

RIDER PROFESSOR HONORED FOR CHAMPIONING WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY



Dr. Elizabeth Hawthorne, the director of Rider University's graduate program in cybersecurity, received this year's Advocacy Award from Women in CyberSecurity (WiCyS), a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the number of women in the cybersecurity field. The award was given to her in March as a surprise during the organization's 10th annual conference in Denver, Colorado, for her years of championing women pursuing careers in cybersecurity.

"I was totally shocked; I was choking back tears of joy," says Hawthorne, a founding advisory board member of WiCyS. "It's a passion of mine to help women feel like they have other opportunities beyond the fields they are traditionally associated with. It's very important to stand for something, and this is my purpose."

WiCyS was founded in 2012 when women made up a mere 11% of the cybersecurity workforce worldwide, according to data from (ISC)², a global cybersecurity certification organization. That number increased to 24% in 2020. During that time, WiCyS has also grown considerably. The group now boasts more than 7,000 members and hosts chapters in dozens of countries. Its latest annual conference, where Hawthorne received her award to a standing ovation, attracted 1,900 participants. About 350 people attended the original conference in 2014.

"We have moved the needle," says Hawthorne, who joined Rider's faculty in 2021 with decades of college teaching experience under her belt.

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From left, junior Kailee Herman, Dr. Elizabeth Hawthorne and senior Amanda Zambrana represent Rider at the 2023 WiCyS conference.

The WiCyS conference brings together women in cybersecurity from academia, research, government and industry to help recruit, retain and advance women in cybersecurity. Dr. Cara Tang, an adjunct faculty member for Rider's cybersecurity program, as well as two Rider undergraduates, senior Amanda Zambrana and junior Kailee Herman, also participated in the conference. The students are officers (vice president and treasurer, respectively) of the University's WiCyS cybersecurity student club CybHer@RiderU, which Hawthorne helped found.

Hawthorne cites several potential barriers that may contribute to the underrepresentation of women in the cybersecurity industry. One significant problem, she says, is the lack of female role models and mentors in the field, which can make it difficult for women to envision themselves succeeding in this male-dominated industry. For decades, Hawthorne's presence as an educator and academic has served as a solution to that problem.

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After earning a doctorate in computer information systems from Nova Southeastern University, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship in digital forensics and cyber investigations at the University of Maryland, where she was also an adjunct assistant professor. She then rose to the level of senior professor of computer science and cybersecurity during 26 years at Union County College before joining Rider, which has both undergraduate and graduate programs in cybersecurity. Over the course of her career, Hawthorne has made more than 100 digital library publications and presentations for the Association for Computing Machinery, where she currently serves on the organization's education board as co-chair.

Read the original news announcement published by Rider University [here](#).

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