

My civic engagement experience was conducting the ODU Member Security Posture Review, a project focused on computer security and acceptable use policies at Old Dominion University. This was a valuable experience because every member of the university community agrees to these policies, making it a shared foundation that affects students, faculty, and staff.

I chose to take part in this project because of my role at the ODU IT Help Desk, where I often see the effects of misunderstandings about security practices. I believe accessibility and security should support one another, and that a more engaged and informed community could reduce confusion, improve efficiency, and strengthen the university's overall security posture. At times, problems remain unresolved for extended periods due to miscommunication or lack of awareness, which impacts members whose time at the university is both valuable and limited. By encouraging interaction and understanding between IT staff and the broader community, I wanted to help create an environment where security and accessibility are priorities and where users feel confident navigating systems.

This experience impacted me by showing how important communication is in solving technical problems. Many issues such as account lockouts or password resets can be addressed quickly if users are familiar with self-service options or IT processes. However, the burden should not fall only on community members. IT staff must also be well prepared to guide users, manage tickets accurately, and maintain consistent practices. From my experience, I have seen how both repeated user mistakes and internal mismanagement of simple tickets can cause frustration. Recognizing this, I came to see the issue as a shared responsibility where both IT staff and users play an important role.

The project also influenced the community by reinforcing that maintaining secure and accessible systems requires collaboration on both sides. When members are knowledgeable about policies and procedures, they can take ownership of their accounts and assist others around them. When IT staff are equally well trained and proactive, they can support users effectively and reduce barriers to problem resolution. While the focus of this work is primarily on community members and its immediate impact is relatively small, the data collected creates an opportunity to propose new approaches to educating IT staff and university members and to involve the community more directly in strengthening ODU's overall security posture. This shifts the approach from a passive expectation that improvements will eventually occur to a more deliberate effort toward meaningful change.