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ISAT 252

Dr. Morgan Benton

Reflective Narrative

Coming into ISAT 252, I was expecting to have a course where the professor taught a specific programming language they chose like either Python and Javascript and they would have a specific way of teaching us how to learn the programming language. This was not the case at all however, and in fact this was rather a good surprise that it was not what I expected. Instead of having a strict way of teaching that would be the end-all be-all, Morgan had us explore any programming language that interested us and had us learn at our own pace. It also wasn’t just regular class on a three-day class basis but we would also have small team meetings to check up on how we are doing which would also keep me on pace with my work as this was a self-paced class. Instead, the classes would give us advice/tutorials and tips on how to keep advancing in our own programming language and also provide useful tools to help us practice the language we chose.

In this class, the learning goals I set for myself was by the end of the semester to at least know the basics of how to use the command line and the basics of Javascript as that was the language I chose. On top of that I was hoping if I had time after learning the basics of Javascript if I could learn C++ as I heard these two programming languages go hand-in-hand. Learning Javascript was the main goal for me as I am a marketing major and I asked my peers and professionals I know currently in the business world about what programming language would be a beneficial asset to use to go with marketing. Almost all of them said Javascript was the best programming language to learn to help with app development and website development as it would help with digital marketing.

This semester, I actually did what I set out to do with my goals as I learned the basics of how to use the command line in Windows by watching Youtube tutorials on how to use the command line which were very helpful. I developed my own website as well and plan to use it in my career to track my achievements and what I have been doing both in the classroom and outside the classroom. I see the website as a personal resume that I can use over the lifetime of my career as I can keep adding to it to show everything about my life. I also heavily relied on Free Code Camp for learning as it had basic HTML and HTML5 courses. I also used it to learn the basics of Javascript as well which is where I learned about everything I currently know about Javascript. Watching some tutorials on Youtube when I would get stuck or to reinforce my knowledge on Javascript were also helpful and began to use Exercism to reinforce my knowledge of Javascript. I would also try to spend about an hour every day during the weekdays watching these tutorials and learning outside of class which seemed reasonable for myself to handle. Although, some days I wouldn’t be able to spend as much time on it depending on my work for other classes as this semester was my most difficult semester and the semester that I had to apply to COB300. It was also not just a busy semester academically, but with extracurriculars as well as I am apart of four organizations on campus which are Vietnamese Student Association, Filipino Americans at Madison, my fraternity, and Club Lacrosse. These extracurriculars would also take up a lot of my time as I also picked up three “littles” with one in the Vietnamese Student Association, one in Filipino Americans at Madison, and one in my fraternity. Each “little” I had I would act as a mentor to them and get them more acquainted with the organization they were in while also trying to help guide them along their first year here at JMU. Balancing these extracurriculars with academics was difficult to do but was very manageable as long as I made efficient use of my time.

I felt I was successful with my website as I completed the basics of my website and how I wanted it to be formatted, so now all I have to do is continually keep adding information as I keep completing goals and projects I set out to do in my life. I also felt I was successful in learning how to use the command line as I completed the Free Code Camp tutorial as well for the Basic HTML and HTML5. I was also able to fully complete the basic Javascript tutorial in Free Code Camp as well which also adds to the evidence of my successes.

Even though I did complete my initial goals, I still wasn’t able to get to learn C++ as I wasn’t able to get to learn it before the semester ended. Also, I feel like even though I did complete the basics of Javascript tutorial on Free Code Camp, I felt it took me awhile to learn as I would frequently get stuck on what to do and it would take me a little while to figure out each step. Even after finishing the tutorial too, I feel as if I am still not that well-versed in Javascript and that I may forget things the tutorial has taught me as I learned programming (at least in Javascript) is personally pretty difficult for me to learn as I would easily become frustrated and stressed. After going through the tutorials, retaining the information of everything I learned I feel will be a little difficult for me and I would still need to look at the tutorials for reminders when coding even if I already learned it. The same goes for the command line as well however the basics of the command line was easier to retain rather than Javascript.

Reflecting on my failures, I think I’ve learned that in order to reinforce my ability in programming Javascript and the command line, the best way to do it is by keep practicing coding on a consistent basis. This way, I will become more familiarized and comfortable with programming and it will come to me more naturally as I keep interacting with it. I just have to keep practicing and make more use of practice problems as well as they are very helpful in helping me reinforce my knowledge of Javascript. Even though it will be hard at first as I may have to keep getting help from hints or the use of tutorials, eventually I will be able to overcome that hump and start to rely less on these tutorials and learn to do it by myself. Personally, programming isn’t my personal preference as I feel it comes harder to me than it does for other people and I have to spend more time on learning it than others. However, I do feel it is a useful skill to have in the future which is why I want to stick with it even if it is not my strong suit.

After taking this class this semester, I definitely do feel more educated and it opened my horizon to new possibilities I can have by becoming skilled at programming. I feel learning to program will open new doors for me and help me get to where I want in life as I feel it is an important and necessary skill to have in this day and age with the rapid advancement of technology. I don’t think I would use the term as feeling more enlightened personally for me as this adds to my list as more things I need to get done in my life in order to become successful although it will overall add more stress into my life during the learning curve of programming. It also gave me a greater appreciation of what programmers do and how they develop websites and develop apps as they have to go through multiple steps of coding in order to reach their end product. At the same time though, before I took this class I thought programming would be impossible for me as I am not the best at using technology compared to my peers and thought it would be impossible to create my own website. I always looked at programming as a foreign language but it isn’t as impossible as I thought it was. Here we are now as I have developed my own website as I now know it’s not as difficult as I thought as long as you put in the effort to learn.

Within ISAT 252, it has helped me realize that programming really isn’t my strong suit but I am still determined to learn it as I feel like it would be an essential skill to have in the future. Although it is not my strong suit, I am still glad I took the first step in being introduced to programming as even though it won’t change my major or what I want to do in life, I am still glad I tried it out and went through the experience as I’ve never tried learning it before. It has definitely contributed to knowing myself better and solidifying what I want to do in the future and also opened my eyes that it could be an important asset to learn in my major which is marketing. I am also minoring in Computer Information Systems so either way I feel like I would have learned Javascript or some type of programming language. Outside of this class, the classes I took towards my major only reinforced my determination to become a marketing major as that has been my goal since high school and have invested so much time into making this happen. This is the semester I also applied to COB300 which I will be taking next fall semester which is when everything will really start for my major. This semester is when I filled the last of my prerequisites in order to become officially accepted into the College of Business. My goal in the distant future is to become part of a marketing team where I can collaborate with others on campaigns and projects for a company that I support such as Nike or Google and become specialized in digital marketing. The other gen ed classes I took also reinforced this fact as I know after taking those classes such as art history that I never want to take it again as that is not suited for me. Some unexpected events also happened which I wouldn’t say I’m glad that happened but have definitely made me stronger and firmer in how I stand as a person and in my identity. Towards the end of this semester a little over a week before finals, I had gotten into an altercation with another student as he said some provocative things to me as they were attacks directed towards me. I could not let that slide and stood up for myself and that is when things escalated and he attacked me first which is how the altercation occurred. Fortunately, the police eventually became involved and helped calm the situation down. After reflecting on the situation, it honestly still makes me mad about what happened but I feel made me stronger as a person and reaffirm my own identity as a person but also made me realize that things can happen like this even in a place like JMU.

Personally I feel like I deserve an A considering the effort I put towards this class even though it was one of my more difficult classes this semester learning wise, as I learned programming is not best fit for me. Learning in this class did not come naturally to me as it would in other classes I take which is why I had to put in more effort in this class than others. I feel I was still able to get a considerable amount done for this semester from what I’ve achieved and have learned a lot from my experiences in this class. Although I feel I learned at a slower rate than my peers and despite the frustrations I would have while trying to learn Javascript, it was still a fun and interesting class to take and am glad I got the chance to make this my first programming class.