Reflection Paper

This class was an experience that I was completely not expecting in several ways. I fully expected to walk into class on the first day and be underwhelmed by the content of the class as well as the energy in the classroom itself. I set my expectations quite low for the class because I hadn’t had the smoothest experiences in the past with my other programming courses. My professors in the past were less than willing to put in extra time in order to help me succeed in their class, making finishing with a good grade extremely difficult. I realized quickly that the course that I took this semester was very different. I had more than enough support and material to learn properly and sufficiently and it really made a difference. When I realized this, I set higher goals for myself in this class to see if I could succeed at programming when in the proper setting for myself personally. I promised myself that I would spend more time outside of class teaching myself how to be better and faster at programming so that I could ultimately receive a better grade than before. I wanted to feel content with myself if I was ever in a situation where I needed to be able to write some simple code, so I worked really hard to be able to feel confident in my own knowledge. This ended up working out and I did actually spend more time than ever before outside of class watching video tutorials and reading forums to learn how to code a vast range of programs. My most used websites were stack overflow and youtube, simply because they are the best and most informative to me personally ☺. If I had to guess how much time I spent outside of class working on my own per week, I would have to say that I spent around 6-10 hours per week doing extra research. Once I realized what a huge difference that studying this much actually made for me, my new goal for the semester was to be able to achieve a B or higher in the course as this would be my new personal best in a programming course. I feel like there were many successful moments for me in this course, but the one that I am most proud of is being able to navigate how to code across different programs using more than one class. This definitely took the most trial and error for me personally and had me extremely frustrated for quite a bit of time, but once I was able to figure out what I was doing wrong and how to fix it, I felt extremely proud of myself for learning something that I had never been able to figure out once before. I also felt small moments of success anytime that a program I wrote ran through properly… literally anytime it was successful I counted that as a win. This helped a lot with my overall confidence while programming and motivated me to be better. I even started showing my family all of the different programs that I was able to write, and they were equally as impressed which ended up just motivating me more. On the other hand, of course there were failures, and these were much more frustrating than I would like to admit. When I couldn’t get my code to run properly or I just didn’t know HOW to make my code run at all, I would get angry and put it down for a few days and then come back to it with a better attitude because programming seems to be notorious for making me feel a lot less intelligent than I actually am. I feel like that is my one failure for the semester, not being able to keep myself calm and collected rather than frustrated to the max. I wish that this was the one thing that I was able to change and combat because ultimately it would make me feel better about opening my laptop to be able to code in an efficient way. Overall, I feel like JMU makes me a better student and enforces good learning practices that I can carry on into the rest of my life. I do feel more educated after taking this course because I have learned new things in this course bottom line, but I guess I don’t particularly feel more enlightened. I’m not really sure I can properly explain why that is, but it probably has something to do with how much of an impact my personal life has on my classroom experience, and unfortunately this semester was a wild one for all of us. I feel like this semester and all that I completed within it has proven to me that I can persevere no matter the circumstances, and that makes me really proud of myself. Of course, none of this would have been possible without an outstanding and caring professor to teach us a subject that can be seen as very difficult. I believe that the comfort that the professor has with his/her students has a direct correlation to how well a student does in the course, because they will feel like they can ask for help without being told no or shut down. Having Dr. Benton for this course made all the difference for me and I consider myself very lucky to have been able to meet him and be a student in one of his courses. Ultimately, I feel as if I could have completed more programming if I didn’t have outside factors holding me back and hope to do better moving forward in my programming career. I hope to receive a B in this course because I do feel as if I deserve it for my improvement in this skill, but I could have also done more. Thank you for a great semester, Dr. Benton ☺