

Think about how you use cybersecurity today to stay safe online and protect your personal information and privacy. Now consider your life in college and your career after you graduate. How might cybersecurity help you achieve your academic and professional goals?

We don't realize the importance of security in our lives until we've lost it. I didn't come to this realization until I lost security in the place that I had felt safest my entire life: home.

Five months ago, I was alone in my house when four men, dressed as masked construction workers, infiltrated my home. They found me and held me at gunpoint. I escaped this situation with my life and with the dire realization that we are not guaranteed universal safety, not even in our own home. Technology has progressed. With these new innovations comes increased accessibility, even for those with destructive intentions. This security risk follows us everywhere.

Home invasions, especially those with masked gunmen, are many peoples' greatest fear. More terrifying, though, is when these criminals, masked behind a computer screen, invade your privacy from anywhere in the world. If this situation in my home happened online, my anti-malware software would have assessed if the intruder was malicious and booted them before they had the chance to attack. Cybersecurity acts as a personal bodyguard, constantly working in the background to protect our privacy and data so that we can be confident our information is safe from pernicious hackers.

To understand the gravity of how much my personal information is at risk, I counted the number of applications I have given access to my information. I was alarmed to find that I gave 15 different applications my credit card information, 11 my home address, and 3 my social security number. Cyber attacks happen every 39 seconds. 44 data records are stolen each second, and that number is rising (<https://aag-it.com/how-often-do-cyber-attacks-occur/>). Cybersecurity is the only thing standing between cybercriminals and our personal data. This is why I personally protect myself online by researching and using the most effective anti-malware software on the market.

As an aspiring software engineer, who has experienced first hand what it's like to feel completely helpless in the hands of a criminal, protecting systems against cyber attacks is a goal that I am devoted to. More specifically, I want to help companies build secure applications that will protect their clients' information from being breached. I am inspired by Malwarebytes' statement that "it takes a hacker to beat a hacker." Throughout college, I plan to dig deep into white-hat hacking by taking courses in cryptography and networking. I am confident that learning the ins and outs of cybersecurity will enable me to protect system vulnerabilities that so often get exploited by hackers. Above all, cybersecurity will help me ensure that no one ever has to feel as defenseless as I did when I lost security in a place I once viewed as indestructible.

