

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**UW-Stout professor among ‘strong community of women’ leading the way in cybersecurity**

*Professor Yuan introduces program’s hands-on approach, encourages students to apply for Department of Defense scholarship*

[Story Link](https://www.uwstout.edu/about-us/news-center/uw-stout-professor-among-strong-community-women-leading-way-cybersecurity)

**Photos attached**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Menomonie, Wis. –During national Cybersecurity Awareness Month, University of Wisconsin-Stout [cybersecurity](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bs-cybersecurity) faculty and students represented the university on panel discussions and explored the growing dynamics and diversity in the field.

Holly Yuan, program director of [computer networking and information technology](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bs-computer-networking-and-information-technology), represented UW-Stout on a panel discussion on UW System Cybersecurity Education at the [Governor’s Cybersecurity Summit](https://wigcot.eventsair.com/2022-wisconsin-governors-cybersecurity-summit/agenda), Oct. 23-25, in Wisconsin Dells.

She presented an overview of the university’s cybersecurity program, student clubs, technologies, tools and hands-on approach to teaching cybersecurity and related programs, like CNIT. She also discussed how the programs are increasing their diversity and how they support Wisconsin’s workforce.

**Women in cybersecurity**

Yuan serves as the faculty adviser for the Women in IT and Security (WITS) and Cyber Defense student clubs. She advocates for and promotes women in IT and cybersecurity.

During the summit, Yuan joined several female cybersecurity students at Wisconsin's first Women in Cybersecurity event. The event for women who work in cybersecurity or who are pursuing a related degree highlighted the increasing number of female cybersecurity professionals and expanding opportunities for women in the field.

“We have a group of brilliant female students in the program,” Yuan said. “Women are underrepresented in cybersecurity. Our CNIT program has grown female enrollment from three to 14 for the past few years.”

In 2021, there were 201 students in the CNIT program. To help grow the number of women in cyber-related programs, Yuan and faculty have built a mentorship/sponsorship program for female students with industry partners; developed the WITS club for students to support each other; supported allyships with male students; and created an awareness campaign with the cybersecurity community.

Students at the Women in Cybersecurity event met with Wisconsin’s chief information officer, chief information security officer, and former DOD CIO. “The officers encouraged them. And our students were also interviewed by news reporters. It was an amazing experience for them,” Yuan said.

Ally Andersen, a [computer science major](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bs-computer-science) from Eau Claire, said, “I met a lot of amazing women who showed me I’m not alone in my male-dominated field. And that there truly is a strong community of women who support and encourage each other to grow and connect.”

Mariana Pena, a CNIT major from Waukesha, said they learned that since women make up only 24% of the cybersecurity workforce, “they may not feel as comfortable to take opportunities or put themselves out there unless they are 100% qualified.

“The best advice I learned was that you don't have to be totally confident in whatever it is that you want to pursue but focus on being courageous. Be able to open yourself up to opportunities that you may not necessarily have all the required experience for because in the end, that's how you build confidence,” Pena added.

**Cyber Defense Scholarship helps prepare students for Wisconsin’s workforce**

In 2017, UW-Stout was designated a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense by the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security.

UW-Stout is the first four-year university in the state to receive this prestigious designation. The award was based on proven efforts to reduce threats to national infrastructure by promoting higher education and research in cyber defense and providing the nation with qualified cybersecurity professionals.

Students in cybersecurity and related programs are eligible for the [U.S. Department of Defense Cyber Scholarship](https://www.uwstout.edu/academics/colleges-schools/college-science-technology-engineering-mathematics-and-management/department-defense-cyber-scholarship-program). Two CNIT students were recently awarded the scholarship. Each will receive the full cost of tuition and a $27,000 stipend per year. They also earn a guaranteed paid summer internship with a DOD agency every year until graduation.

“The scholarship supports UW-Stout in preparing a DOD cybersecurity workforce to protect critical infrastructure and networks against cyber-attacks,” Yuan said.

“Our Stout students have been the only students who were awarded this most prestigious cyber scholarship in the state of Wisconsin. They were selected because of our rigorous cybersecurity programs, faculty-dedicated service to the cybersecurity community and students' passion, learning ability and technical skills to defend the country's cyberspace,” she added.

One recipient, Christina Kimball, a senior from Dousman, has been captain of UW-Stout’s Collegiate Cyber Defense Team for the past two years. The team won first place in the [Wisconsin Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition](https://www.uwstout.edu/about-us/news-center/student-team-wins-statewide-cyber-defense-competition) last February. “We are the only team with a female captain. And we are planning to compete again next year,” Yuan said.

Yuan has been awarded millions of dollars in cybersecurity research and outreach grants. With external funding from the Department of Defense, she built a 5G and Wifi6 connected Internet of Things (IoT) laboratory at UW-Stout. She engages students and faculty in cutting-edge research in 5G, Cloud Computing, IoT, zero-trust and artificial intelligence.

Yuan directs UW-Stout’s [Cybersecurity Research and Outreach Center](https://www.uwstout.edu/academics/colleges-schools/college-science-technology-engineering-mathematics-and-management/cybersecurity-research-outreach-center-cyroc), which promotes awareness, research and outreach to meet Wisconsin’s workforce needs.

She and faculty collaborate with industry partners to sponsor students with real-world cybersecurity capstone projects, paid internships and coops. The first cohort of the [cybersecurity program](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/bs-cybersecurity) started this fall. The program is offered both on-campus and online.

The university also offers certificates in [Cyber Security and Cyber Defense - Secure Software Development](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/cyber-security-and-cyber-defense-secure-software-development-certificate) and [Cyber Security and Cyber Defense – Computer Networking](https://www.uwstout.edu/programs/cyber-security-and-cyber-defense-computer-networking-certificate). Students graduate with full-time jobs secured in security engineering, security analysis, cloud security engineering, penetration testing and more.

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**Photos**

Professor Holly Yuan, front center, and female cybersecurity students at Wisconsin's first Women in Cybersecurity event, part of the Governor’s Cybersecurity Summit, Oct. 23-25, in Wisconsin Dells.

Professor Holly Yuan presents an overview of UW-Stout’s cybersecurity program at the Governor’s Cybersecurity Summit.

Professor Holly Yuan shows female CNIT students computer servers in a lab in Micheels Hall.

Christina Kimball, recipient of a U.S. Department of Defense Cyber Scholarship, is captain of UW-Stout’s Collegiate Cyber Defense Team. The team won first place in the Wisconsin Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition last February.