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Security

Estrella Mountain CC Earns Recognition for Power Security Training

By Dian Schaffhauser ｜ **06/18/15**

A 5,700-student community college in Arizona recently received a national designation for its cyber-defense education programs. Estrella Mountain Community College, which is one of the 10 schools that make up the Maricopa Community Colleges system, has been designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence (CAE) by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security for its Cyber Defense Two-Year Education program.

Courses in the program focus on IT, IT security and power systems fundamentals as they relate to energy generation, transmission, distribution and embedded systems. Students are trained for IT security employment in the power plant industry as well as more general network and systems security in other segments.

"Becoming a CAE indicates that our program is meeting the highest standards for training students to protect and defend cyberspace," said Clay Goodman, the college's vice president of learning. Goodman is also the director of the Arizona Sun Corridor-Get Into Energy Consortium, a group of five colleges that received federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) funding to develop degree programs for specific workforce training.

In fall 2014, Estrella teamed up with the Peoria Unified School District to offer dual and concurrent enrollment credits for the cybersecurity program to high school students. The college pathway includes the two-year cyber defense program and access to a four-year CAE program at an in-state institution.

High school students, transitioning veterans and adults seeking a new career can also join the Estrella program through open enrollment. Graduates earn an associate degree in IT and Power Systems Security (IT-PSS) through one of four tracks: power systems and IT security, Cisco-based network security, Linux systems security, and Microsoft systems security.

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

About the Author

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