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A Reflective Journey: Navigating Your Cumulative Experience at Iowa State University

When I reflect upon my experience at Iowa State University, one thing always comes to the forefront of my mind: problem-solving. Not the classes, concepts, or even individual homework questions specifically. Instead, problem-solving in general is something that has been refined during my time at Iowa State. This is because of the collection of challenging labs, homework, exams, and assignments I've completed within my degree program. Within this reflection, I will highlight the various activities and processes that helped shape me as an engineer.

My experience at Iowa State has been full of classes and extracurricular activities that have helped shape me into a person who is willing and able to attack difficult tasks head-on. Although a lot of this development stemmed from technical coursework related to my major, some of it also came from the general education classes I enrolled in. This is because I was opened up to the idea of approaching problems in a different light, and both of these types of classes helped me to become a better learner. Before my time at Iowa State, I believed that being a good learner was a natural gift; however, as I progressed through my classes, I became aware of study and learning techniques that helped me to understand the course material better. This revelation ultimately helped me to achieve better grades as well as better overall knowledge of difficult concepts. It also helped me to excel in academic projects.

Academic projects became a place where I could logically problem-solve and demonstrate my understanding of class material. A specific project that comes to mind is the Embedded Systems CPRE2880 final project, where I developed a Roomba to navigate a

specific mine layout. This project gave me the opportunity to grow technically and socially. It allowed me to learn how to effectively communicate with teammates, utilize real-world software, and develop a useful product. This project, among others, gave me the opportunity to learn while doing. It taught me how to overcome struggles and think critically about various situations to improve my problem-solving ability.

Iowa State has also provided me with non-academic opportunities that helped shape me into who I am today. These include intramural sports such as flag football, basketball, and broomball, clubs (academic and extracurricular alike), and career fairs. From these experiences, I learned to adapt to new situations and be comfortable with being uncomfortable. This trait is something I now hold tightly, as I believe stretching yourself is the best way to grow. If not for Iowa State University and the opportunities the institution has granted me, I would still be struggling to understand how to approach technical and simple social interactions alike.

Throughout my time in Ames, I adapted my study techniques to improve my overall knowledge of difficult concepts. These topics mainly included math, such as calculus and physics, but they also included algorithms and programming-related classes. During my time taking Data Structures and Algorithms COMS3110, I enlisted the help of a tutor. This tutor helped me understand the class material and also gave me tips to better acquire knowledge and utilize it to attack problems in a different light. This experience granted me a new view on identifying, analyzing, and fixing problems.

Looking back on the experiences that have helped shape me into the person I am now opens my eyes up to the progress I've made in developing the traits essential for engineering. I am confident my time at Iowa State has effectively prepared me for a life outside of college. I am excited to put my abilities to work in a real-world environment. This new step will force me to build upon my knowledge and put my love for personal growth to use. I plan to take risks, try new things, attempt new challenges, and grow by being accepting of failure and approaching

problems with a positive and logical mindset. These traits, developed at Iowa State University, will help me live a fulfilling life in engineering.

Overall, my time at Iowa State has helped me to develop characteristics that I can not only use but continue to develop throughout my whole life. From the technical classes, all the way down to intramurals, I have learned a variety of skills that I will forever be grateful for. These skills, related to attacking problems and developing solutions, will help me to be successful in a full-time engineering role. I am thankful for my time at college, and I doubt I would change a single thing if I were able to go back and do it all over again.