With increasing cybersecurity threats, and a growing interconnected world, engaging trainings in cyber best-practices are more valuable and vital than ever before. In 2019, there were 504,316 cybersecurity job openings with many of those in California. Cal Poly decided this needed to change, and the California Cyber Innovation Challenge was born. With students being sponges for information, it is the perfect time to train them in skills that can help them in the workplace down the road and help close the job gap.

Cybersecurity concepts can seem daunting, so creating a challenge that is fun and engaging is essential to the success of the event. Students enter the challenge going through immersive sets and engaging in physical puzzles, then proceed to the digital challenges. The digital puzzles include a networking capture the flag challenge written by Henry Danielson, and the main digital forensics challenge (DFC). The DFC is tiered so groups may succeed at certain levels while learning and being pushed at others.

At the 2019 CCIC, 26 teams competed, over 150 junior high/high school students from 21 different schools across the state, Paradise to San Diego.

The CCIC will continue to promote actions to enhance cybersecurity and grow the cybersecurity workforce

The 2020 event will highlight cyber in space, and will look to grow the event in underrepresented areas in California in order to assist future cyber defenders in realizing the California Dream.

Worked in conjunction with James Poirier, Sydney Mendoza and Zoe Lie on the construction of the DFC

Worked in conjunction with Tanner Covington on immersive set elements

Jess MacMillan
California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo