

Cumulative Reflection

Ever since moving on from high school, I've been fortunate enough to call Iowa State and Ames my home. Looking back, I graduated from a very small high school with a class of just about 30 students in 2020. As you can imagine, this was quite a unique year to end high school and start college. There were so many unknowns, which made the months leading up to college nerve-wracking for me. Thankfully, my major of study was not one of these unknowns. Ever since I was a child, I knew I wanted a future in technology because of the influence of my older brother. While growing up, he would spend a lot of time coding outside of school, and seeing that influenced me to follow a similar path. I ultimately chose to major in Computer Engineering as I was unsure whether I would prefer the hardware or software side more. I knew obtaining this degree would require a lot of studying and commitment. My high school didn't have a strong online learning environment set up during the pandemic, so I essentially had a big break leading up to the start of college. Having not gotten the chance to finish certain classes I knew I'd be taking in college, including physics and economics, I was unsure whether I would struggle in the college-level versions of these courses. This reflection will walk through each of my college years while outlining the new experiences and personal growth.

To my surprise, the pandemic didn't delay freshman year move-in. After seeing so many colleges make the decision to keep students at home, I was concerned Iowa State would do the same. Despite being able to live on campus, this was far from an ordinary year of school. Fortunately, I adapted to online schooling quickly and was able to keep myself motivated to stay on top of all my assignments. From my experience, the biggest piece of advice I would give to an incoming freshman would be to work one week ahead. Starting off college with this mindset helped to set me up to have a quite successful college academic career. This helped me not to miss assignment deadlines since I wasn't waiting until right before the deadlines to begin them. Honestly, the biggest challenge during my freshman year was navigating the pandemic protocols and trying to find friends. This struggle resulted in a big life choice of deciding to join a fraternity during my second semester. Coming into college, I had not even considered Greek life as a potential for me because of my introverted personality. Looking back now, I couldn't imagine life not having joined Delta Upsilon. Through the fraternity, I have gained numerous friendships, along with leadership and travel opportunities, as well as countless incredible memories.

After a long summer away from Ames and two semesters of college later, I was excited to move back and be a sophomore in college. By sophomore year, classes were starting to transition back to being more in-person. Yet again, this was a big switch for me after becoming so used to online classes. Ever since freshman year, I have enjoyed online school much more than in person. The main factor that I prefer is being able to work at my own desk with ample space while also cutting out travel time. I think this is a unique feeling though, as most of my

friends prefer in-person classes. During this year, I was elected to my fraternity's executive board as the Vice President of Academics. Through this position, I was responsible for developing and implementing the chapter's academic program. My main job was working with the new freshman members, as well as older members struggling academically, to help get them the resources/support they need to do well. This year, I also got the chance to improve my object-oriented programming skills, as well as work alongside a team for a semester-long Android application project in Software Development Practices, COM S 309. During this project, my passion for front-end mobile development started. I found out that I really enjoyed designing user interfaces and learning how to connect them to the backend data. My future goal is to work in an industry that will allow me to further explore this passion.

Once my junior year hit, I knew my college career was going to be over in a flash. I started to realize how time seems to go by much faster the older you get. Throughout this year, I found myself diving deeper into my major's core classes, including Computer Architecture, CPR E 381, and Introduction to Design and Analysis of Algorithms, COM S 311. These are probably the two hardest and most time-consuming classes I will have taken when I graduate next semester. The project for Computer Architecture involved designing a single-cycle MIPS processor. Through this project, I gained a better understanding and appreciation for properly drawn design documents. Having a clear and concise design makes a huge difference when it comes to the actual implementation. One other class I took during the year, Russia Today, unexpectedly piqued my interest. The Russia-Ukraine conflict began to resuscitate during the time I was taking this course, which further sparked my interest in the history of the country leading up to this conflict. This course provided me with a great opportunity to step away from engineering and do more research into the history of a country to learn the impact of decisions over the years that could ultimately result in a war.

During this last year, I am focused on making sure to enjoy it as much as possible. I know by now how fast it's going to go and that I will be receiving my diploma in the blink of an eye. I have begun to shift my focus to job opportunities after graduation. Coming into college, everyone mentioned how much personal growth occurs during these years. I now can look back over the past few years and recognize how much I have changed and grown. I am so fortunate for all the friendships I've created and the experiences I've had throughout my time here at Iowa State. You really do get to choose your adventure at Iowa State.