

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Commerce and Tourism

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BILL: CS/SB 1266

INTRODUCER: Commerce and Tourism Committee and Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: Cybersecurity Internships

DATE: January 21, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Dike	McKay	CM	Fav/CS
2.			ATD	
3.			AP	

**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 1266 creates the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program within the Department of Commerce (department). Under the bill, the department must partner with the University of South Florida (USF) to expand its Florida Center for Cybersecurity program (Cyber Florida) to other universities and institutions in the state to increase the state's cybersecurity workforce. The bill outlines annual reporting requirements and appropriates funds for the department.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**II. Present Situation:**

**NCAE-C Programs**

The National Security Agency (NSA) launched the National Centers of Academic Excellence in 1999 to promote education and research in cybersecurity, produce professionals with cyber expertise[to] expand the cybersecurity workforce, and reduce vulnerabilities in national infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> The National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) program is managed by the NSA's National Cryptologic School, alongside other federal

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<sup>1</sup> Nat'l Ctr. of Acad. Excellence in Cybersecurity, *Program Book*, available at [https://www.caecommunity.org/\\_files/ugd/fd9f4b\\_4248a3dadef84805adcc9d1a3bf78fd4.pdf](https://www.caecommunity.org/_files/ugd/fd9f4b_4248a3dadef84805adcc9d1a3bf78fd4.pdf) (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

partners.<sup>2</sup> To receive a designation under this program, institutions must complete validation of their programs of study.<sup>3</sup>

Academic institutions may choose from three designations under the NCAE:

- The cyber defense (CAE-CD) designation is awarded to regionally accredited schools offering cybersecurity degrees and certificates.
- The cyber research (CAE-R) designation is awarded to DoD schools, military academies with PhD programs, and other institutions with specific doctoral programs.
- The cyber operations (CAE-CO) designation applies to technical higher education programs focused on computer science, computer engineering, and/or electrical engineering.<sup>4</sup>

As of February 2024, NCAE had over “480 designated institutions across 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. There are 153 associate programs and degrees, 243 Cyber Defense bachelors and graduate programs, 20 Cyber Operations bachelors and graduate programs, and 80 institutions hold the Research designation.”<sup>5</sup>

The following Florida institutions hold one of the three designations:

- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University;
- Florida Atlantic University;
- Florida Memorial University;
- Florida State University;
- Eastern Florida State College;
- University of Central Florida;
- University of Florida;
- University of North Florida;
- University of South Florida;
- University of West Florida (UWF);
- Florida Institute of Technology;
- Florida International University;
- Jacksonville University;
- Miami Dade College;
- Nova Southeastern University;
- Pensacola State College; and
- St. Petersburg College.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nat’l Sec. Agency, *National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity*, available at <https://www.nsa.gov/Academics/Centers-of-Academic-Excellence/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Nat’l Ctr. of Acad. Excellence in Cybersecurity, *supra* note 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

## CompTIA Security+ Certification

The Computing Technology Industry Association (CompyTIA) is one of the biggest providers of IT certifications worldwide.<sup>7</sup> A CompTIA Security+ certification is “a global certification exam that validates the baseline skills you need to perform core security functions and pursue an IT career.”<sup>8</sup> The program focuses on preventing cyber-attacks, understanding organizational security, using cryptographic standards and products, configuring security technologies, understanding wireless and remote access security, identifying coding vulnerabilities, and more.<sup>9</sup>

## Cyber Florida Pilot Program

In 2014, the Legislature created Cyber Florida in s. 1004.444, F.S., within USF to make Florida a national leader in cybersecurity and expand the state cybersecurity workforce. The goals of Cyber Florida include creating jobs in the state’s cybersecurity industry, facilitating research and development initiatives with, forming partnerships with major military installations, attracting cybersecurity companies to Florida, and sharing cybersecurity knowledge, resources, and training.<sup>10</sup>

In 2024, the Legislature updated s. 1004.444, F.S., allowing Cyber Florida to assist any state-funded initiatives that relate to: (1) cybersecurity training, professional development, and education for state and local government employees, and (2) increasing the cybersecurity effectiveness of the state and local government technology platforms and infrastructure.

As part of this pilot at USF, Cyber Florida hosts:

- The Aligned Realistic Cyberattack Simulation (ARCS) Range, which provides cyber and IT training for Florida public sector employees.<sup>11</sup>
- Firstline, which provides public sector training in cybersecurity.<sup>12</sup>
- The Critical Infrastructure Program, which provides free access to cybersecurity risk assessments and resources for specific organizations.<sup>13</sup>
- Operation K12, to include cybersecurity education in K-12 classrooms across the state with lesson plans, labs, and more.<sup>14</sup>
- CyberWorks, to provide cybersecurity training with a focus on transitioning veterans, military spouses, first responders, and career-changers.<sup>15</sup>
- CyberHub, an online platform with free tools and education resources, including a protected online laboratory for students and researchers to investigate software without compromising the security of other devices.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> CompTIA, *What Is CompTIA Security+ Certification?*, available at <https://www.comptia.org/en-us/blog/what-is-comptia-security-certification/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Cyber Florida, *Our Mission*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/about/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> Cyber Florida, *The ARCS Range*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/arcs-range/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>12</sup> Cyber Florida, *Firstline*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/firstline/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>13</sup> Cyber Florida, *Critical Infrastructure Program*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/cip/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>14</sup> Cyber Florida, *Operation K12*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/opk12/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>15</sup> Cyber Florida, *CyberWorks*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/cyberworks/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>16</sup> Cyber Florida, *CyberHub*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/florida-cyberhub/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

- The Security Operations Center Apprentice Program (SOCAP), which is a paid internship program for USF students studying cybersecurity.<sup>17</sup>
- PhaseZero, which fills critical gaps in funding for cybersecurity entrepreneurs and fosters research partnerships.<sup>18</sup>
- The Cybersecurity and Information Technology Pathways Program, partnered with the Florida Department of Education, to fund projects which prepared students for cybersecurity and IT jobs.<sup>19</sup>
- The NIST Ramps Program, which partners with organizations and laboratories to provide students with hands-on training.<sup>20</sup>

At UWF, the pilot program hosts workforce development and community outreach programs, including:

- The National Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program, CyberSkills2Work, which provides free education and career development for eligible transitioning military, first responders, veterans, military spouses, and government personnel.<sup>21</sup>
- The UWF Florida Cybersecurity Training Program, which provides free training for eligible university, college, K-12, state, county, and city employees.<sup>22</sup>
- The UWF Cyber Skills Exercise, an intensive cybersecurity one-day training program eligible transitioning military members, first responders, veterans, military spouses, and State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) government personnel.<sup>23</sup>
- The Cybersecurity Education in Critical Infrastructure Protection (CECIP) Project, which develops training courses with hands-on, laboratory experiences to offer workforce development certificates.<sup>24</sup>
- GenCyber Experience Camps, which provide K-12 students and teachers with introductory cybersecurity education.<sup>25</sup>
- Cybersecurity Ambassadors, which sends UWF students to K-12 schools in Northwest Florida to teach cybersecurity expertise and awareness.<sup>26</sup>
- CyberPatriot, which is a cybersecurity competition for middle and high school students.<sup>27</sup>
- The 502 Project, partnered with other Florida higher education institutions, which connects high school students with professional mentors and teaches them new cybersecurity skills.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cyber Florida, *SOCAP*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/socap/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>18</sup> Cyber Florida, *phaseZero*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/phasezero/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>19</sup> Cyber Florida, *Cyber/IT Pathways*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/pathways/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>20</sup> Cyber Florida, *NIST Ramps Program*, available at <https://cyberflorida.org/nist-ramps-program/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>21</sup> UWF, *Center for Cybersecurity*, available at <https://uwf.edu/centers/center-for-cybersecurity/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026) (“The University of West Florida Center for Cybersecurity has been awarded a \$9.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of War CIO Cyber Academic Engagement Office to expand the National Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program. The program will prepare over 4,688 professionals over the next two years for 24 industry certifications and 41 emerging cybersecurity and AI work roles through 62 new educational pathways.”).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* (“These exercises are part of the National Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program, CyberSkills2Work®, and funded by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)”).

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> UWF Center for Cybersecurity, *Community Outreach*, available at <https://uwf.edu/centers/center-for-cybersecurity/community-outreach/> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

- ITEN Wired, which is a cybersecurity and IT conference for industry leaders, educators, entrepreneurs.<sup>29</sup>
- Women in CyberSecurity, which is a Florida affiliate group supporting the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in cybersecurity.<sup>30</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

#### Findings

**Section 1** creates s. 1004.0983, F.S., explaining that two successful pilot programs at USF and the University of West Florida demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of combining cybersecurity internships, federal security clearance readiness, and CompTIA Security+ certification as critical elements of workforce development for students.

#### Cybersecurity Program

In subsection (3), the bill creates the Cybersecurity Experiential Internship and Clearance Readiness Program (program) within the department. The department must enter into an agreement with Cyber Florida to implement the program with all NCAE-C-designated state universities and Florida College system institutions.

Under subsection (4) of the bill, the program must:

- Increase the number of experiential cyber risk analyst internships statewide;
- Provide intern-supporting organizations with prioritized analytics, reporting, and risk mitigation action plans to enhance cyber resilience;
- Implement a federal security clearance readiness curriculum;
- Provide CompTIA Security+ certification training and examination;
- Coordinate with government and private sector partners to place graduates in high-demand cybersecurity roles; and
- Provide access to datasets for statewide cyber assessments, research, and development.

Beginning in 2026-2027, the bill mandates the program must be available at all current NCAE-C-designated state universities and institutions. The bill states that its provisions expire on October 1, 2031.

#### Reporting

Beginning January 1, 2027, and each subsequent year through 2032, the department must submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report must include:

- The number of students participating at each institution;
- The number of students who earned CompTIA Security+ certification;
- The number of students who have completed internship and clearance readiness milestones;

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

- The number of students who subsequently entered federal, state, or private sector cybersecurity jobs requiring federal public trust or national security clearance;
- Available data on the aforementioned jobs; and
- Recommendations for program improvements, including potential integration with other state workforce initiatives.

**Effective Date**

The bill sets forth an effective date of July 1, 2026.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

Indeterminate. There may be increased costs for institutions of higher education to implement this bill.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 1004.0983 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Commerce and Tourism Committee on January 21, 2026:**

The amendment removes the section appropriating \$11.9 million to the Department of Commerce to implement the bill.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.