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## **Waukesha County Technical College takes victory at the 2017 AITP National Collegiate Conference® Cyber Security Challenge**

**St. Louis, MO:** On April 8th, 2016, Lucas Gallagher, a student at Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC), secured the victory for his college in the 2017 Association of Information Technology Professionals National Collegiate Conference and Career Fair® (AITP-NCC) Cyber Security Challenge. Gallagher, like more than four-hundred (400) other students, attended the AITP-NCC to put his skills to the test, competing against other students from colleges and universities across the country in a variety of different information technology (IT) contests. The contests covered a broad spectrum of IT disciplines, ranging from PC Troubleshooting to Web Design, to Cyber Security. Gallagher found his name on the leaderboard more than once throughout the AITP-NCC, making the finals in the PC Troubleshooting event as well. In fact, Waukesha County Technical College found their students on the leaderboards five (5) times across the various contests, with three (3) of WCTC's students in the top ten (10) of the Cyber Security Challenge.

WraySec LLC., a Cyber Security Consulting firm, based out of the central Pennsylvania area, hosted the 2017 Association of Information Technology Professionals National Collegiate Conference and Career Fair® (AITP-NCC) Cyber Security Challenge at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis Arch. The AITP-NCC is an annual conference dedicated to building relationships between collegiate students and the Information Technology industry.

The AITP-NCC attracted more than five-hundred-fifty (550) IT students and faculty, coming from over forty-five (45) different colleges and universities, in addition to industry organizations and professionals. Furthermore, the AITP-NCC included a career fair, talks from industry experts, on-site certification testing, and many other IT-centric challenges.

The AITP-NCC Security Challenge started with a qualification round, which saw more than eighty-five (85) participants complete a qualification exam comprised of both knowledge-based and practical-based questions. The top ten (10) finalists from the qualification round moved onto the final round, competing in a puzzle-based cyber exercise competition. The puzzles, also known as challenges, were developed by WraySec and tailored to entry-level job roles and tasks in Defensive and Offensive Cyber Security Operations. The scoring was provided via WraySec's CyExNg, a Cyber Exercise Platform currently in open beta. CyExNg is designed to streamline the scoring of cyber exercises, ranging from

internal training events to international cyber competitions, often referred to as a capture the flag or simply a 'CTF.'

WraySec CEO, Justin Wray, was pleased with the turnout and results of the event. "Competitions are an amazing learning experience and can be highly motivating for the participants," he expressed. Mr. Wray went on to explain that competitions provide a great outlet for showing off skill but are not exclusively about winning either, "more important than winning is the ability to identify areas where you want to want to improve and focus more training." WraySec COO, Steve Collmann, indicated that he too was happy with the event. "These types of events are extremely energizing. It is so much fun to watch the participants compete, and the spectators anxiously watch the scoreboard while cheering on their school. It is really no different than a sporting event." When asked about the outcome of the competition, Mr. Collmann pointed out that it was not only fun but also ran very smoothly, from both organizational and technical standpoints. "Just like last year's event, this was a rounding success, I heard nothing but positive feedback from everyone involved," stated Mr. Collmann.

This year's AITP-NCC Cyber Security Challenge included puzzles in thirteen (13) categories: Cryptography, Current Events, Database Security, Exploitation, Log Analysis, Network Forensics, Open Source Intelligence, Password Security, Physical Security, Regulation Knowledge, Reverse Engineering, Technical Knowledge, and Web Security. Participants had two and a half hours to complete as many puzzles as possible. As the participants completed each puzzle, they found a "flag" and submitted it for points. Mr. Wray explained that a flag was essentially, "[a] piece of data, representing real-world data." The level of realism did not stop there; the questions were formulated around the theme of the exercise: Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA). SCADA encompasses the devices that link the physical world to the digital world. "SCADA is a major area of interest in the cyber security field today. SCADA sounds like a big scary term because it is. We use SCADA devices to control power plants, water treatment facilities, train cars, traffic lights, you name it." said Mr. Collmann. Mr. Wray further explained, "[SCADA] is the control systems you rely on a daily basis, but never think about. We want the challenges to be as real-world as possible. The challenges need to be something that is not only relevant to the participants but also something that everyone can relate to." Moreover, realistic it was; Herzog, a railway services company, featuring a lot of automation technology, was among the sponsors involved at this year's AITP-NCC.

Kevin Jetton, the AITP-NCC Director, announced the top three placements and honorable mentions for the Cyber Security Challenge at the AITP-NCC Closing Award Banquet. Those winners were as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup>	Lucas Gallagher	Waukesha County Technical College
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Schuyler Martin	Tarleton State University
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Christopher Abbott	Northern Michigan University
Honorable Mentions:	Alex Nernberger	Waukesha County Technical College
	Alfredo Villarreal	Our Lady of the Lake University

Francisco Hernandez	Our Lady of the Lake University
Tyler Ellison	Texas State University
Robert Reif	Fox Valley Technical College
Jason Smith	Brigham Young University
John Shegonee	Waukesha County Technical College

While Gallagher might have finished in first place, his win did not come without steep competition. Schuyler Martin of Tarleton State University was right behind Gallagher in the end, with only a fraction fewer points. Martin took to the leaderboard early and paved his way to a first place position for much of the competition. “Martin actually had a wide berth of points between him and the rest of the competitors for quite a while,” said Mr. Collmann. However, in the end, Gallagher was able to catch up and edge out the final points to overtake Martin. Mr. Wray explained, “it is rare that we see events this close, especially such large events.” The competition boasted ninety (90) different challenges, making close scores a statistical anomaly. “In the end, someone has to 'win,' but Martin's accomplishments are no less prestigious, and he and his school should be proud of what was accomplished.” Mr. Wray said in closing.

Congratulations to all of those who participated in both the qualification and to all of the finalists!

**About AITP:** The Association of Information Technology Professionals is the leading organization of its kind, including professionals from every part of the IT Industry. Founded in 1951, AITP seeks to advance the IT Profession through professional development, support of IT education, and national policies on IT that improve society as a whole. AITP is based in Mount Laurel, NJ.

**About WraySec, LLC:** WraySec, LLC (WraySec) is a Cyber Security startup dedicated to cutting-edge solutions, which provide critical value to their clients. WraySec specializes in Cyber Security Consulting, Services, and Products. WraySec is conveniently located in the Central Pennsylvania area, providing quick access to the Mid-Atlantic region, from Washington, DC to New York City. Additionally, WraySec provides on-site and remote services to customers all over the globe.