TECH FULL OF CYBER SYNERGY

Academic program offers broad range of career options

By Scott Rogers

Ever-changing and constantly growing, the digital world offers numerous career opportunities — particularly in security, network defense and data retrieval.

As a result, Louisiana Tech University has found its newest program resonates with students across the country.

The cyber engineering program was established in 2002 with 25 students but has grown to 90. Tech expects another 80 will enroll in the fall.

David Atkinson, program chair of cyber engineering and assistant professor of computer science, has fielded calls from interested students and parents from Colorado, New York and Michigan.

It is the first cyber engineering program in the nation.

“Cyber immediately caught the attention of students and parents,” Atkinson said.

“Big interest is how computers learn,” he said.

Atkinson learned in computer science have quickly landed jobs in major companies such as Google, Yahoo, Twitter and Facebook.

The demand for students with cyber skills isn’t expected to decline soon as companies, even small businesses, realize the importance of cyber security.

“Cyber is everywhere,” Dua said.

The program is most attractive to younger generations who grew up connected, using almost every platform created, Atkinson said.

“Look at the generation we have today. They are very connected and much more versed in the cyber realm,” Atkinson said.

And for young people looking to excel in the cyber realm, opportunities are limitless.

“More companies recognize the importance of the cyber realm and computer network defense. Just about every market you can think of right now has some need for cyber skills,” Atkinson said.

Dua gets just as excited about the possibilities for his students. An old-school data-miner, Dua laughs when problems arise because his passion is solving problems.

“With more young minds joining him through this new program to lend fresh ideas to problems, Dua believes Tech could be on the verge of its most exciting and innovative time. The level of excitement for these projects and research opportunities is off the chart, Goud said.

“Of course teaching is important, and we want to be good teachers, but research is where we stay aware of the recent things that are happening. We can have deep knowledge of cutting-edge things that are happening. To bring that in the classroom, we can sow seeds for projects students can work on,” Goud said.

Last week Tech started a new initiative called Living with Cyber. How freshman computer science majors use Google Nexus 7 tablets combined with Raspberry Pi computers to get hands-on experience through projects to help in planning, designing, programming, deploying, using and evaluating software.

Using these devices, students will create software applications, while developing the critical thinking and problem solving skills needed to form the foundation of their academic degree and prepare them for career opportunities in these fields.

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