



# The Merritt Connection

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Dr. Marie-Elaine Burns, Interim President

## Cybersecurity Program Trains Students To Help Solve Worldwide Staffing Needs

Two years ago **Sho Harris** was working at a warehouse, taking classes at Laney, and trying to figure out what to do with his life when he spotted Merritt's new Cybersecurity Program in the class schedule. Today he has a full-time job at FireEye, one of the top cybersecurity companies in the world. "I was attracted by the chance to learn computer skills and also have a paid internship. It was an intense, fast-paced program with excellent teachers and helpful fellow students which made the process easier. I wake up every day feeling blessed."



It's rare to look at the news today and not see an article about computer hacking. This new high-tech problem has created a dire need for cybersecurity to prevent computers, networks, programs and data from change or destruction. Today there is a desperate search for more than 200,000 skilled cybersecurity employees, and the numbers are growing. Predicting this need more than two years ago, Merritt College, along with a team of security executives from Silicon Valley, created a curriculum to train students in helping with this worldwide problem. The Applications & Infrastructure Security Program, with instructors from industry and with hands-on internships, will have its second graduation in May.

Sho Harris is one of the program's many success stories. See what other students have to say about their experiences.



Although she had worked in technology services for the Oakland school district, the first computer class **Sandy Keh** ever took was Merritt's Intro to Computer Science. She was then encouraged to continue in the Cybersecurity Program, and she's glad she did. "This is a life-changing program for anyone interested in technology. The support I received from the first moment has been invaluable. Anyone interested in the field would benefit from it."



**Will Weekes** was studying psychology at Cal State East Bay when he decided that he wanted a more hands-on career in technology. He started learning the gaming industry then heard about Merritt's Cybersecurity program and what a high-demand field it was.

"It's a challenge, but the market is hot, and there will always be a need for security. The instructors are really passionate."



**Hamza Rouili**, who had a hobby of fixing computers and a dream to learn more, finally found his chance. "I saw Courtney Brown's video on the website and it looked like just what I wanted. I didn't have a lot of experience, but the classes are surrounded by people who care about making sure you succeed." When **Chris Hanson** started her third career, she figured this one would be the charm. "I've always gravitated toward helping with IT in my jobs and enjoyed it. In this program, I've been able to take classes while working since they are only scheduled on Fridays. I really like the team environment of the class just like in the industry."



**Beverly Brooks** had a master's degree in technology but hadn't quite found her purpose for it until she came to Merritt's program, drawn by industry-experienced instructors and comparatively low cost. What she found would change her life. "I



was in the right place at the right time, and I was asked to teach in the program. I now have the best of both worlds: doing something I love and being able to pass it on to others." Leaving behind a career in the auto industry, **Nic Burton** wanted to find a new career where he could use his computer programming skills toward something productive. "This is a huge opportunity. We have the resources available to develop the problem-solving skills we'll need to perform in a professional work environment." **Brandon Thompson** was working in customer service for a tech company when he became interested in learning more about the field—and ended up with a full-time job. "It was an intensive program, and I learned a lot. I



worked part-time at Auth0 as the technical account manager which gave me a lot of opportunity to learn about the company, and they ended up hiring me."

—Susan May