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MSU drawing teens to cybersecurity camps

Posted by: Becky Gillette in MBJ FEATURE, NEWS, Technology January 7, 2016

By BECKY GILLETTE

You only have to read the headlines about major security breaches ranging from the U.S. government to the major retailers to know that cybersecurity is a huge issue, and one that requires a skilled workforce to protect against major identity fraud. Mississippi State University has developed a summer camp program called Bulldog Bytes that is designed to diversify the future workforce in cybersecurity by getting middle and high school students interested in becoming technology innovators and critical thinkers.



STACY KASTNER



SARAH B. LEE

The Bulldog Bytes program that began in 2013 hosts same-gender camps, recognizing that girls are more engaged with science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curricula without the distractions and stereotypes that come in mixed gender learning experiences.

"Participants are recruited from across the state of Mississippi, particularly students of color, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with disabilities," said Dr. Sarah B. Lee, an assistant clinical professor in the MSU Department of Computer Science and Engineering. "The camps are free, and are residential in order to interest students in the college experience who might have little to no exposure to a college campus."

Lee said their interdisciplinary approach recognizes that preparing students for life and careers in the 21st century means engaging them in thinking about technology and computing from a variety of dimensions. "The digital world we live in requires new skills and behavior to ensure technology is used responsibly and safely," she said. "Often, users of technology do not perceive the consequences of actions they take online and the impact of the anonymity in cyberspace."

Students learn cybersecurity concepts through a curriculum that blends robotics, programming, and the liberal arts. Cybersecurity lessons include learning about threats in cyberspace and mechanisms for protecting personal safety. Lee said introducing the students to digital forensics enables them to recognize the digital footprints they leave on computers, cell phones, and during any electronic transactions. Students learn how to follow this type of trail to identify unethical behavior, a skill that is required by anyone entering the growing field of digital forensics and information assurance.


Dr. Stacy Kastner, assistant professor of English at MSU, said if kids are cognizant of why and how to be

safe online, they'll likely also bring this information into their homes, influencing parents and grandparents who grew up in a different time, when there was (maybe) some sense of anonymity and safety on the Internet.

"If this was ever true, it certainly is not now," Kastner said. "In addition to this, for us, cybersecurity is an increasingly important part of life for kids who are on the internet. It's important that they understand the ways that posting a picture to a social media site, for example, may allow someone to geographically locate them—giving them time and date and geo-tags. And it is important to understand how clicking on a pop-up,


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List of largest hospitals is ranked by number of beds and includes address, phone, website, employees, year founded, top officer.

Largest Mississippi Hospitals Miss

RANK	Hospital Address	Phone Website
1	Mississippi State Hospital 2550 Hwy. 408 W., Winfield, MS 39383	601-551-8000 www.msh.state.ms.us
2	North Mississippi Medical Center 830 S. Gloster St., Tupelo, MS 38801	662-377-3000 www.nmmc.net
3	Mississippi Baptist Medical Center 1225 N. State St., Jackson, MS 39202	601-968-1000 www.mbbc.org
4	University Hospitals & Health System 2500 N. State St., Jackson, MS 39216	601-984-1000 www.uhmshealth.com
5	St. Dominic Hospital 999 Lakeland Dr., Jackson, MS 39216	601-200-2000 www.stdominic.com

Information was provided by hospital representatives and MBI research. Direct questions or comments to Frank Revere at f...

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The ROI Conference will bring together leaders from the private, financial, and public sectors to discuss potential partnerships to bring investment focused on job creation, small business growth, and the development of important infrastructure to the Delta region.

For more information, visit dra.gov/roi-delta or email rkaufman@dra.gov.

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES LIST

A list of public, private and junior colleges in Mississippi, ranked by enrollment. List includes address, website, phone, president, year founded and undergrad enrollment.

Colleges and Universities

RANK	Institution	Address
1	Mississippi State University	P.O. Box 6334, Mississippi State, MS 39762
2	University of Mississippi	P.O. Box 1848, University, MS 38677

for example, might give a hacker a backdoor into their computer systems, linking this stranger to their parents' bank accounts, passwords, etc. Being cyber savvy is about safety, privacy, and is essential."

Kastner said the primary reason their camps are residential is kids benefit from having the experience of being on a college campus.

"In particular, since we recruit students from traditionally socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, for some of our campers, this is their first visit to a college campus and their first association of MSU as a place for football and learning," Kastner said. "Every year that we've done the camps, our campers have reported that some of their favorite parts of the camp are getting to be on campus, staying in the dorms, and interacting with the computer science undergraduate students who deliver most of the instruction during their stay. It's our hope that our camps will help to spark interest in campers who weren't thinking that college was for them, and get them familiar with MSU so that college doesn't seem so intimidating. We hope to see them a few years later as first-year students. Similarly, we hope, particularly for high schoolers who are already considering college and universities, that our camp will help to interest them in what MSU has to offer."

There is a significant gender gap in computing and technology career fields. According to the American Association of University Women's report, the number of women in computing and math professions has actually been decreasing since 1990, even as this is one of the fastest growing career fields.

"This gap is particularly pronounced when it comes to women of color," Kastner said. "We've learned that girls begin to lose interest in technology during the middle school years and that the stereotypes about tech, computers, and gaming truly do have a negative impact on girls' pursuing interests in their fields in terms of both education and careers. Our camp addresses this by supporting same-gender camp environments."

They bring in speakers from industry during the camps—speakers who are female, who are people of color, and who have various disabilities like blindness to help student begin to re-imagine the tech and computing world as diverse and open.

"This is, again, one of our campers' favorite parts of the camp—getting to hear from and see real people, people who were once kids who looked like them—who have 'made it' in the tech world," she said.

Funding for Bulldog Bytes has been partially provided each year by the National Center for Women and Information Technology's AspireIT program. In 2015, funding was also provided by the National Security Agency's GenCyber program.

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ABOUT BECKY GILLETTE



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Information for this list was provided by institution representatives and MBJ research. Institutions are ranked by number of employees.

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WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES LIST

A list of 41 women-owned businesses operating in Mississippi. Companies are ranked by number of employees. List includes address, phone, website, top officer, year founded, number of employees and type of business.

Table with 3 columns: Rank, Company Name, Phone. Lists businesses like Sells Security Services and Delta Shipment & Packing.

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