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CEP 807
Fall 2022

It only takes a year...

I am now in a position where I'm not sure what my career will look like down the line, but for right now I thoroughly enjoy what I do and in large, that is teaching and supporting professors. Will I always want to teach professors at the capacity I am? I'm not sure yet. But what I do know is how much I really enjoy instructing and supporting learners. So as I start to think about what I want in a career, I keep those two activities close to the heart. I have three goals for my future: work towards a project management certificate, gain knowledge of data analysis, and basic knowledge of coding. I believe these three goals will help me not only keep what I enjoy at the core of my learning, but also expand my knowledge to reach potential opportunities that I might not even know are out there yet.

This first goal might seem a bit out of left field, however this is something teachers do every single day and might not even know it. Every year, sometimes with multiple classes, we are going through the five phases of project management. While I am very comfortable with discussing the phases of project management when it comes to a classroom setting, I want to broaden that skillset and expand it to projects outside of the classroom. This was encouraged by a coworker of mine who got her certification and is now heading a few very important projects in our department. While I could *possibly* succeed with the project management knowledge I currently have, I want to make sure I can apply it to the world outside of the classroom. I plan on utilizing LinkedIn Learning courses and other course management systems, such as Coursera. Then when I feel like I have gained the knowledge necessary, I will take the PMP Certification Exam. If I pass the exam, then I will receive my certification. I believe this will help me continue to build a skillset that will advance my career.

My second goal involves another skill set that many teachers are very proficient in: data analysis. We are constantly analyzing qualitative and quantitative data that our students give us, through test scores and observations. As I stated above, I am very comfortable discussing data analysis in the context of a classroom, however I want to learn more about data analysis outside of the classroom. Throughout the MAET program, I feel as though I have received practice with data analysis through various projects, but I want to dig a little deeper. In my previous job, I was analyzing and presenting data every week to the founders of the company. It was in this situation that I realized I actually really enjoy looking at data, figuring out what it's telling me, and then planning and adjusting my future "chess moves". Like my first goal, I will use LinkedIn Learning and Coursera but also Simplilearn.com has affordable courses I can take as well.

My final goal is something I have always been incredibly curious about and taking CEP 833 (Creativity in K-12 Computing Education) just multiplied this curiosity. I want to learn the basics of coding, but past creating games on Scratch (I am very comfortable with this now, thanks to CEP 833). I remember playing around with python and one other I cannot remember the name of, but I felt as though there was a huge gap between what I experienced with Scratch and what I was seeing with Python. I want to fill in that gap. While I know I can find great courses on LinkedIn or Coursera, I learned from a TikTok that Harvard has classes available online to take without needing to be a student at Harvard. I intend on checking these out, specifically their Introduction to Python and Computer Science for Business Professionals. This will not only potentially open more doors in my professional career, but also satisfy a personal goal I've had for a few years.

Even though all three of these goals involve me learning new skills through various learning management systems, and potentially many hours of studying outside of my workday, they will help me tremendously in my current job and in any future job I find myself in. From 2001 until 2021, my career goal has always been the same: be the best teacher I can be. Throughout those twenty crazy years, my definition of "best teacher" has changed quite a bit but the overall goal was to educate. Yet, the end of 2021 made me make a choice I never thought I would have to make: teaching or my mental health. I'm proud to say I chose my mental health, however my love for teaching and education in general hasn't changed. I am now just trying to see how I can push myself out of my comfort zone and continue to be a lifelong learner!