

What can higher education leaders do to bring more women and girls into and up through cybersecurity?



Coordinate with Greek Life:

Plan a cybersecurity awareness challenge or event with a philanthropic goal with Greek Life organizations on campus (perhaps supporting efforts to protect vulnerable communities from hacking and/or identity theft). Make sure to have free food.

Connect Careers to Course Registration:

Schedule a career event—or series of events—that brings female cybersecurity professionals in to talk about their careers with clubs and societies for women. Ask speakers to be explicit about the links between their work and specific academic disciplines or courses. Time these events to coincide with course registration periods, so that students are connecting with female role models as they make decisions about their academic pathways.

Redefine Foreign Language Requirements:

Allow computer languages to count towards university curriculum (UCC) language requirements.

Emphasize Security Roles:

Partner with organizations like ROTC to break down gendered assumptions around “security” as a general concept. Showcase women in the military as role models, pointing out the many different ways women are protecting the nation’s security. If it encourages the idea to stick, consider using “Mama Bear” images and memes to help students think of how women do play security roles.

Reframe Cybersecurity:

Where technology courses or cybersecurity awareness trainings are a mandatory part of the curriculum or campus life, integrate examples and narratives that emphasize the ways in which good security relies on creativity and helping other people in order to encourage students to connect with careers in the field. Emphasize how cybersecurity jobs use skills—like pattern recognition—that are often considered common strengths for women.

Gender Equality By Design:

Consider making changes to systems, processes, and environments to foster a greater sense of belonging and to reduce the negative impact of internalized stereotypes among girls and women. For instance, putting posters of women up on the walls and including more women in the syllabus can all contribute to a greater sense of belonging and achievement in the classroom.

Partner with Industry:

Beyond hosting career fairs, partner with industry practitioners to collaborate on designing cybersecurity skills and educational career paths. Areas as diverse as St. Louis, Albuquerque, Baton Rouge, and many others already have established cybersecurity apprenticeship programs that pair educators with employers. Consider reaching out to explore the possibility of collaborating or establishing a new program.



Women make up less than one-quarter of the cybersecurity workforce, which can lead to less innovation, inferior design, seriously underutilized human potential, and needlessly unfilled jobs in a growing field. In short, this lack of gender diversity means poorer security.

To counter this trend, we convened a diverse group of experts from corporate, academic, nonprofit, and government backgrounds. Their job was to generate new ideas, share emerging efforts, and consider strategies to bring women into and up through cybersecurity careers. This series of one pagers features these ideas, efforts, and strategies.

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