Reflections

Discuss one challenge you overcame during your academic development. What was the challenge, was it technical, nontechnical, or both, and how did you overcome it?

During my academic development, there have been many challenges that I believe I have dealt with effectively. Overall, the most difficult challenge was to learn how to learn effectively. It may seem counterintuitive. However, the ability to teach yourself in a time-efficient manner is actually a skill unto itself. Ideally, the best way to learn a skill or gain knowledge is to be guided by an individual with the relevant expertise and a passion for teaching. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Sometimes, you have to gather all the relevant information you can and simply do your best to create an ad hoc curriculum that is good enough to make you proficient in the discipline or subject at hand, given the time constraints. Of course, today we have more access to information than ever before through search engines, so this is easier, although not always an easy task. In my opinion, anyone that wants to truly gain a deep and thorough understanding of a subject must at least incorporate some of the qualities of an autodidact into their mindset as a student. While this skill is nontechnical in nature, I would say that it is an important tool for overcoming challenges that are technical.

Discuss a situation where you worked with a team. How would you describe yourself as a teammate? Where can you improve your team skills? Be specific.

Working with a team can often come with its own unique set of challenges. During my academic development, I have worked on multiple team projects. I would say that, as a teammate, my philosophy is to start with a plan that is as comprehensive as possible. Most potential problems can be avoided when there is a clear delineation of responsibilities set out from the beginning that all team members agree to and believe is equitable. At the same time, any project with a large enough scope will likely have unforeseen issues that arise. With more experience, this is certainly an area in which I could improve. This is why good use of communication channels is necessary for all team members so that concerns can be raised before creating problems down the line. The ability to compromise, receive feedback, and adjust plans accordingly is critical. I would say these are my strengths.

What type of career in CS do you believe you are most suited for? Why this field and not another? Be specific.

I would say that I have a passion for computer programming in general. There is a unique sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that comes with it. To people that have never written a computer program, I describe it as similar to the feeling of building with lego blocks. With enough time and imagination, you can create almost anything. Personally, I enjoy the more creative or artistic aspects of programming. Building a website's user interface that is elegant and user friendly makes it truly a piece of art, in my opinion. Video games are also a great mesh between artists and programmers where working closely together is a necessity. With that being said, I believe web development, software engineering, and video game development would all be a great fit for me.

What professional organizations would you like to join? What professional development would you like to be a part of in the next five years? Be specific and don't consider places of employment.

In the future, I would like to join the Association of Christians in the Mathematical Sciences as well as the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence.

What are the ways you can use the skills you have learned in CS to serve your community? Be specific.

There are many ways in which the skills I have learned in CS can be applied to serve my community. For example, Free Code Camp is a nonprofit with a mission to educate in many disciplines such as responsive web design, quality assurance, and data analysis. Their project has benefited from many contributions, including mine.