taking a class this term called Pathways in the X like CSS 399. It's one credit and it's it is technically optional, but it counts as my selective. So, yeah, I don't know, just bringing more attention to it because I think people understand that diversity is is important. But I don't think people really fully grasp why and fully grasp that you need to have diversity, you need to have a lot of it so that when people from underrepresented groups want their have ideas and I mean like people from underrepresented groups have great ideas, they're not too intimidated and not too scared to share them because they are in an environment where it's like they're the only other ah, in the environment. So I would, I don't know, I'd love to see probably, uh, either a class or like something to sort of just educate the students on like. Why diversity is important and why, uh, companies are emphasizing it because, I mean, I'm a student and I'm in like 150 plus lecture classrooms. It's been very, very regular. Very, very regular. But like, I'm definitely I've definitely heard and there's definitely vibes of like people are like, Oh, whoa, like you're a minority. So of course you're going to get more job opportunities than me. But it's like or they say comments like that and it's like they don't understand why and they don't understand why it's very important. So just sort of bringing that bring attention to that.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:35] Well. Garrett, thank you so much for your willingness to share your story. And I think it's going to be hugely meaningful for those who listen to it and for our project in general. So I just really appreciate your time and your willingness to share.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:54] Thank you for the opportunity.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:56] I'm gonna turn off our recording now.