

Governor Hutchinson's Weekly Address: Cyber Range: Next Step in Arkansas' Computer-Science Initiative

LITTLE ROCK - When you hear that computer hackers have stolen millions of Americans' personal information from a credit bureau, it's like hearing that someone has stolen all the gold from Fort Knox.

There's a temptation to think there's nothing we can do to stop the bad guys, and that nothing is safe from thieves and high-tech troublemakers.

But in Arkansas, we work to solve our problems. Which is exactly what the University of Central Arkansas is doing about cyber security training.

With a half-million-dollar grant from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, UCA is building a cyber range to train students in cyber security.

On Wednesday, UCA President Houston Davis, UCA Dean Stephen Addison, and Courtney Pledger, director of the Arkansas Educational Television Network joined me at the capitol to announce the project. We hope it will be up and running by the first of the year.

A cyber range allows teachers to create a virtual computer network so that students learn to anticipate cyber attacks and how to defeat them. Instructors can set up any kind of network and inject a variety of viruses onto the range without turning a free-roaming virus loose on the internet. When the war game is over, they hit reset and start over, no harm done.

A cyber range allows students to go beyond antivirus programs to create programs that will recognize unknown viruses hiding in friendly looking email or web links. Students will learn cyber security in real-time systems.

Arkansas Educational Television Network is supporting UCA in this endeavor through a partnership to develop cyber security, coding, computer programming, computer science and other curricula in Arkansas schools.

With that support, the cyber range complements my computer-science initiative to offer coding education to students at all levels.

UCA's state-of-the art teaching will be available through AETN to Arkansas students, both in high school and college.

National security agencies have long been utilizing cyber ranges, but this is the first time that students in Arkansas will have access to that technology. This will be the first educational

cyber range in the region, and Arkansas will be the first in the country to build a range that eventually will be available for K-12 as well as university students.

UCA plans to offer an interdisciplinary bachelor's degree in cyber security in the fall of 2018. The program will be supported by the UCA College of Business, College of Liberal Arts and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

The cyber range is the next logical step in our computer-science initiative. This will keep Arkansas on the leading edge of computer education, which will continue attract industry that needs a well-trained work force.

Contact: press@governor.arkansas.gov

###