Professional Reflections

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Week 1 – Getting to know the UNE Academy and Career Reflection

After completing my SWOT analysis, I am an independent person, which brings with it both strengths and weaknesses. Although self-driven and critical of my work, becoming distracted or unmotivated will hurt my productivity. I will need to keep myself in check, and reach out for help when I need it. I am very much looking forward to what this course will bring, and how it will potentially set me up on a new career path.

Week 2 - Project Ideas Review

I'm excited to get started with this by brainstorming some ideas - I'm sure my ideas and thoughts will change from day to day until I settle on something but here a couple project ideas that spark my interest. I've never really attempted a project like this before so I'm not sure if I am overshooting myself or not. A couple ideas I've had are as follows:

- A music recommendation app: So a spin-off of the college major app that is mentioned in the Project Pool- an app where the user puts in information and current music interests and then the app generates recommendations for similar artists.

- Staying on the music path: There may be a resource available today, but when I used to play music often, I had always wanted a sort of social network for bands and DIY venues to connect. I found it frustrating when trying to contact a person/venue from far away that in order to do this, you really had to know someone who knew someone...but what if you didn't already have any connections like that? What I am envisioning is a spin-off of CouchSurfing , so there would be two different "users" (bands/venues) who would list information on their page and then they could write feedback about each other too. The venues could also recommend spots or restaurants in the area. This would be a huge undertaking for the amount of time allowed for the project, so this one will remain just an "idea" for now.

- Create a text game in the style of "choose your own adventure".

Week 3 Identify Shared Interests

Goals - to become a developer. I would like to eventually work in software / application development, but I also have an interest in web development, and have been trying to tackle JavaScript on my own. So my overall goal is to become proficient in multiple languages.

Interests - from an educational standpoint, math was always my favorite subject in high school and usually the only subject that I would always take an honors class for. I enjoyed the material and the challenge. I have an interest in how things work as well. I've had a few motorcycles in which I mostly do all the work myself, learning just by watching YouTube videos. It is satisfying to know what you are working with, and how it all comes together. I think that carries over to my desire to become a programmer.

General interests - video games, fitness, music

Week 4 Professional Identity Development

I believe that the course so far has kept me motivated and in a state of progression. This has been very important to me, for my purpose in enrolling was to help accelerate a change in careers. I know that some people learn to develop on their own, and I've tried to do so prior to being in this course, but I think that if you don't have the right personality you can hit roadblocks and become stagnant.

While I have learned a great deal, I am also aware that there is so much that I don't know. The industry is incredibly vast and always moving/changing. I think that it can be both intimidating as well as exciting.

Out of all the topics covered in the course so far, I found parsing files and web data to be very powerful. While the programs we wrote and functionalities they performed were relatively entry level, I think it spoke volumes to the power of what writing a little bit of code can do. It felt very tangible and inspiring.

I've only just started the course that covers SQL, but something about this language sparked my interest, so I'm curious as to how I will feel about it once I complete it. Overall, I have been challenged and at times quite frustrated, but I've got to learn to crawl before I can walk, and I'm glad to have enrolled in the course.

Week 5 Project Development and Prototype

This has been a challenging task but I have also learned a great amount. With the way my prototype is coming along, it will probably be much different than how I originally thought it might be. I don't think it will include all of the features I originally wanted to have. Additionally, I tried to figure out how to incorporate a GUI such as Tkinter, but I don't think it is in the cards for my project. I've already spent enough time trying to work on what I've got right now. And, with the way I've developed the game so far, a GUI doesn't seem right, since I've incorporated commands which function in the terminal. So I'm okay with that.

The biggest problems facing me in this have been time and knowledge. I've definitely put more time into the project than the syllabus calls for so far, but I don't think I would have be able to do what I'm trying to make without doing so. I have done additional research on python text games. It was difficult to produce a game prototype using only the knowledge gained from Coursera. The additional research has been done primarily by Googling, checking out resources at Stack Overflow and Github.

I haven't finished my game 'story' yet, but I have the basic functionalities in place and just need to wrap things up. I can probably clean up the code too. Honestly, the way I am writing this game probably isn't the best way.

Right now I have information stored in JSON files, the program reads those files, and the user interacts with all of this in the terminal. I think am going to try and incorporate SQLite for a database. That way, it will be like bring together all the elements covered in the Coursera courses...

Week 6 Feedback and Outreach

There is always room for improvement when it comes to communication and collaboration. Having weekly Academy Live sessions has been extremely beneficial, as I hear from fellow students in the academy, and well as from mentors. Hearing from classmates puts my own experience in the program into perspective, allowing me to hear other points of view and make connections. Mentor wisdom is always appreciated and goes beyond what can be taught in a Coursera course.

Another important thing that I am taking away from the Academy is the foundation for a network in the technology industry. Before the Academy, I only had a few connections in the industry, but can now say that through interactions with peers, the mentors, and through the Roundtable that I have a good start to building a potentially solid network. Overall, the Academy Live sessions offered support through interpersonal interaction, gave me another reason to be excited about the work that was being produced by the students (including my own), and was a source of wealthy information in regards to the industry on a wide scale.

The most intensive way I could've been more collaborative would have been to create a project with another student. Communicating about our individual progress though in-person discussions and through Blackboard has worked well, but developing a project with a partner would've brought the collaboration aspect to a whole new level for me.

Week 7: Skills, Development, and Growth

As the end of the course approaches, I still find myself thinking that I haven't even got my feet wet yet, but I know that is not the reality of it at all. Relatively speaking, I would say that I am leagues ahead of where I was 8 weeks ago. All I had done prior to this course was mess around with web development basics and try free coding tutorials online. I initially thought I was not ready for Python, as I was still trying to grasp front end development concepts. How I could move right on to learning a more back end language without mastering front end languages first?

Little did I know that things would start to click for me while using Python. I found it was a refreshingly reasonable language to learn, and so far would argue that it is more stripped down and less syntax-y when compared to say Java and JavaScript, two other languages I've been trying to grasp on my own time. For that reason, it was a good choice on the Academy's part to go with Python as the language for students to learn.

I've gained skill and knowledge in both soft-skills and hard-skills. I feel more confident in my ability to pursue programming, and in my ability to effectively communicate about it. With completing the Coursera courses and creating the Project for the course, it shows my developed understanding of the subject matter and my desire to keep pushing myself to learn more. For the future, I see myself eventually breaking ground in a

career in the technology space, but where and when is yet to be seen - Hopefully sooner rather than later. If I cannot find an entry level developer role, I would hope to get my foot in the door doing QA work. But until then, I will continue to challenge myself and learn all that I can to the best of my ability.

Week 8 Final Reflection

Reflecting on the past 8 weeks in the UNE Digital Academy Program, I think back to when I decided to enroll. My job/career at the time had very little personal meaning to me, and I made the decision to start over and pursue a new path. What drew me into programming and the Academy was a passion for growth and a desire to be challenged, all while learning a topic I was always interested in diving into.

Many aspects of the Academy worked very well for me. I enjoyed working on both soft-skills and hard-skills, because this gave the program a real holistic approach. Academy Live sessions and Blackboard emphasized the soft-skills, while the Coursera courses and Project focused on the hard-skills. The only thing that was difficult for me was the difference in projected time for all the work. Due to being quite challenged by the course material and underestimating the development my project, I definitely put more time into the session than prescribed. It was worth it though; because I wanted to understand what I was learning and make a project that I was satisfied with.

I'm glad I took the Development and Programming course through the Academy, and I would recommend it anyone that was in the same position as me 8 weeks ago - Anyone who is interested in programming but not sure how to start, having a desire to make a change, and be up for a challenge.