

# **MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CYBERSECURITY INTERNSHIP: MAXIMIZING LEARNING & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

**Lisa Hathaway**

**Director of VCEA Internships & Career Services**

**VCEA.Internships@wsu.ed**

## Prepare Before You Start

- Research the organization: understand its mission, current challenges, and recent cybersecurity incidents
- Review the job description carefully to familiarize yourself with the tools, technologies, and expectations of the role
- Approach the experience with curiosity- ask thoughtful questions and practice active listening

## Mindset

- You are not “just an intern”- you are a potential future team member and contributor

## Reflection Questions

- What are three key questions you want answered early in your internship?
- How will you proactively seek out those answers?



# Set SMART Personal Development Goals

Specific	Clearly define your objectives (what do you want to achieve?)
Measurable	Quantifiable progress
Achievable	Realistic within the scope of your internship
Relevant	Aligned with cybersecurity career
Time-Bound	Completed within internship period (milestones)



**Reflection Question:** How could you sharpen your goals to make them more clear and achievable



## Making a Strong First Impression- and Building on It

- Take initiative to introduce yourself and begin building relationships early
- Demonstrate curiosity by asking about projects, challenges, and tools
- Keep a running journal of technical concepts, processes, questions, and ideas
- Learn the organization's security culture- how risk is assessed and what priorities drive decisions

# Maximize Daily Habits

## Manage Your Time

- Balance routine tasks with opportunities that add meaningful value

## Get Involved

- Seek out side projects or shadowing experiences Stay Connected Schedule consistent check-ins with your supervisor or mentor

## Capture Your Learning

- Document processes, skills developed, and key takeaways

## Engage Actively

- Participate in team meetings and discussions

## Be Curious

- Use open time to explore research, emerging threats, vulnerabilities, and new ideas



# Build Your Professional Network



**Ask smart questions:** *“What are the biggest security threats you’re facing?”*



Talk to professionals outside your team—**build a cross-functional network**



**Use LinkedIn:** connect with coworkers, post takeaways (carefully worded, no NDA material)



Join company **Slack/Teams channels** relevant to cybersecurity discussions



## Reflection Question:

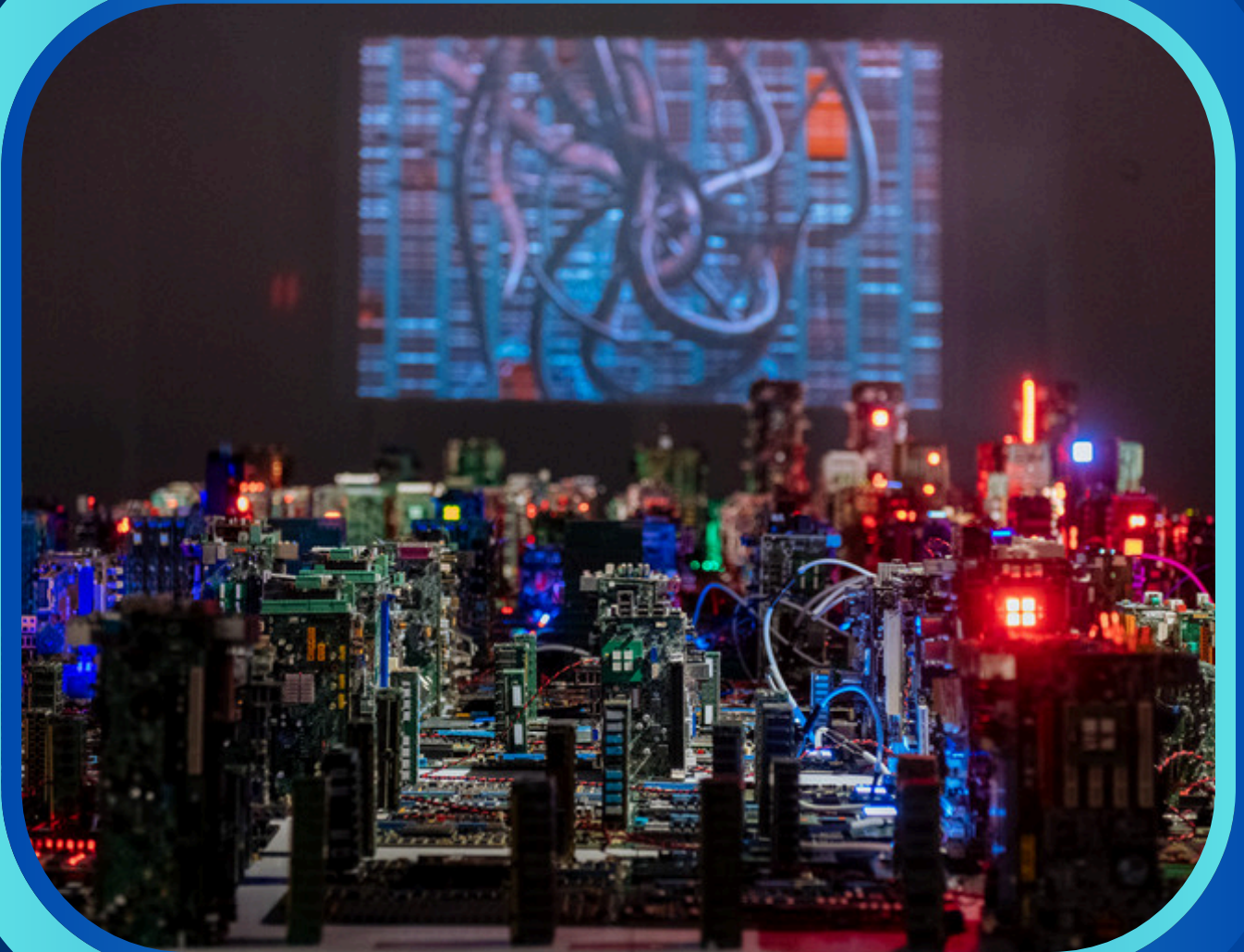
How can you maintain professional relationships beyond the internship?

## Reflect & Showcase

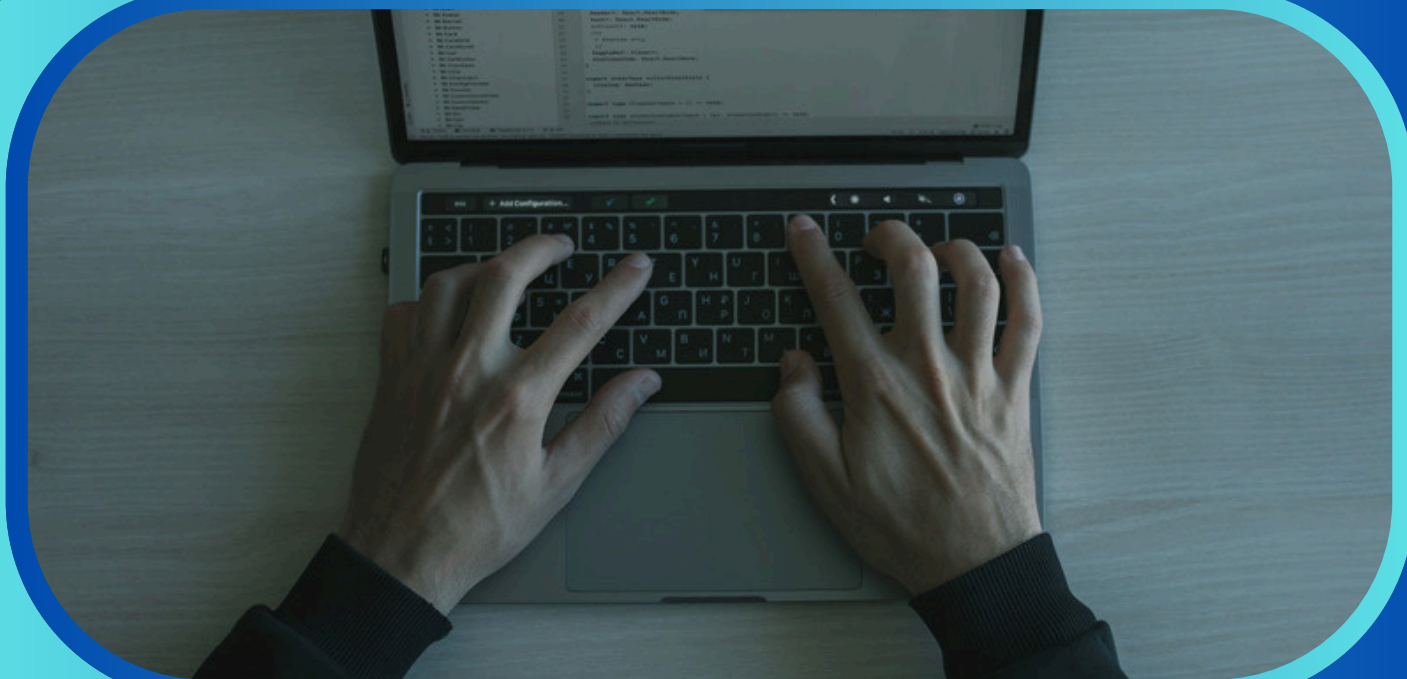
- Track your progress: projects, problems solved, tools used (e.g., Splunk, Wireshark, Kali Linux, Nessus)
- Create a final presentation or “internship summary” for your supervisor
- Update your résumé and LinkedIn with accomplishments—use quantifiable results if possible

### Reflection Question:

How will you showcase your internship achievements?



# Next Steps & Resources



- Find certification opportunities
- Continued learning paths
- Professional development resources
- Industry networking events
- Follow-up and stay connected with your network

## Reflection Question:

How will you leverage this experience for your next career move?

## ProPEL Internship Program



**1. Earn Academic Credit Toward Graduation**



**2. Full-Time Student Status**



**3. Structured Reflection and Skill Development**



**4. Stronger Career Outcomes**



**5. VCEA Mentorship and Support**

# THANK YOU



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
**Voiland College Career Services**