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Getting Started Essay

I am a non-traditional student. I was born in Dallas, TX and have lived most of my life in Arlington. I served eight years in the United States Air Force. I was a weather forecaster in the Air Force, but also was given the opportunity to attend the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey, where I studied Arabic. Though I haven’t used it in quite some time, I can speak, read, and write Arabic with limited proficiency. In Arabic, the word for housewife is “Rabat al bait”, which translated means “Goddess of the House”. This is a remarkably accurate description of what my wife does. We have two children: Layla (2 years) and Liam (9 months). My wife and I had several discussions prior to leaving the Air Force about our plans afterwards and a primary goal for both of us was education. We wanted the levity to able to choose career paths that would not only stimulate us intellectually, but provide a lifestyle we would be happy with. It was not difficult for me to decide on an engineering discipline as my educational goal. I have always been interested in computing, so Software Engineering seemed a more proper fit than Electrical or Mechanical. I worked full time for the first 3 years of my degree and am now an intern for L-3 communications. After graduation, I intend to work and attend graduate school part time until I complete my Masters. Right now that is as far as I have planned out.

The time in the military gave me an opportunity to hone leadership and organizational skills. I communicate well in all mediums and have the ability to give polished presentations with little notice or background information. I conceptualize very well and am adept in problem solving. I can focus on small details while keeping sight of the big picture and vice versa. The programming languages I am most proficient in are Java and C/C++, though I have been afforded limited exposure to a few others. Related to peers, I would say I’m close to but not at the top with respect to skill level. There are definitely some amazing people in our class that I do not hold a candle to.

My weaknesses with respect to the impending project will probably be the hardware component. I have very limited experience with hardware. I am also far from an expert when it comes to networking. I have to deal with networks in my current job and sometimes once it reaches a certain level of complexity, it seems to be over my head. I have very little experience testing software, with the exception of debugging my programs. I will be taking Software Testing in the Fall, so hopefully I can gain enough knowledge from this class to assist with some of the testing of our project.

I am comfortable leading a team. I was team lead in Project Management last semester for an android project and we performed very well. The last 8 years of my professional life have been in the capacity of a manager. Before taking the internship position, I was a logistics manager for a transportation company, supervising over 100 union employees, and during peak times, up to 200. In the military I supervised an operations floor responsible for dissemination resource protection warnings for the entire state of Alaska. I am definitely more comfortable in a leadership position, however can function and perform well within a team regardless of my role.