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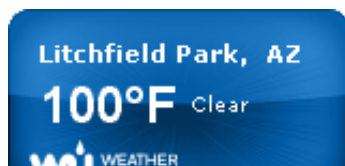
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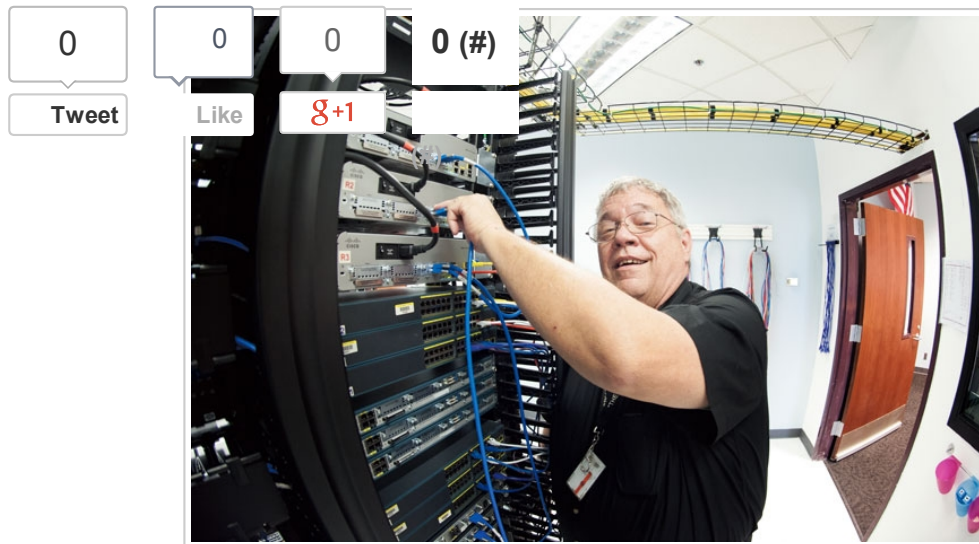
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Avondale college building cybersecurity workforce



LARRY HEINZ, Instructional Computing faculty member at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale, teaches classes related to information assurance and cyber defense programs. EMCC is the first two-year college in the state to receive a National Centers of Academic Excellence designation in Cyber Defense. View photo by Ray Thomas

Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale is the first two-year institution in the state to receive a National Centers of Academic Excellence designation in Cyber Defense, a program designed to cultivate more U.S. cyber professionals.

Through the CAE, The National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security identify colleges that meet the highest standards for educating and training students to protect and defend cyberspace.

“Becoming a CAE indicates that our program is meeting the highest standards for training students to protect and defend cyberspace,” said Clay Goodman, EMCC vice president of learning and director of the Arizona Sun Corridor-Get Into Energy Consortium. “Completing the program opens doors for students at a national level for federal and corporate careers.”

EMCCs cybersecurity program is a component of the ASC-GIEC, which received a \$13.5 million Department of Labor grant in the fall of

2014 to advance the training and development of a workforce for the energy industry, and created the energy-related cybersecurity program at EMCC, focusing on the power and energy industry.

The college partnered with the Peoria Unified School District Medical, Engineering and Technology Professional Academy to offer dual and concurrent enrollment credits for the cybersecurity program to high school students.

According to a news release, the partnership will provide students a pathway from high school through graduate school, including a CAE two-year program, followed by in-state access to a CAE four-year program.

Open enrollment is also offered outside of the Peoria partnership to post high school students, transitioning veterans and re-careering adults, with opportunities for financial aid.

The EMCC CAE cyber defense program encompasses an associate degree in IT and Power Systems Security, which offers four tracks to students: Power Systems and IT Security; Network Security; Linux Systems Security and Microsoft Linux Systems. Students learn how to secure the networks through cybersecurity practices and skills.

The advisory council supporting the program is composed of local representatives from across the cybersecurity sector, including Arizona Public Service Co., Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, Arizona Department of Homeland Security and Arizona Cyber Threat Response Alliance.

The program began as a request from the industry partners, according to a news release.

“Considering the current world of cybersecurity and data, corporations are looking for students and people who are either going to be part of that initial operation center that’s monitoring to find out if they are having these vulnerabilities, be part of the team that responds to those vulnerabilities or attacks, or be part of the team that sets the

policy,” EMCC Instructional Computing faculty member Larry Heinz said. “Cybersecurity is composed of many different faces to meet a person’s interests.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in the cybersecurity field is expected to grow much faster than average, increasing 37 percent by 2022.

“This is a career path that is going to grow and evolve and change,” Heinz said. “It has a significant amount of emphasis today and lots of people are afraid of their data getting lost. Like anything with technology, it’s continually evolving and changing. For those students who want to constantly be challenging themselves, this is going to be an incredibly exciting area for them.”

Most recently, EMCC announced a partnership with the Markle Foundation, the city of Phoenix, Arizona Public Service Co., LinkedIn and Arizona State University to build a 21st century digital labor market that will create more opportunities for middle-skill jobseekers in Phoenix and to provide local employers with a more qualified workforce.

The digital innovation partnership was announced June 24 at Arizona State University at the downtown Phoenix campus.

“We’ve all heard about the skills gap. It’s a very real thing, especially in certain sectors in the economy. Those are sectors that Arizona also has — things like high tech, oil and energy, gas — that’s a great combination,” Allen Blue, co-founder of LinkedIn, said. “A lot of the jobs are the best jobs that are in this higher-skilled area.”

Ernest Lara, EMCC president, said the partnership meets the goal of the community college, which is to provide 21st century working individuals the skills they need to respond to employers.

“At our college, we are really emphasizing our Energy Pathways Program,” Lara said. “The most important thing we’ve done is work with our energy partners to identify those skill gaps, let them take out

the curriculum, and tell us what employees need. Then that way, it makes it easier to go out and recruit for jobs.”

The CAE cyber defense program curriculum is founded on the principles of the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration’s Cybersecurity Competency Model, which was modified by EMCC with input from the industry advisory council.

Twenty-eight schools received CAE designation this year; 46 states now have CAE institutions.

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