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WEB NEWS RELEASE

University of Maryland to host first workshop April 21 as part of the CyberWATCH "Cool Careers" series

Series encourages your girls to get excited about STEM career opportunities

COLLEGE PARK, MD (March 2006) - On April 21, 30 girls from area middle schools will learn about the many career opportunities available in the fields of science and technology, plus what it takes to succeed in these professions. The students will participate in the *Cool Careers in Cybersecurity for Girls* workshop - the first in a series of CyberWATCH *Cool Careers in Cybersecurity Workshops* hosted by Educational Technology Outreach within the College of Education.

With studies showing the number of girls interested in learning science and technology continuously decreases throughout middle school and into high school, this workshop is part of an effort to recruit and retain girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields through programs that educate about career choices. Issues faced by women from underrepresented groups will be a focus among the topics covered at the workshop. The students will hear from successful women in STEM fields working at various companies and agencies throughout the state.

"Presentations by female leaders in cybersecurity help shed light on a variety of careers that are based on technology," said Davina Pruitt-Mentle, coordinator of the University of Maryland's K-12 initiative for CyberWATCH and director of educational technology outreach for the College of Education. "Girls are often lacking the role models that illustrate they can succeed in these fields - women who leap over major societal hurdles in these occupations. This workshop shows the exciting career paths available to them in science, math and technology."

The program includes a full day of speakers, hands-on activities and campus site visits. Beginning at 8 a.m. in the Benjamin Building, the workshop's opening speaker will be Vonda Williams. As director of Information Assurance for Solvern Innovations, Williams applies cutting edge technology solutions and simulations to provide objective solutions to critical problems of importance to national security. Cynthia Mason-Posey, an associate professor at Prince George's Community College, will then lead an interactive computer session to teach participants about cybersafety - how to be safe when using the Internet, tips to keep their home computer bug and

virus free, and how this applies in the cybersecurity and information assurance fields. The students will also visit *Trufina*, a small start up company located in the TAI Program on campus that provides a web based application to assure a safer, secure and trustworthy way to identify yourself to others and for others to truthfully identify themselves to you. The day ends with a tour of the GIS lab in the *Department of Geography,* where the girls will visit a number of researchers and current research projects.

The participants were selected from Hyattsville Middle School, Drew-Freeman Middle School, and Nicholas Orem Middle School through the campus *Talent Search* - a U.S. Department of Education funded program designed to provide all students with early college awareness and post secondary opportunities through a variety of activities that encourage students to pursue an academically rigorous course selection. The girls will have the opportunity to participate in additional CyberWATCH workshops over the next four years, as well as the *Young Scholars Program* for rising juniors and seniors.

To learn more about CyberWATCH or the *Cool Careers in Cybersecurity Workshops*, contact Davina Pruitt-Mentle, Director, Educational Technology Outreach, at: *dpruitt@umd.edu*.

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**For more information on the College of Education, visit: *www.education.umd.edu*
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About CyberWATCH

Supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), CyberWATCH (Cybersecurity: Washington Area Technician and Consortium Headquarters) was established to operate a Regional Center in cybersecurity from 2005 through 2009. The only center located on the East Coast, CyberWATCH addresses challenges and concerns in education and the business industry, specifically the shortage of security professionals, a perceived lack of business and team-work skills among information technology professionals, and the lack of a cybersecurity curriculum at many higher education institutions. As the Washington region and its higher education institutions have such a diverse population, professional development for faculty, high school teachers, students, and staff will target populations that are traditionally least likely to major in fields requiring a cybersecurity/information assurance component.

The University of Maryland leads CyberWATCH's K-12 initiative, which involves professional development for educators and a series of guidance counselor workshops throughout Maryland, the District of Columbia and northern Virginia. A three week residential program is also offered to rising junior and high school students, plus an after school enrichment program to help students understand the plethora of career opportunities in the cybersecurity field.

In addition to the University of Maryland, the CyberWATCH consortium includes: Anne Arundel Community College, the Community Colleges of Baltimore County, Montgomery College,

Northern Virginia and Prince Georges Community College; and George Mason, George Washington, Johns Hopkins, and Towson Universities. Additional consortium members include five Cisco Academy high schools and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The consortium members will collaborate to share best practices, methodologies, curricula, course modules and materials, and provide faculty training and support to colleges who want to develop a cybersecurity/information assurance curriculum.

www.edtechoutreach.umd.edu/NSFCYBERWATCH.html