

- Background:
 - Based in Ames still.
 - Computer Engineering graduate with a minor in business. Passion for building impactful, real world tech solutions.
 - Major
 - Computer Engineering
 - Graduated May 2025
 - Why SW?
 - Like games, video games, computers before going to college
 - Decided to go with computer engineering
 - Favorite classes in school and why?
 - Enjoy project based courses a lot more (309 – android app built)
 - Also working with people in group project/team setting.
- Freelance:
 - Working on website development, should be up and running through June.
- Noticed big roadblock/issue:
 - Applications submitted with no call back:
 - 50+
 - Any gaps on resume you're concerned about?
 - GPA concerns?
 - 3.33 GPA
 - Communication is lacking
 - "Sometimes I need more time to think, need to be faster, more responsive"
 - Lack of experience
- Goal:
 - Seeking full time work in: software & application development, embedded systems & firmware, IT Support & networking, cybersecurity & systems engineering.
 - Dream Role:
 - Remote/Hybrid computer engineering role, network engineer, IT, software engineer, infrastructure engineer
 - Cisco. Infrastructure is #1 on the list.
 - Clubs/Involvement on Campus:
 - MSA – Secretary
- When do you want to start?
 - +8hrs in Saudia
 - Monday 1/5/26 – 9AM CST.
- Why now? What happens if nothing changes in the next 6 months?
 - Change must happen inshallah

Session 1 (1/9/26):

Big issues: communication

- Join Toastmasters – or other speaking clubs
- ISU Student Innovation Center offers Pitch Workshops (you learn to do a 90 second project pitch)
- Offer mentorship to underclassmen. This can improve communication.
-

Advice:

- Leverage ISU Alumni Resources:
 - CyHire – keep an updated profile
 - Engineering Career Services – can schedule mock interviews for even more interview experience
 - Career Fair – get ready for February! (Tuesday, Feb 10 – 12PM - 5PM)
 - ISU Research Park – post graduation internships sometimes offered or early talent development programs
- Independent projects
- Open source projects on Github and contribute
- ISU Job Board for research assistant or lab tech or something just to get some foot in the door with a professor.
- Tutoring
- Reconnect with old professors that knew you about opportunities

Developed a full-stack academic scheduling tool for KAU using React, TypeScript, Node.js, Express, and Sequelize.

Developed a full-stack academic scheduling tool:

- University was using excel or paper (very inefficient) – cutting down scheduling time by 60%
- Scheduling out all classes for a department
- Timeframe was to finish from June to August
- Flexible budget
- 5 departments tried to use out of 30 departments
- # professors or classes

How:

- Backwards compatibility

Impact:

- 5 departments adopted,

Accomplishment + Metric + How + Why

Developed a full-stack academic scheduling tool (KAU Faculty Scheduler**) to replace manual excel/paper system for 30 departments using full stack (React, TypeScript, Node.js, Express, and Sequelize), cutting down scheduling time by X%, saving KAU \$X/year.**

Implemented role-based access control, dynamic dashboards, and admin features for course and user management.

Background:

- Different roles, Dean, Department Head, Chair, all have different access to parts of the site.
- Faculty hours, courses, times, locations of courses, management.
- Admin features is separate for IT access to add users to the system (user management).
- Time constraint – completed in 2 days to get security implemented.
- Pain – taking too long to schedule courses (time).

Implemented security feature in 2 days and X iterations of data validation testing with role-based access control to Faculty Scheduler using RESTful APIs and JWT authentication for Faculty to schedule courses (hours, locations, times) restricting sensitive information to authorized users.

Integrated RESTful APIs, JWT authentication, and robust data validation for secure, scalable performance.

Next session: Tuesday (6AM CST).

Session 2 (1/16/26):

Coin Control - Financial Planner Android Application

- Built an Android budgeting and expense-tracking app using Java and Spring Boot, integrating an SQL database to store and manage user financial data, enabling efficient personal finance management for multiple users.

Situation/Task:

- Class project (software development practices class). Semester long project.
- I was on a team of 4 (2 backend devs and 2 front end devs).
- I was a backend dev (chat function, homepage, tracking, database).
- Assignment was to create an Android app after approval from the professor.
- It had to have a chat feature in it.
- We chose a financial planning/budgeting app – chose this because it was more formal, seemed more professional. We wanted to do something more around productivity, not a game (useful).
- We wanted to integrate a GPT chatbot, but we had difficulty because of a paywall. (is there detail about the research/effort that went in?)

Actions:

- Split up responsibilities based on people's interests/experience (I got back end).
- Helped to keep the team on track by checking in on progress (especially closer to deadlines).
- Helping coordinate meeting times for progress check-ins or group work sessions outside of class time.
- I designed the logo (coin control logo – design with online Canva type tool)
- I implemented:
 - the chat function
 - implemented in Java, (try to fill in more details here about interesting features in this function/concepts)
 - the homepage
 - Shows you your allowance and savings, can insert expenses here as well. Built with Java. (functions built to calculate allowance and savings based on expenses given). Built equations, then algorithm to accomplish this.
 - the tracking function for expenses
 - Same as homepage.
 - the database
 - Built with SQL (relational database). Takes what you input into homepage, stores in database, then calls on this data when it needs to do calculations. Also stores user info in this database (I didn't have the user info)
- Backend/frontend integration/collaboration:

- Before starting, meet with front end guys, I would understand what output types they might need, so I can adjust the backend to accommodate and avoid rework.
- Would finish a piece of backend work, then meet with front end guys and walk them through the new changes/implementation and how they can interface with the backend for their portions.

-Testing:

- I would do my own backend testing (unit testing for calculations, input/output testing)
- The front end would do their own testing.

-Presented 3 times to a TA throughout semester (presenting my contribution)

- No negative feedback from TA throughout these check-ins, continued on with the project.

Results:

-Finished on time

-Functional app (all functions working at the end) – tested/used by all 4 teammates

-Finished with an A (100%) on the project – this included peer reviews/ratings from my teammates.

-Presented final app to a TA (presenting my contribution)

-What would you do differently?

- Chatbot?
- Would have tried to take some front end responsibility to contribute more to the front end experience and learn more about it.
- Would like to have added more functionality to make the app appeal to audience/consumers outside of our class. (scanning receipts with camera and have AI auto populate expenses, use data from previous month and go through financial planning for next month)

-What was your biggest takeaway?

- Learned how to make a native Android app, didn't know how before this
- Learned how important it is to make back end decisions/implementations after collaboration with front end devs to avoid rework and misalignment.

-How did you spread influence/impact wider?

- Coached brother through class after my lessons learned.
- I used my backend experience from this app to help with backend work at Abdul Aziz Uni.

Next session: 6PM CST, Thursday 29Jan.

Session 3 (1/29/26):

Intros:

Recent grad from ISU (B.S. in Computer Engineering, minor in business). Network engineer internship, other working experience.

1 or 2 of your favorite classes so far and why? My favorite class was SW development when I made an application. Got to see the whole process and see the result.

Behavioral Interview:

Question 1: Leadership & Initiative (taking ownership, stepping up, driving results without being asked):

What to Look For

- Identifies problems proactively, doesn't wait to be told
- Takes ownership of outcomes, not just tasks
- Influences others without formal authority
- Shows clear "I did" vs "we did" — knows their specific contribution
- Demonstrates follow-through to measurable results
- Volunteers for stretch assignments or ambiguous situations

Red Flags

- Waits for permission or explicit instructions
- Takes credit for team efforts ("we" without clarifying their role)
- Confuses activity with leadership (busy ≠ leading)
- Can't articulate the impact of their initiative
- Blames others when initiative fails
- Leadership examples are all about authority, not influence

"Tell me about a time you had to make a decision without all the information you needed."

"Describe a situation where you had to lead a team or project. What was your approach?"

S/T: Senior design project had to create a pressure sensor patch. Would be seated onto a wheel chair. This would make sure they don't get pressure soars. I was assigned to be the team leader (AKA the scrum master). The main role was to keep the project moving forward, and checking in with the progress with each team member. I also had to run agile sprints, and communicate with the clients. I had to revise and submit all the progress reports.

A: Actions were the things mentioned in the role above.

R: Finished the project. Performed well, scored well in the class as well. The device did what it was supposed to do. We did send it out to the client. Was sent out to the company.

LL: I asked the question. Importance of communicating well with the clients. First time working with the outside client. I had to represent the team, was the face of the team talking to the clients.

BT: I asked the question. I would have rather taken more technical responsibilities in addition to my leadership role. (this could be a dangerous answer, because you were the team lead.)

Client Feedback: Not prepared as much as I wanted.

My Feedback: I can see you looking at other monitor and checking other information. You were moving around a lot (seemed nervous) as I was reading the question/doing the intro. I would want to have a bulleted list and not spend so much time searching. You might have included actions in the S/T. Never had any communication with the client/company afterward, should follow up.

3 levels of an answer:

- 1 – did what was asked, answers the question, answers the competency
- 2 – level 1 + above and beyond what was asked (process improvement afterwards, broader impact than intended or super effort/overcame big obstacles to get it done)
- 3 – level 2 + became a spokesperson for this thing, shared with other teams/groups/departments/trained others/taught others/applied elsewhere.

Question 2: Problem Solving & Technical Judgement (analytical thinking, debugging approach, technical decision-making):

 **What to Look For**

- Structured approach: breaks down complex problems systematically
- Considers multiple solutions before deciding
- Articulates trade-offs clearly (cost, time, quality, risk)
- Uses data/evidence to support decisions
- Knows when to ask for help vs. push through
- Learns from debugging experiences—doesn't repeat mistakes

 **Red Flags**

- Jumps to solutions without understanding the problem
- Can't explain their reasoning or thought process
- "Trial and error" without hypothesis-driven approach
- Overcomplicates simple problems or oversimplifies complex ones
- Blames tools, time, or others for technical failures
- No mention of validation or testing decisions

"Walk me through how you approached a complex technical problem."

S/T: From full stack development at KAU. Position I got when I was speaking with university staff. Lecture/course planning was very inefficient. **They were using excel and hand written paper (time metric?).** I proposed to them to build a website to make the process easy and save them a lot of time. Started in June 2025, target was to complete before August 2025, so they could use it before semester started. I was also collaborating with another developer to create it. Was being created from scratch.

Main difficult part I was going through was that throughout building, database kept changing over and over, and getting errors. We were trying to figure out things as we go, which kept creating bugs and we had to keep solving them. We had to do a migration every time we have to change the database. Everyone who would pull the code from git would have to run migration as well.

A:

R: Delivered the scheduling system reduced time from 2 weeks to a couple of hours. They could schedule without conflicts, in one place, one website. We sent out beta testing for them to use, and provide feedback so we could provide continuous improvements.

LL: Learned typescript from scratch and applied it to this production environment. Also gained hands on experience with authentication, authorization, and securing multi user login through 1 database, and making sure everyone only got access to what they're supposed to.

BT: We had a lot of trouble with the database, I was using mySQL, but I would have explored other kinds of databases to see if we could have avoided the use for migrations. Have not looked at other databases. (do this before you interview, even if you just ask Grok)

Why did you choose this migration solution specifically? Because that's the only solution that I knew of. From my SQL experience, this is what I knew. I did explore other possibilities and it reinforced my belief that migrations were the best.

Still in use? Still supporting and there are some small continuous improvements. Need to create a landing page and a video tutorial to teach people how to use it (english/arabic).

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 3: Teamwork & Collaboration (working well with others, cross-functional skills, and supporting teammates):

What to Look For

- Shares credit genuinely—highlights teammates' contributions
- Adapts communication style for different audiences
- Seeks to understand before being understood (active listening)
- Puts team success above personal recognition
- Offers help proactively, not just when asked
- Handles conflict constructively—focuses on solutions, not blame

Red Flags

- "I" language only—no acknowledgment of team
- Speaks negatively about previous teammates/managers
- Avoids conflict entirely OR escalates unnecessarily
- Takes a "not my job" attitude
- Can't give specific examples of helping others
- Blames team dynamics for personal failures

"Describe a conflict you had with a teammate. How did you resolve it?"

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 4: Communication & Influence (explaining complex ideas, persuading stakeholders, and presenting):

What to Look For

- Adjusts message complexity for the audience
- Uses concrete examples, analogies, or visuals
- Listens and addresses objections thoughtfully
- Shows preparation and structure in presentations
- Delivers difficult messages with empathy and clarity
- Persuades through logic AND relationship-building

Red Flags

- Uses jargon when explaining to non-experts
- Rambles without clear structure or point
- Gets defensive when challenged
- Avoids difficult conversations entirely
- Relies on authority/position rather than persuasion
- Can't give examples of adapting communication style

"Tell me about a time you had to explain something technical to a non-technical audience."

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 5: Adaptability & Learning (handling change, learning quickly, and dealing with ambiguity):

What to Look For

- Embraces change as opportunity, not threat
- Has a systematic approach to learning new things
- Stays calm under uncertainty—takes action anyway
- Seeks out unfamiliar challenges proactively
- Shows curiosity and asks good questions
- Quickly integrates new information into their approach

Red Flags

- Resists change or complains about shifting priorities
- "That's not what I was hired to do" attitude
- Freezes when facing ambiguity—needs all answers first
- Relies only on familiar methods, won't try new approaches
- Learning approach is passive (waiting to be taught)
- Gets frustrated easily when things don't go as planned

"Tell me about a time you had to adapt to a significant change."

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 6: Failure & Self-Awareness (humility, self-reflection, growth mindset, accountability):

What to Look For (Strong Answers)

- Owns the failure fully—no deflection or excuses
- Shows genuine self-reflection, not scripted humility
- Describes specific actions taken to improve
- Shares a REAL failure, not a humble-brag
- Demonstrates growth—behavior actually changed
- Comfortable discussing imperfection (emotionally mature)

Red Flags (Weak Answers)

- Blames others, circumstances, or timing
- "Failure" is actually a disguised success
- Can't name a genuine failure (lack of self-awareness)
- Gets defensive or uncomfortable with the topic
- Learning is generic: "I learned to work harder"
- No evidence the lesson was actually applied

"Tell me about a time you realized you were wrong about something."

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 7: Generic Job Fit (passion for engineering, career goals, and intrinsic motivation):

What to Look For

- Genuine enthusiasm—eyes light up talking about work
- Clear career direction with logical reasoning
- Pursues learning outside of job requirements
- Connects personal interests to professional goals
- Shows curiosity about the role and company specifically
- Has researched the company and asks thoughtful questions

Red Flags

- Generic answers: "I like solving problems"
- Motivation is purely extrinsic (salary, title, prestige)
- No side projects, learning, or personal development
- Can't articulate why THIS role vs. any other
- Career goals seem unrealistic or disconnected
- No questions about the role, team, or company

"Why are you interested in this role/company specifically?"

Next session, Sunday 1PM CST

Session 4 (2/1/26):

Intros:

Recent grad from ISU (B.S. in Computer Engineering, minor in business). Network engineer internship, other working experience.

1 or 2 of your favorite classes so far and why? My favorite class was SW development when I made an application. Got to see the whole process and see the result.

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"Describe a situation where you had to lead a team or project. What was your approach?"

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"Tell me about a time you had to make a decision without all the information you needed."

"Tell me about a time your leadership approach didn't work. What happened?"

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 2: Problem Solving & Technical Judgement (analytical thinking, debugging approach, technical decision-making):

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Still in use? Still supporting and there are some small continuous improvements. Need to create a landing page and a video tutorial to teach people how to use it (english/arabic).

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

"Describe a technical trade-off you had to make. How did you decide?"

"Describe a time you were stuck on a problem. How did you get unstuck?"

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 3: Teamwork & Collaboration (working well with others, cross-functional skills, and supporting teammates):

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Red Flags

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- Avoids conflict entirely OR escalates unnecessarily
- Takes a "not my job" attitude
- Can't give specific examples of helping others
- Blames team dynamics for personal failures

X"Describe a time you had to work with someone difficult. How did you handle it?"

"Describe a conflict you had with a teammate. How did you resolve it?"

S/T: Back in high school before ISU. Doing senior design project had to choose a research paper or make a working product. I did both, most did only research paper. Developed a video game to teach Saudi culture to children. It was to teach national identity to children. I made the game with that intention (did research on national unity). Used online tutorials and coding resources to teach myself. Built a working prototype, had animations, had camera tracking, had some gameable features to collect coins. Prepared design with free assets, later hired someone to improve. First exposure to actual programming, writing code, taught myself Unity and C#. Had 1 teammate and that's where the trouble started on this project.

A:

Initially, my teammate refused to contribute.

Initially I realized that my teammate was lacking a lot of the skills he needed to help contribute for his portion of the project.

Said he didn't have the technical or writing skills.

So we met initially to talk about what his experience was, where his strengths were, what his gaps were, and what he was ready to contribute to right off the bat, and where you could learn and continue to contribute over time.

During COVID, a lot of people were feeling lazy, so I guess he was feeling like that.

I communicated openly with him and the instructor and handled it professionally.

I divided up the work with that feedback so he could contribute in X, Y, Z ways based on his skills.

I also gave him some coaching and training on how do some in depth research on finding different assets for our project, so he could take ownership over that as well.

Deadlines – how often did you meet, how did you keep him on track, how did you manage your teammate specially (constructively).

Presentation – how did he contribute, or how did you enable him and EMPOWER him to contribute.

We agreed that I would do the writing and coding, he would manage the design assets with the hired person.

I managed the deadlines for the project itself, and the presentation.

R: I made a working demo to the school. Teachers played/demo'd it to the school.

Got some good feedback (specific?). Only student to deliver product (out of how many students?). Because of all the positive feedback, and the hard work, I was approached by a foundation that was excited to sponsored me to take game development courses at Michigan State University and inspired me to study computer engineering.

LL: Moved from scratch to proper coding, developing a game was new, graphics integration, project management. (More productive to lift up teammates who need help, than to abandon them and move on without them.)

BT: I would have used LLMs to solve problems faster (they didn't exist). (I came a long way in terms of coaching and helping my teammate get up to the point they could contribute, but if I could go back, I might challenge them even more, and I would have pushed them a little harder to contribute towards our demo and presentation more than I did. I would have pushed them to get out of their comfort zone a little harder and not taken on so much of the demo/presentation myself.)

Client Feedback: Decent, addressed question. Went on a tangent.

My Feedback:

Question 4: Communication & Influence (explaining complex ideas, persuading stakeholders, and presenting):

What to Look For

- Adjusts message complexity for the audience
- Uses concrete examples, analogies, or visuals
- Listens and addresses objections thoughtfully
- Shows preparation and structure in presentations
- Delivers difficult messages with empathy and clarity
- Persuades through logic AND relationship-building

Red Flags

- Uses jargon when explaining to non-experts
- Rambles without clear structure or point
- Gets defensive when challenged
- Avoids difficult conversations entirely
- Relies on authority/position rather than persuasion
- Can't give examples of adapting communication style

X“Tell me about a time you had to explain something technical to a non-technical audience.”

“Tell me about a time you failed to communicate effectively. What happened?”

Technical → non-technical

S/T: A research team reached out after they heard about the full stack scheduling project at KAU. Another team reached out to me and I worked with a lead researcher. Worked on multi modal AI models, text to image/image to text models. Research was to see if models can adapt to content based on ads, how well can models interpret the visual intent and CULTURAL details specifically. PAINT THE PAIN: Language barrier!! Time zone difference!!

A: Selected leading multi modal AI models. Chose the models based on support for text to image/image to text performance. Tracked rankings for text to image leaderboards to choose them as well. Then, provided each model to convert each image into a detailed text prompt. I fed the text back into the model and asked it to recreate the image. Then, compared results to see accuracy, cultural items (skin color, clothing, facial features). Mention arabic/english. Compiled all of my findings in a document catered towards non-technical audiences (researchers). Included side by side images/comparisons as well.

R: Finished the comparison and provided feedback to the researchers, not requiring them to have technical knowledge of these models/etc. (They didn't have any questions left).

LL: Learned biggest strengths/weaknesses of current multi modal AI languages. (GPT is only model that could ready arabic text and convert to images). Learned when working with people who english is not their first language, avoid deep technical language.

BT: I would try to use more basic english vocabulary. I would speak arabic when we're not needing technical language to make it easier to understand. Would have done video calls earlier on, realized that email and slack messaging was harder with technical to non technical information and english as a second language. Time zone issue really made us too reliant on written communication early on.

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 5: Adaptability & Learning (handling change, learning quickly, and dealing with ambiguity):

What to Look For

- Embraces change as opportunity, not threat
- Has a systematic approach to learning new things
- Stays calm under uncertainty—takes action anyway
- Seeks out unfamiliar challenges proactively
- Shows curiosity and asks good questions
- Quickly integrates new information into their approach

Red Flags

- Resists change or complains about shifting priorities
- "That's not what I was hired to do" attitude
- Freezes when facing ambiguity—needs all answers first
- Relies only on familiar methods, won't try new approaches
- Learning approach is passive (waiting to be taught)
- Gets frustrated easily when things don't go as planned

"Tell me about a time you had to adapt to a significant change."

"Tell me about a time you struggled to adapt to something new."

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 6: Failure & Self-Awareness (humility, self-reflection, growth mindset, accountability):

What to Look For (Strong Answers)

- Owns the failure fully—no deflection or excuses
- Shows genuine self-reflection, not scripted humility
- Describes specific actions taken to improve
- Shares a REAL failure, not a humble-brag
- Demonstrates growth—behavior actually changed
- Comfortable discussing imperfection (emotionally mature)

Red Flags (Weak Answers)

- Blames others, circumstances, or timing
- "Failure" is actually a disguised success
- Can't name a genuine failure (lack of self-awareness)
- Gets defensive or uncomfortable with the topic
- Learning is generic: "I learned to work harder"
- No evidence the lesson was actually applied

"Tell me about a time you realized you were wrong about something."

"What's the worst decision you've made? What happened?"

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback:

Question 7: Generic Job Fit (passion for engineering, career goals, and intrinsic motivation):

What to Look For

- Genuine enthusiasm—eyes light up talking about work
- Clear career direction with logical reasoning
- Pursues learning outside of job requirements
- Connects personal interests to professional goals
- Shows curiosity about the role and company specifically
- Has researched the company and asks thoughtful questions

Red Flags

- Generic answers: "I like solving problems"
- Motivation is purely extrinsic (salary, title, prestige)
- No side projects, learning, or personal development
- Can't articulate why THIS role vs. any other
- Career goals seem unrealistic or disconnected
- No questions about the role, team, or company

"Why are you interested in this role/company specifically?"

"Tell me about a side project or personal initiative in engineering."

S/T:

A:

R:

LL:

BT:

Client Feedback:

My Feedback: