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Internship (and Transition) Experiences of Veterans in a Graduate Cybersecurity Degree Program



by “Scuba” Steve Gary
Associate Professor of Practice
PhD Student, Career and Workforce Education



Agenda

- Scuba
- Veterans Today
- Internships
- The Seminar
- The Unofficial Pre-Pilot “Study”
- The Big Question
- Experiences of Veterans
- The Results



**CYBER
FLORIDA**

at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA



Scuba

- Retired USAF Intelligence Officer
 - Chief, Cyber Intelligence, USSOCOM
- USF Associate Professor of Practice
 - Internship Coordinator/Concentration Director
 - MS in Cybersecurity
 - MS in Intelligence Studies
- USF PhD Student
 - Career and Workforce Education
 - Dissertation Topic: Internship and Transition Experiences of Veterans in a Graduate Cybersecurity Degree Program





Veterans Today

- Difficulty transitioning to civilian workforce (Zogas, 2017)
 - Especially younger veterans (Shane, 2019) and females (Mittal, 2019)
- Thanks to the GI Bill, many are going/returning to college
 - 1M+ by next year (Lipka, 2011)
 - Many are pursuing cybersecurity (Fucci, 2017)





Internships

- Recommended for all students, including veterans
(Gonyea, Kinzie, Kuh, & Laird, 2008)
- Should be a requirement for graduating
(Giordani, 2012)
- Excellent for cybersecurity
(McGettrick, 2013)



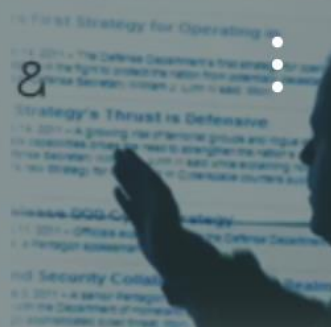


The Seminar

- Host a weekly veteran-centered cybersecurity seminar
 - Address veteran-specific issues
 - Constant feedback on programs
 - Pulse on internship and transition experiences

Veterans'
Cybersecurity &
Intelligence
Seminar

Instructor:
"Scuba"





The Unofficial Pre-Pilot “Study”

- Qualitative in nature (phenomenological interview)
- 6 friends/students (participants)
 - Graduates of MS in Cybersecurity degree program
- Tested the waters
 - Tested my interview skills
 - Tested some interview questions
 - 100% voluntary
 - 100% anonymous





The Big Question

How has your internship experiences helped or hindered your transition from the military to the civilian workforce?



Experiences of Veterans



Alpha:

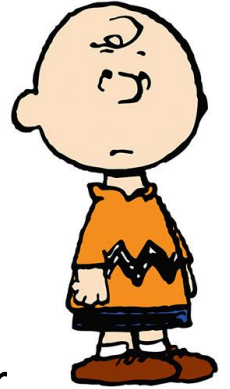
“Ultimately internships have been very positive for me, in one I was able to **understand the business** a little more and in another internship I was exposed to people that were not military. It was a **very civilian job**, so I was able to work in [an] environment that was much different than what I came out of so the internship fully **helped me to see how a civilian company works.**”

Experiences of Veterans

The logo for Bravo, featuring the word "bravo" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font inside a black speech bubble shape.

Bravo:

“My experience was **very positive**. My internship was with a company that used cutting edge technology, so I had the opportunity to **learn many new things**. The team members were excellent, a couple of them I have been keeping in touch with and we’ve been **helping each other in our job search**.”

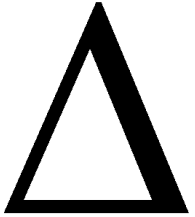


Experiences of Veterans

Charlie:

“It allowed for me to add **some relevant or basic information** for pursuing a change in career. It wouldn’t necessarily be value added if I were already in the cybersecurity field. It was extremely **difficult to figure out** how to get into an internship. Allowed for my resume to **include information and knowledge regarding’s policies and procedures** within cyber security and to establish a baseline. I can’t say that it hindered the transition but was **beneficial**. Unfortunately, I feel my own internship experience was **less than stellar** and **didn’t really teach me a lot** and I had to **figure things out on my own.**”

Experiences of Veterans



Delta:

“It was a very positive experience the actual project I was working on was **very useful in my employment** on a cyber ranges which is something I **continued to do my current position.**”

Experiences of Veterans



Echo:

“My internship experiences were **very positive**, internship **turned into a full-time job**. There’s a lot of **civilian terminology** that I was exposed to when onboarding and other various words that I didn’t understand until I enrolled into the internship.”

Experiences of Veterans **FOXTROT**

Foxtrot:

“My internship has helped me in many ways. The principal manner being **building a resume** that I knew at the end they [employers] would be looking for.”



The Results



Two overarching themes:

1. Benefited from internship

4 said “Very positive”

1 said “Beneficial”

1 said “Helped”

2. Learned how to work in a civilian workforce environment

- Terminology, new skills, new things, build a resume, understand the business

My assessment:

A positive internship experience *most likely* equates to a positive transition experience for veterans



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QUESTIONS?

“Scuba” Steve Gary
Associate Professor of Practice
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sgary@usf.edu



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