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CYSE 368 – Internship Reflection Paper #3
RFK Outreach
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Reflection Paper #3

This reflection covers the third fifty-hour block of my internship with RFK Outreach, bringing my total internship hours to one hundred fifty. Where the first two reflection periods were centered on infrastructure hardening, IT deployment, and CMMC compliance research, this block shifted heavily toward outreach and education, giving me a very different, and in many ways more demanding, set of experiences to reflect on. Over these fifty hours I helped design and deliver hands-on cybersecurity programming for kids and young women, supported large-scale event logistics, and continued to build my working relationship with my colleague Daniel Cobb on offensive security content.

The period began with some continuation of my earlier systems work. I finished hardening the last Linux system in the Guardian environment and started dual-booting the machines in the Olympus rooms so that they could support both the standard classroom image and the specialized tools needed for upcoming events. I also attended a meeting for the Cyber Academia initiative, which set the direction for much of the programming that followed. Almost immediately after that, my focus turned toward preparing for "Hacking for Kids" and the broader cyber camp. I worked with Daniel on the CTF component of the camp, helping him build and later test the individual challenges and the scoreboard system that would track participant progress. In parallel, I helped put together the slide deck used to teach the hacking day material, revising it more than once as we refined the material for the audience's age and experience level.

A significant part of this block was physical event preparation rather than pure technical work, and it taught me just as much. I helped move laptops, build computers, and haul monitors and cabling

into the school site the camp would use, and I took part in commercial recordings promoting the program. Once the hardware was in place, my attention shifted to the drone and 3D-printing equipment that RFK Outreach uses in its programming: charging and testing the drones, researching 3D printers and an RGB tower for a future build, and testing Bambu Studio as slicing software. None of this was security work in the traditional sense, but it reinforced something I have come to appreciate about this internship: a cybersecurity outreach program lives or dies on logistics as much as on technical content, and being willing to do the unglamorous setup work is part of being a reliable team member.

The camp itself was the centerpiece of this reflection period. On June 29th I led hacking day, which meant taking ownership of the session rather than simply assisting with it, walking a room of students through the exercises Daniel and I had built and troubleshooting issues in real time. The following week I helped staff the drone course, cleaned up the drone equipment afterward, and then supported the CTF portion of the broader camp: prepping laptops, helping students individually as they worked through challenges, and serving as leader and announcer for the competition itself. Standing in front of a group and running an event live is a different skill than writing the technical content behind it, and this was the first time in the internship I was given that kind of ownership. It forced me to think on my feet, explain security concepts in plain language to students with no background in the field, and manage the pace of an event so that participants of different skill levels all stayed engaged.

The final part of this fifty-hour block was arguably the most meaningful. I sat in on a meeting to plan a cyber academy for girls hosted at ODU, and the following week I helped run it, spending several days redoing the CTF for this new audience and teaching a classroom of about thirty students. Adapting existing material for a new group rather than just reusing what had worked for

the earlier camp required rethinking pacing, examples, and how much prior knowledge to assume, and it reinforced how important audience awareness is in any kind of technical outreach. Being part of a program aimed specifically at increasing young women's exposure to cybersecurity also gave the work an added sense of purpose; it is one thing to teach a general audience and another to be part of a deliberate effort to broaden who sees themselves as belonging in this field.

Looking back at this fifty-hour period as a whole, the throughline is a shift from behind-the-scenes technical work toward direct instruction and event leadership. I still did plenty of hands-on technical preparation, from CTF challenge testing with Daniel to hardware setup, but the new addition was standing in front of students and running sessions myself. That experience has sharpened skills that do not show up as clearly in a lab environment: communicating technical material to non-technical audiences, adapting on the fly, and taking responsibility for how an event goes rather than just for a single task within it. Reaching one hundred fifty hours at RFK Outreach, I feel considerably more confident not just in the technical skills I came into this internship with, but in my ability to teach and lead, both of which I expect to be valuable regardless of the specific direction my cybersecurity career takes.