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11/29/2021

Personal Development Reflection

The material of the PD3 course has allowed me to be more introspective than ever before at my time at RPI and it has provided an opportunity for me to analyze what kind of person I am in the professional world. Through the analysis of leadership competencies and engineering competencies I have learned that skills that I took for granted are potentially the reason why there were not as many doors open to me in terms of career opportunities. Engineering is a vast and complex subject not only in its technicality but in its spread of knowledge to other people. There were two main leadership competencies that I felt I strongly developed over the course of this class, those being Project Management and Innovation. Though these skills were developed, many areas of improvement still exist and thus a plan was created to demonstrate how my professional development will continue.

The Professional Development course was primarily a project based course and thus I took it upon myself to continue to develop my project management skills. There are 3 instances that I displayed great improvement in this competency. Firstly during the 60 Second Sell presentation I managed the group into writing all of the documents for peer feedback. I made sure to write documents myself, in addition to encouraging people to write their own, so that we would always hit the necessary 3 person feedback on presentation. Furthermore I worked to speed along the presentation in a timely manner without sacrificing people their own allotted presentation and questioning period. During the Cultural Competency presentation I took the lead of developing the template and overall structure of the PowerPoint. I also gave examples of what I was going to include in my portion of the presentation such that the other team members could use my work as a base. Lastly for the final paper report I made it a point to begin early and set up the ground base for which we would write the paper. I spent time reading over the assignment and devised a way for each member of the team to contribute equally to the overall paper. In addition through all of these instances, I spent time making sure everyone was up to date on their assignments and tasks so that we could finish on time to a high standard.

Innovation was another competency that I developed throughout this semester. The way in which I exemplified innovation was by pushing the boundaries of the class. I asked questions that challenged the original notion. I tried to answer questions in lecture, in a way that had not been thought of before. I tended to use extreme scenarios to see how the material we were being taught held up in those corner cases. By understanding the limits of the lessons it allowed me to further expand my knowledge of what more I had to learn. Therefore I began to ask questions that other students were not in order to attempt to bring a new perspective to the table of discussion. Furthermore in group projects, I tried to optimize the way we all worked on assignments. Instead of directly answering questions in a presentation I helped the team organize the slides in a way that synthesized a new complex argument from the given answers.

Indeed there were rooms for improvement and I think Teamwork and Collaboration is the competency I need the most work on. For clarity I do not think I suffered majorly in this competency, I simply believe there is no way to master it. Throughout the professional journey any individual will come across thousands of other people who all lead different lives. Knowing how to become a master at teamwork in a given environment requires understanding of that person’s character and strengths. Each new person on the team is a new challenge to overcome in this leadership competency. I attribute the lack of development in this competency to the lack of hours this class held. In other classes my sense of teamwork and collaboration is higher since I spend more time solving problems with those teams.

To improve myself on my professional journey I have a plan that follows 3 main points. The first plan of action was to achieve a full time position after graduation. The next point of action will be to pursue opportunities in that company similar to “rotational” programs. This is due to the opportunity presenting not only a chance to broaden my horizon in that company but also to meet new people and continue to develop my ability to work with like-minded engineers. The final action on this still developing plan would be to look for opportunities to work abroad. I am limited by the competencies I can develop working in American companies. However there are more ways to develop myself professionally outside of the United States, and that’s why I plan to work abroad. The timeline for these events are as follows: 1 year from graduation to find a full time positions, 1 year afterwards to begin working in a rotational program, and 1 year beyond that to be fully prepared to move into a similar position in another country.

Upon receiving feedback from the peer review form I have updated my plans of action and have been given insight to how I can increase my aptitude in leadership competencies. In order to increase my technical aptitude competency I will keep familiar with the topics that I have learned in school. Primarily I will do practice interview problems when looking for new positions within the company to apply to. That way I will be well prepared and able to show my abilities to a high level.

There are a few things I could have done differently in order to increase my performance in the course with respect to leadership competencies. I mentioned my weakness in teamwork and on the feedback form I was given the advice of understanding the team better. The feedback I received was to analyze the team well and handle out specific tasks that are well suited to each member. This allows myself as a leader to not only lighten the work I am required to do, but also utilize the strengths of my team to the fullest. Furthermore for the team members themselves I would be fostering an environment where their unique talents and strengths are on showcase while we solve complex engineering problems. Lastly this would allow me to better understand the team’s point of view on the problem. If everyone is a master in their respective subsystem of a project this allows a higher level of discussion and design choices to occur.

To maximize my performance in the future I plan to take this feedback and lessons in the course to heart. I have outlined my 3-4 step action plan that will only be expanded upon in the future. Through the lessons in the course not only do I have a strong foundation to begin working with new engineers in a new environment, but I also possess the ability to account for nuance and maneuver efficiently amongst the team. Some action steps that I will take to maximize my performance are as follows: paying attention more in meetings to develop team work, keeping up to date with tasks for EQ self-regulation, and lastly utilization resources such as GitHub for project management. As a leader in the course I have gained knowledge on different leadership and cultural competencies and I am confident that my skills in those areas will allow me to excel in my future professional career.