

Iowa State's Classes are useful for only so much. Only around 30% of what I have learned may be applicable to any career I go into. Several of my classes, I will never again use some of the knowledge I was required to learn for it. The general concepts are very useful in understanding how something technical works. That is the most important information I have carried on from my classes. The real knowledge I have gained from college came outside of class, working on my own projects, working in a research lab, and having internships. That is the most important part of college.

Starting Sophomore year, I began working at ISEAGE, a research lab responsible for running the Cyber Defense Competitions (CDC) held for ISU students, community colleges, and high schools. Every competition, I have learned something new. In the beginning, I began learning how to use Linux for hosting server applications, and the power of a terminal. That has been an invaluable resource that I have used every single day since the day I learned it. My laptop now will exclusively run Unix/Linux based OS's because of how useful it is.

My first summer during college, I obtained my first internship. It's taught me a lot in the time I was there about the management of infrastructure for a company. With the extra money from that, I realized I had a budget to do what I wanted with it. I realized I had been wanted to work on vehicles and own my own. I starting extensive research on what it took to repair vehicles, the buying process, and everything else I could learn from videos and forums. The opportunity then came where a friend of mine offered me a car for \$300. I took it. It was in rough shape. The brakes were stuck on, and was a nightmare to drive it only 4 miles from his place to mine. When all was done, I had the title in my hand, and a car in rough shape. That was perhaps the best and worst decision I've ever made that day.

I learned a lot from that moment. I know now a lot more on what I should look for in a vehicle, because this one I would find out later was almost beyond repair. I replaced the brakes pads, rotors, calipers, and fuel lines all by my self. It was a huge undertaking and took multiple evenings over the course of a couple weeks. But, at the end of it all, I had the best feeling of all owning my own vehicle that I had tirelessly worked on. It was wonderful. But, not even a few months down the road, the Iowa weather got to the subframe of the vehicle, and rust ended up retiring the vehicle for good. I deemed it unsafe when I started to feel one of the front wheels jittering because the mount location for it was starting to rust into a bigger and bigger hole. Welding would not have solved this problem alone.

This is the most important thing I have done since then. It was a big risk for me, and required a large amount of time invested in learning how to repair the vehicle I had purchased. I learned that self learning is the most powerful tool one can have in their entire life. Classes only get you so far, and once you've graduated, you need to know how to learn things on your own. I have meet too many people with near perfect grades at Iowa State who have refused to learn many things on their own time. A problem occurs in their life, and instead of learning and researching on their own, they go to someone else to fix their problem. It's what keeps a help desk in business at most companies.

At Iowa State, the only thing I can recommend is to get as active as you can in clubs and student organizations. Classes are useful, but a 4.0 GPA is useless if you can put some application to it. Have hobbies, have projects, and understand and put some practical use to what you've learned in your time at Iowa State. You will be much more marketable when you leave. I only wish I had more time to dedicate to these projects and hobbies so I can learn and do more.