



TRANSPORTATION SPOTLIGHT

PROFESSIONAL: CHELSEA S. JACKSON

NAME: Chelsea S. Jackson

COMPANY: Virginia Department of Transportation

TITLE: Core Development Program (CDP)
Business Associate (IT Division)

COLLEGE: Virginia State University

DEGREE: B.S. Management Information Systems

Q: How did you select your certification program or college major?

A: As a child, I always had a curiosity for technology. What makes things tick? How is this system or device brought to life? From that, curiosity sparked an interest in pursuing a career in the technology field. Capitalizing on my extroverted tendencies, I chose information systems as a way to ensure that communicating with people every day would always be a part of my job.

Q: What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/career pathway?

A: The biggest influence was the encouragement of my family. There were instances when I walked my parents through how to program the TV, or their personal laptop. Explaining along the way what we were doing, and WHY we were doing it. It brought me joy to share my passion, and get their tasks accomplished as well. Seeing my zeal for this industry and its increasing demand my parents encouraged me to start my IT Career.

Q: What attracted you to the transportation industry?

A: Honestly, I was not privy to the ins and outs of transportation prior to applying at VDOT. I had similar knowledge to that of the average citizen. I knew what VDOT stood for, but wasn't confident on impact.

After just over a year here, I've learned so much about transportation and its impact on our day-to-day lives. I've also learned about how much technology is woven into this industry through the various projects I've supported. It's been a tremendous learning experience and I'm excited to learn more as I continue my career here at VDOT.

Q: What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A: I love the versatility. As a CDP Associate, I get the opportunity to not only support the IT division, but also explore and learn about other divisions in the agency. This gives me a better look at the "big picture" and how IT fits into it. I've worked on projects that focus on IT Solution Support, Business Process Analysis, Recruiting, Data Analysis, Disaster Recovery and more! It's definitely been a learning experience.

Q: How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/your community?

A: VDOT is responsible for maintaining and operating the roads, bridges and tunnels in the Commonwealth of VA. VDOT does more than just snow removal from highways. They partner with municipalities to provide the best infrastructure for citizens to travel, conduct business and thrive across the state.





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Q: What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your professional career?

A: The most interesting have been opportunities to give back and pour into the community. I have had the pleasure of speaking to students at my alma mater about my role at VDOT at a career fair. I've also been invited to speak at local schools on behalf of previous employers about careers in IT. It was fun to share my experiences with them in hopes of recruiting new talent to the Agency (though some may be years from employment). It is really a "full circle" feeling. I was in their shoes just a few years ago.

Q: What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A: Though indirectly, I am galvanized by the opportunity to make an impact on those in my community and serve my colleagues and other citizens by contributing my knowledge and expertise.

Q: If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for the future, what would it be?

A: I would have to say Personal Finance. In grade school, my concept of money was simple. My parents were the "bank" and there was a seemingly endless supply for what I needed; depending on my behavior. As I moved through undergrad, I learned (the hard way) the value of a dollar and how important it was to save and budget ALL expenses. I have since taken interest in creative ways to save and generate higher ROI on my purchases.

Q: What advice would you share with students or anyone considering your profession?

A: Change is the only constant. This industry (and especially an IT department) does not settle on concepts for very long. If anything, there is something innovated or invented everyday. So keep an open mind and be adaptable!

