



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
OSHKOSH

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh  
800 Algoma Blvd.  
Oshkosh, WI 54901  
Contact: Natalie Johnson, (920) 424-3362

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## **UW Oshkosh opens collaborative Cybersecurity Center of Excellence**

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh has opened a new cybersecurity center, providing new space for research, training and outreach related to cybersecurity, in a partnership with the Wisconsin Cyber Threat Response Alliance.

Known as the Cybersecurity Center of Excellence, the space is located in the Culver Family Welcome Center on the Oshkosh campus and features a live-fire cyber range where users can experience real-world cyber threats in a controlled, educational environment. The Center also includes classrooms, a lab and a small data center.

Teaming with the University is the Wisconsin Cyber Threat Response Alliance (WICTRA), a Madison-based nonprofit information technology and services organization.

Michael Patton, a UW Oshkosh information systems lecturer, said the new Center is a manifestation of the Wisconsin Idea and while initially focused on the needs of organizations and communities in northeast Wisconsin, it's a potential model for similar endeavors around the state.

"There is no more appropriate subject for the Wisconsin Idea than cybersecurity," Patton said. "There is no Wisconsinite today who doesn't have a cyber presence—from a Facebook account to your banking information. And yet, to most people, cybersecurity is this mysterious, specialized body of knowledge that they hope 'the experts' are taking care of for them."

"In reality cybersecurity is more like automotive knowledge: You may not know how all of the systems in your car work, but you have to know about filling it up and when to change the oil. Our goal is to take away the mystery and intimidation so we can elevate everyone's cybersecurity awareness one notch."

The Center is free to University students and will offer programming for the greater Oshkosh community. Students will have access to a one-of-a-kind venue from which they can expand their cybersecurity awareness and skills in a practical, marketable way through courses, events, lab work and internship opportunities.

"This program offers our students the ability to put what they learn in the classroom into practice on real cybersecurity threats, not just simulations," Patton said. "This not only makes it more interesting

for the students, but gives them an advantage after graduation as they can tell employers about attacks they have actually defended.

The Center will serve nearby schools by offering events to increase skills, knowledge and abilities for information technology workers and computer science instructors, plus hands-on learning opportunities for students. The public also will benefit from events and training opportunities.

The UWO computer science and information systems programs will have priority access to the Center and it will be a resource for academic clubs. Faculty and staff from those programs will perform research on real-world threats in a safe environment. The University's information technology staff also will be able to hone their skills to better prepare them for threats they may encounter on the job.

WICTRA will use it for its programs and events and the community also will be able to rent the facility for special events, provided either University or WICTRA volunteers are available to staff the event.

UWO's information systems department inside the College of Business directs the activities of the Center and the space has been used for information system courses this fall.

UWO students and employees, as well as WICTRA members, will have access to the lab for learning and experimentation as long as the Center is staffed. There also is an ongoing need for volunteers and anyone interested should contact Patton at [pattonm@uwosh.edu](mailto:pattonm@uwosh.edu).