When I first began my journey into higher education there was more focus on networking and cybersecurity. After completing high school, I enrolled at ECPI University. It was there that my passion for computing began. Technology is a way I can express myself. It allows you to do things in a way you never thought was possible. You can be creative and show your personality in all you do with a professional touch to it. I could do a project and review and think that it is simple, but if I were to do that same project on a computer and with the right number of designs, it would be seen as more elaborate or creative. Technology is more than just being efficient and creative; it’s about showing a sense of professionalism. It allows you to express duality in design and words. It’s about bringing a positive impact to others through your final product and having the opportunity to have a sense of pride from your creation.

Technology can impact your life in the way it has mine, and it can become a sixth sense or an extension of yourself. While it’s not always the best to have this sense as it can lead to dependence, but sometimes that dependence is necessary. It’s that same dependence that lets you do everything you have ever imagined. Break-through any barrier or obstacle that you may have encountered this far in life. Being connected through tech is the new normal. Without some of the technology that we have today I am not sure where we would all be.

The curriculum at ECPI prepared me to build secure networks in Windows, Cisco, and Linux environments, and implement network security plans to keep hackers at bay and networks secure. ECPI also gave a brief introduction to programming and software development. While networking is the basis for all things my passion now lies within software development. I am interested in acquiring the skills necessary to become either a backend or a full-stack developer. Front-end development is not the ideal endpoint but is not fully dismissed as it will enhance my skills and make me more marketable.

My current skill set while not vast is not completely devoid of anything. I have a associate degree in cyber and network security but am pursuing a bachelor's in computer science. I do have hands-on experience with service desk work, networking, and monitoring servers. Since starting my current internship I have been able to further develop this skill and have been focusing on the long-term maintenance of hardware, specifically server and end-user devices. I am knowledgeable in Java, C, Linux, and Python languages. I have learned to quickly triage, escalate, and/or resolve IT related incidents. I am capable of actively responding to NMS alerts and improve monitoring as needed.

My experience with HPC technology began earlier this year. I participated in the HackHPC@ADMI22 where we used CloudyClusters as our main development environment. It was in the beginning while adapting to the new environment, but it was a great tool once I was adjusted. Our team was leading an investigation into food insecurity in NC, and through CloudyClusters, we were able to complete our data analysis via Jupyter Notebooks. This summer I have had the pleasure to experience utilizing Jetstream as my launching pad into virtual machines and Linux through the SGCI Coding Institute. Being accepted into this coding institute has helped me greatly enhance my current programming skills. It has helped me grow as a young professional, while also providing me new perspectives on concepts. While I have had some exposure to each of them in their own way at my previous institution, Jetstream further enhanced my experience with HPC technology.

When reflecting on what I have achieved thus far I am proud. At this point in my life, I have managed to complete my associate degree in Computer Information Systems with a concentration in Cybersecurity. It took me a year and a half to complete the program at ECPI with some hands-on experience while I was there. I have also secured an internship in my field of study. A few months ago, I was given the opportunity to join the Information Technology department at Yadtel/Zirrus Telecom. It was a unique opportunity for me to find. They were looking for students in Computer Science or Information Technology. Over the past few months, I have risen to every challenge and have been learning new things daily. In my career I can see myself eventually working for a government agency. I would like the opportunity to experience a remote-based job. I do believe that I would flourish in a software-based environment. The reason being is software or data is forever changing. I do not want to go into a career that is monotonous. I will always be a life-learner and love discovering new things. My professional network is one that I am continuing to grow as time goes on. Currently I would say that my coworkers are my best source of help. The people I work with are natural mentors and love helping those of us that may not know everything that they do and try their best to help us grow. There are some internships within the FBI that I have thought about joining. These would be fantastic opportunities for training and development. My current internship is a great source of training. My mentors would be the same people I consider my professional network. Although, I would include Dr. Caldwell and Dr. K as mentors. They are great professors who offer good advice.

Over the next few years there are three main goals I would like to achieve. The first would be to finish my bachelor’s degree. I transferred into WSSU as a Junior, and I plan to graduate by the Spring of 2023. While my time at WSSU has been short I have learned a lot. I would never have been able to gain the experience that I have thus far without my supporters that I found here. The second goal would be to either start focusing on obtaining certifications or already have a certification. A certification for either a specific programming language or for data analytics. My current interest pushes me to focus on SQL. I would also prefer to focus on developing my range of programming languages. I have decided to learn multiple common general purposes, but to also find my niche within an obscure language. I am of the belief that finding a language that is not frequently used by others would help with job security. My third goal would be to have a Jr. position in my current company or a Jr. position somewhere that will help further my career. While I do appreciate the opportunities afforded to me in my current position, I am hoping to be able to gain real-world experience within a software-based company that is already established.