

By the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; the Committee on Commerce and Tourism; and Senator Calatayud

606-02503-26

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to cybersecurity internships; creating s. 1004.0983, F.S.; providing legislative findings; requiring the Department of Commerce to create the Cybersecurity Experiential Learning Program in a specified fiscal year, subject to legislative appropriation; requiring the department use a certain percentage of appropriated funds in a specified fiscal year to enter into an agreement with Cyber Florida at the University of South Florida to collaborate in designing the program for implementation and plan for expansion of the program; requiring Cyber Florida to report specified information to the department; providing the department with authorized uses of unspent funds; requiring that disbursement of funds is subject to department approval; requiring the department to submit an annual report by a specified date to the Governor and the Legislature; providing requirements for the report; providing for the expiration of the program; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 1004.0983, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1004.0983 Cybersecurity Experiential Learning Program.—
(1)(a) The Legislature finds that this state's
cybersecurity workforce is essential to state and national

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30 security, multi-sector state economic resilience, and the
31 protection of critical infrastructure. The Legislature also
32 finds that this state has a persistent shortfall in its supply
33 of qualified cybersecurity professionals relative to the
34 workforce demand, and that the growing integration of digital
35 technologies in all economic sectors will exacerbate this
36 workforce gap in the future.

37 (b) The Legislature further finds that there are examples
38 of successful cybersecurity experiential learning opportunities
39 across the state university system, including an experiential
40 cyber program at the University of South Florida, and a combined
41 security clearance readiness and cyber certification program at
42 the University of West Florida. Both institutions are designated
43 as National Security Agency National Centers of Academic
44 Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C).

45 (c) The Legislature further finds that expansion of
46 experiential learning opportunities in cybersecurity for
47 students at state universities and Florida College System
48 institutions is likely to accelerate the development of a highly
49 qualified cybersecurity workforce. This expanded capacity to
50 develop a more qualified cybersecurity workforce is necessary to
51 close existing gaps and keep pace with the growth in demand for
52 cybersecurity talent within this state.

53 (2)(a) Subject to legislative appropriation, the Department
54 of Commerce shall create and operate the Cybersecurity
55 Experiential Learning Program in the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

56 (b) The Department of Commerce must use 10 percent of the
57 appropriated funds in the 2026-2027 fiscal year to enter into an
58 agreement with Cyber Florida within the University of South

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Florida to collaborate in designing the program for implementation at a minimum of one state university or Florida College System institution during the 2026-2027 school year, and to plan for the expansion of the program to additional sites and additional national security-focused workforces in future years.

(3) Cyber Florida shall determine and report back to the department on the following:

(a) The specific internship opportunities and experiential learning opportunities that the United States Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) believes will be the most impactful on a student's job placement in high-demand cybersecurity roles in the state, including an assessment of when completing a federal security clearance readiness program will assist certain students in job placement in this state.

(b) A review of best practices for cybersecurity experiential learning opportunities in place at other NCAE-C-designated institutions within and outside of this state which can be replicated at institutions across this state.

(c) A recommendation for the minimum qualifications a student should possess or meet prior to enrolling in an experiential learning program.

(d) A listing of the state universities and Florida College System institutions that wish to participate in the program, along with an expected number of students to be served by the program at each participating institution during the fiscal year. Cyber Florida shall make a recommendation to the department for the disbursement of available funds for the program to maximize statewide impact, improve students' job

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88 placement, and support economic growth in this state's defense
89 industry.

90 (e) A listing of employers in this state with openings or
91 anticipated openings in cybersecurity roles or other industries
92 that perform work that requires a security clearance.

93 (4)(a) In each fiscal year in which funds are appropriated
94 to the program, or where an unspent balance for the program
95 remains from a prior year's appropriation which can continue to
96 support the program's operations, the Department of Commerce
97 may:

98 1. Implement the program and directly disburse the funds to
99 participating institutions. Such funds may be used to cover the
100 cost of students going through the security clearance process;
101 or

102 2. Enter into a mutually agreed upon multi-year contract
103 with Cyber Florida to administer the program statewide and
104 disburse the available funding to participating institutions.

105 (b) Any disbursement of funds under this subsection is
106 subject to approval by the department.

107 (5) Beginning January 15, 2028, and on each January 15
108 following the completion of a fiscal year in which the program
109 operates, the Department of Commerce shall submit a report to
110 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
111 the House of Representatives which includes all the following:

112 (a) The number of students participating in experiential
113 learning opportunities at each participating institution and a
114 listing of the specific outcomes, skills, or credentials,
115 including security clearances, earned by students through the
116 program which contributed to job placement.

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117 (b) The number of students who completed an experiential
118 learning opportunity through the program who subsequently
119 reported entering federal, state, or private sector
120 cybersecurity positions in the state, and the number of students
121 provided security clearance preparation training for other
122 fields.

123 (c) Recommendations for program improvements, including
124 potential integration with other state workforce initiatives and
125 potentially expanding the program to workforces supporting
126 national security such as defense manufacturing and aerospace
127 related engineering fields.

128 (6) This section expires on July 1, 2032.

129 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.