**Closing the Skills Gap: ECPI University's Unique Apprenticeship Program In SC**

ECPI University's South Carolina (SC) cybersecurity apprenticeship program, approved by the SC Department of Labor in October 2022, offers a fresh approach to closing the skills gap. The program's first cybersecurity apprenticeship began in Columbia this June, partnering with Reliable Technology Solutions. The Charleston and Greenville campuses will soon follow with apprenticeship opportunities.

“We are thrilled to kick off this apprenticenship program in South Carolina,” said ECPI University Dean of Computer & Information Science, Dr. Keith Morneau. “The ultimate goal of the program is to work towards closing the cybersecurity skills gap and provide employers with ways to grow their teams.”

What sets ECPI University's program apart is its integration into the academic curriculum. “Apprenticeships begin during a student's seventh term, allowing them to gain real-world experience while earning their bachelor’s degree in computer and information science,” said Dr. Morneau.

During the apprenticeship, students work part-time, receiving a progressive wage throughout the 2,000-hour program. They also participate in an apprenticeship class where faculty track their progress and provide support in learning CIS-based competencies.

“Employers benefit from the DOL-approved program by potentially receiving tax benefits for participating and finding apprentices through ECPI,” said ECPI University Director of Career Services, Dr. Candice Melton. “This incentivizes companies to engage with the program and tap into a skilled workforce.”

To prepare students for the apprenticeship and job market, ECPI University's Career Services hosts a workshop covering expectations, resume development, and mock interviews. This equips students with the necessary skills to be competitive in the apprenticeship site selection process.

How are students eligible to participate? Eligibility for the program requires students to meet attendance and GPA requirements, maintaining them throughout the apprenticeship. “This ensures students remain committed to their studies, so they continue to progress towards their degree, all while gaining valuable real-world experience,” said Dr. Morneau.

By integrating apprenticeships into the academic curriculum, students gain practical experience while earning their degree. With the additional benefit to employers, ECPI University hopes to play a significant role closing the skills gap in cybersecurity.

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