

WiCyS Annual Conferences: 2014 and 2015

WiCyS.net

By Elizabeth K. Hawthorne



The first ever *National Women in Cybersecurity* (WiCyS) conference was held in Nashville, Tennessee, April 11-12, 2014. The conference brought together over 300 women students, faculty, professionals, and researchers from academia, industry, and government with the ex-

pressed intent of increasing the number of women in the cybersecurity pipeline and improving the diversity of the nation's cybersecurity workforce. Keynote speakers included Dr. Deborah Fricke, Associate Director for Education and Training at NSA/CSS, Dr. Ernest McDuffie, Lead for National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education at NIST, and Michele Cantley, Senior VP and Chief Information Security Officer at Regions Financial. Dr. Valerie Barr made welcoming remarks on behalf of NSF and ACM-W.

The idea for creating the WiCyS conference was the brainchild of Ambareen Siraj, Associate Professor in the Computer Science Department at Tennessee Tech University. As a frequent attendee at the annual Grace Hopper conference, Dr. Siraj realized the need for such an initiative for women in cybersecurity. In 2013, she and her peers from the University of Memphis and Jackson State Community College received a financial award from the National Science Foundation for their "Broadening Participation in Cybersecurity" proposal (Award#1303441) in the SFS capacity building track. Corporate funding quickly followed since the cybersecurity pipeline is not currently producing enough professionals to meet the growing job demand, and women's representation is alarmingly low. While 25% of the entire computing workforce is female, women represent less than 15% of the cybersecurity workforce. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook, a much faster than average job growth for information/computer security professionals is projected between the years 2012 and 2022, which is even greater than the projections for other computing occupations.

The second annual WiCyS conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 27-28, 2015. With continued support from NSF, Facebook has committed to be a strategic partner along with other sponsoring partners like Google, Intel, IBM, Regions Financial, and ACM-W. This funding helps to keep conference costs low and provides for travel scholarships. As in 2014, the 2015 conference will offer a variety of sessions, including keynote speakers, technical presentations, panels, birds-of-feather, lightning talks, student posters, student and faculty workshops, speed mentoring session, and a career and graduate school fair.

The deadline for conference proposal submissions is February 1, 2015 at www.WiCyS.net. Any individual or organization interested in supporting recruiting and retention efforts for women in cybersecurity is encouraged to participate. We hope to see you in Atlanta!



ELIZABETH K. HAWTHORNE

WiCyS Advisory Board Member

Computer Science, Union County College, 1033 Springfield Ave, Cranford, NJ 07016, USA

ehawthorne@ucc.edu

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