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Curiosity is not a trait that can be taught. One cannot feign curiosity whether it is for the non-sequitur made by your aunt at a family reunion or for the deepest secrets the universe has to offer. Likewise, I cannot feign my interest in science. It is inherent to my personality and drives me to be better at my job developing automation programs.

When the program I am developing does not perform its intended task, I am intrigued by the problem, not perturbed. My mind swims with all the different possibilities that may be causing the issue, and I quickly devise tests to begin deducing the culprit. Working at Entergy as an RPA developer, it’s my duty to utilize my technical skills to automate internal processes for Entergy employees and customers. Recently, I had to develop an algorithm that confined me to use a certain application to pull in data that would then be filtered to identify certain events. Because the data set was so large, querying for it required a long time. The application I was using to query the database was not allowing the run time limit of the query to lengthen to the needed degree. While I could’ve opened a ticket with IT and debugged this issue, this may have taken a significant amount of time. Instead, I wrote a program that would change the query repeatedly, bringing in small sets of data until the original set was completed. I learned that sometimes the conventional solution can and should be ignored for the sake of efficiency. With my first automation task, I created a program that automatically files invoices for when storms cause a massive influx of contractors being hired by Entergy, a premier utility company. Initially, my attempt to automate this process didn’t work, as a button integral to the process could not be pressed. I had to find a certain area of the screen to interact with and then use the html tab index from there to quickly navigate to the button, allowing it to be pressed. This occurred within the final days before the deadline, and I worked well into the evening to make it work. The feeling of grinding away programming up to a deadline was a familiar one; it brought me back to my computer engineering undergrad days, where a project might mean weeks of troubleshooting, whether it’s a deep learning program or a microcontroller. Allowing your mind to be consumed by the problem is the most efficient way to solve it, not just while at the computer, but while taking a walk, going to the grocery store, exercising; this is often when a solution comes to mind.

When there is no more time to think about the problem, it gets very interesting. This was my experience participating in the IEEEXtreme Competition. There was 24 hours to complete as many problems as possible, and you can have a team of developers helping you. This highlighted the need to really sit and think about the problem in a succinct and meaningful way, as otherwise you would just be typing random lines of code that never amount to anything, except maybe partial points. To the behest of our placement, my partner and I tried to pick one problem and completely flesh it out, minding run time constraints, and have a fully functional algorithm. This was our way of having fun while competing, since everything we had worked on up to that point was designed in a similar fashion, and it was more valuable to us to have a complete solution.

With a Master’s in Computer Science, I want to further my knowledge of computer systems so that when I run into problems, there is less guess work involved. When I understand exactly how various technological concepts relate to each other, I’ll spend less time going down rabbit holes that may not amount to anything, and I’ll be a more efficient developer in general. I am quite interested to see how deep learning can change various industries relating to computer science. Its not obvious how many ways these algorithms can be utilized to solve problems, and this idea is extremely exciting to me. Often a lack of data is the limiting factor, but more and more data is being acquired, and I’d like to have the knowledge to leverage it for deep learning. At the University of New Orleans, I’m aware of the talented professors the university has to offer, as well as my ability to interface well with them. I think, between inquisitive attitude and their ability to simplify complex concepts, I would excel as a master’s student and come up with innovative ideas regarding emerging technologies.

Essentially, I have experienced a sample platter of various computer science fields, from robotic process automation to deep learning, and I’ve learned the fundamental way of critically thinking through technical problems. I am enthralled by the idea of continuing my education with University of New Orleans for both the culture and learning environment.