Learning Goals - Erik Halenkamp

Now that my time at UNC is drawing to a close, I've been thinking lately about what I'll need to learn outside of my degree. For a while now I've worked to hone my skills as a software engineer through self-instruction, and it's almost guaranteed I'll have to use those skills as a software engineer learning industry standards for the first time. Software engineering is a vast field, however, and I have no way of knowing until I'm hired what exactly I'll be doing, so preparing is less about learning as much as I can and more about keeping my research skills sharp. Even though I know nothing about what the goal will specifically consist of, it's my most immediate learning goal nonetheless. No matter what field in software engineering I enter, I want to be able to understand and utilize the most modern and applicable technologies for the task at hand. Unlike UNC, however, it's likely that wherever I end up will have industry professionals that can provide tangible feedback about the tech in question. It seems odd that I've gone an entire three years in the Software Engineering major without receiving a single piece of feedback on any program I've created (from professor or peer), but I'm looking forward to a much-needed change of pace.

All things considered, I don't consider software the field in which I'll remain for the rest of my career. I hope to stay in the workforce for at least a couple years, gaining both technical and industry knowledge, before finally submitting applications for law school. While law school itself is a learning goal I will discuss in more depth soon, I must first achieve expertise in the technologies I'll be using in work. As explained in the previous paragraph, meeting this goal will consist of employing learning strategies I'm already familiar with, perhaps made even easier by resident specialists present to assist. As soon as that's achieved, I can begin learning more about

the industry itself. An industry knowledge beyond a simple technical understanding is necessary for what I want to do after graduating law school. There's many legal pitfalls in the field involving copyright infringement and other intellectual property concerns, so I want to identify the most prevalent issues and any surefire ways of avoiding them in order to effectively consult clients.

Once both of the above goals are fulfilled, I'll be ready to prepare for law school. Here, I know I want to learn about intellectual property law, utilizing my technical background as an augment. This should be my unilateral focus at the time, as it's unlikely my current learning strategy will translate well to the rigor of law school. I'll have to go to great lengths to prepare myself for this kind of education, both mentally and economically. I must be at a spot in life where I can financially support myself without steady income, as well as prepared for the massive educational undertaking law school will be. Upon completion, however, I plan on consulting with developers and business representatives on the legal considerations of their software, all the while staying up-to-date on the latest industry trends and any updates on my tech stack. Maintaining competency as a developer is necessary for this endeavor, as many issues in play can only be understood and troubleshot from that perspective.

Success in each learning goal is the itinerary of my early career, and being able to outline them like this has helped me visualize the reality of my own future. I'm already prepared to begin, and so long as I can stay on the track outlined here, my final goal should be a sure shot.