WiCyS 2025

Conference Evaluation Report – June 2025

Prepared by Dr. Blake Urbach
Preferred Program Evaluations
3043 Carmello Ave.
Orlando, FL 32814
(407) 375-2289
Blake@ppeonline.net
www.ppeonline.net

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WiCyS 2025 – Background and Participation

The WiCyS annual conference is regarded as the flagship conference for women and their allies in cybersecurity, and is the nation's largest cybersecurity conference with comparable representation of aspiring and working professionals in the industry. The first WiCyS conference was hosted in 2014 with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Award Number 1303441. The conference is organized and held in accordance with the mission of WiCyS: to help organizations recruit, retain, and advance women in cybersecurity – all while creating a community of engagement, encouragement, and support.

WiCyS 2025 was held in Dallas, Texas, on April 2-5, 2025. This year's event marked WiCyS' 11th anniversary, and attracted 2,366 attendees in-person and 1,159 attendees virtually. The event proudly showcased its 101 sponsors spanning six tiers of financial support. Over 500 volunteers and members from 10 conference planning committees contributed to the event in various capacities before, during, and after the four-day conference. Travel stipends were granted to 286 deserving attendees, and 1,128 competitive scholarships were awarded. Participants represented 28 countries, the armed forces, and diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skillsets.

WiCyS 2025 – Conference Tracks and Sessions

This year's conference was extended by one day, resulting in a total of 19 bonus sessions. The Career Fair was spread across two days, thus providing participants additional time to visit the sponsors' booths, apply to internship and job postings, and even interview on-the-spot. The conference schedule for WiCyS 2025 featured a variety of tracks and sessions purposely designed to target the interests of attendees ranging from college students and veterans to mid-level professionals and seasoned executives. From morning to evening, attendees were provided both formal and informal opportunities to learn, explore, practice, network, socialize, and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world scenarios. The conference agenda featured color-coded sessions organized by track: **Technical Skill Building, Education & Workforce Development, Research & Innovation, Career Advancement & Management, and Community Ecosystem & Outreach.**

The jam-packed conference schedule included 141 presenters, 106 unique sessions, six empowering keynote speakers, six employer socials, seven invite-only events for select audiences, one allyship event, one Capture the Flag (CTF) competition, and one escape room. A student poster session showcased the research of 29 undergraduate and graduate students. Twenty technical and non-technical workshops geared toward students, educators, practitioners, and researchers were offered. The workshops covered a broad range of topics including AI, penetration testing, IoT hacking, ransomware, AWS security, imposter syndrome, fostering inclusion, and empowering cybersecurity professionals. Participants were encouraged to scan the

QR codes made available at the end of qualifying sessions to receive Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit.

The WiCyS annual conference has developed a reputation for its distinguished presenters, diversity of topics related to women in cybersecurity, and collection of conference forums that appeal to an array of audiences. Each session track focused on the novel tools, frameworks, and strategies being employed to address the latest vulnerabilities of our nation's critical infrastructure and defend users against cyber attacks. Presenters delved into contemporary topics impacting women in cybersecurity such as cultivating technical and soft skills for success in the cyber workforce, mentorship, and allyship. WiCyS affiliates, college chapters, and industry and academic leaders joined curated discussions on best practices for supporting and advancing women and allies in cybersecurity. As in previous years, WiCyS 2025 intentionally engaged "career changers" who are transitioning from an unrelated or adjacent field into the cyber workforce.

Participants were overwhelmingly pleased with the range of presentation themes, and the opportunities for individuals with similar levels of experience to connect through socials, chapter meet-ups, hands-on activities, and competitions. Hundreds of attendees gathered at the First Timers Panel where presenters shared what they found most beneficial about the WiCyS conference and how first-time conference goers could get the most out of their experience. Participants spoke about the quality interactions they had with recruiters, discussions with peers that led to collaboration, and "actionable knowledge" about emerging trends that can be applied to their current cybersecurity role. Conference attendees described their experience at WiCyS 2025 as inspiring, uplifting, inclusive, immersive, hands-on, and valuable.

The conference schedule was available on the WiCyS website and the Whova app. Via this event management app, registrants could browse the conference program, view speaker bios and sponsor information, connect with one another prior to arriving in Dallas, and pose questions to the event organizers. The detailed conference program consisted of agendas, session summaries, and a floor map of the Career Fair.

WiCyS 2025 – Career Fair and Career Growth Hub

The Career Fair and Career Growth Hub are consistently two of the most anticipated and highly rated elements of the WiCyS annual conference. The Career Growth Hub is a place for resume reviews, mock-interview guidance, professional headshots, and career conversations. This conference element was available to all registrants on April 2 and 3.

Conference sponsors transformed a part of the convention center into a bustling scene of hiring, sharing, informing, and inspiring. An impressive lineup of 101 organizations representing Fortune 500 companies, small- to mid-size tech enterprises, government agencies, colleges and universities, financial institutions, retail outlets, and healthcare providers were present during the

Career Fair. Several sponsors conducted real-time interviews at the conference while others were focused on promoting brand awareness and their cybersecurity divisions. This conference element was available to all registrants on April 3 and 4.

Conference Improvement Feedback

<u>Coordination</u>

The conference organizers made every effort to keep participants and sponsors apprised of conference logistics. Through email, social media, and the Whova app, attendees were made aware of expectations, programming, and changes to the schedule and session locations in real-time. Some strategic partners reported being overwhelmed with the volume of email messages they received in the weeks leading up to the conference. One participant reported turning off all notifications through the app because they were bothersome. Another attendee shared that the app does not work properly while using a VPN.

Participants spoke favorably about referencing the color-coded session tracks in order to choose engagements that were of most interest to them. Attendees appreciated not having to sign up for workshops in advance, as was the requirement in previous years. According to several conference goers, the Wi-Fi was spotty and this made it difficult to fully engage during the workshops. Another student proposed that all presenters distribute their lab specifications prior to the conference so participants are adequately prepared when they enter the workshop.

A few participants noted that they had difficulty with the online interface for hotel reservations. Others noted that they were unclear about the process for applying for a scholarship and what was covered by the scholarship.

Participants reported that the coordination of volunteers has been improved from previous years. Nonetheless, a few attendees found it frustrating that there is undue idle time in the Career Growth Hub as volunteers wait for students to enter and request assistance. Having volunteers cross-trained to hold career conversations, conduct mock interviews, etc., would maximize their contribution to the visitors of the Career Growth Hub.

Several attendees expressed their preference for holding the WiCyS annual conference in the fall of each year. Doing so would be of benefit for employers who are recruiting for entry-level openings and internship opportunities in the fall versus the spring. Additionally, having the conference alternate between cities on the east and west coast was requested. Some of the respondents are partial to having the conference occur during the workweek instead of spilling into the weekend. They would prefer the conference to begin early Wednesday morning and conclude Friday evening.

Facilities and Staffing

Holding the conference at the same site where participants are lodging was very well-received. This made it easy for participants to attend a greater number of sessions, activities, and gatherings from morning to evening. A few attendees reported calling the conference non-emergency number with questions or concerns, but never connecting with a person or receiving a return phone call.

Among those staying off-site, better communication regarding the shuttle schedule and the pick-up/drop-off location was deemed essential. Several attendees commented that the shuttle service was unreliable and they missed workshops because they could not get to the conference venue in time. Some participants reported relying on Uber because the shuttle service was altogether unpredictable.

Quite a few participants expressed that the amount of food provided during plated lunches was insufficient. They did not feel that serving a salad in place of an entrée offered enough sustenance to carry them through the day. There was some confusion about where and when food vouchers for scholarship recipients could be collected during badge pick-up, and whether the vouchers covered the restaurants' 18% service fee.

During the Career Fair, exhibitors shared information about their companies/institutions, provided details about job and internship opportunities, collected resumes, and distributed swag to visitors. Holding the Career Fair in a larger space was recommended for future conferences. Several participants commented that it was too noisy and crowded, and not conducive to having one-on-one conversations. It was noted that the Career Fair should include a designated traffic pattern/flow so it feels less chaotic for those at the booths and the conference goers walking through the space.

One attendee requested instituting a "low-sensory time" for neurodivergent attendees to visit the Career Fair. She also urged the conference planners to select a sensory-friendly space that is not so disconnected from the main artery of the conference. Having the Career Fair open for an additional half-day was rated favorably among the attendees. Some participants voiced their disappointment that many of the employers at the Career Fair were not actively hiring.

Programming Elements

The addition of an escape room to this year's lineup was tremendously popular. Several attendees indicated that they wanted to attend but were unable to do so because the engagement was already at capacity. They requested more than one opportunity to participate in an escape room next year. With regard to the CTF competition, some participants inquired about offering a separate opportunity for beginners and advanced practitioners.

Some attendees found the emphasis on student-centered sessions to overshadow the content applicable to mid-career and senior-level professionals, and individuals looking to upskill. They

suggested including a track specifically designed for experienced security professionals. Several individuals were interested in Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC)-related content, in particular. Per one participant, "There wasn't enough depth or substance for those of us further along in our careers." Another shared, "Sessions that highlight real-world stories, lessons learned, and emerging attack surfaces would add incredible value and reflect the full breadth of work being done in cybersecurity today."

Although many of the participants who have attended in previous years reported that the diversity and scope of sessions has increased, they were still hungry for additional technical workshops and presentations. "The technical talks were not very technical and more theoretical." One participant specified the importance of being exposed to experience-based content. She wants to hear about "what people are encountering in their actual jobs – what they've seen, handled, learned from, or even struggled with in real-world security environments." A hardware security engineer explained, ". . . I believe hardware security deserves a more prominent and consistent presence. It's a core part of the cybersecurity ecosystem that often gets overshadowed, yet it's evolving rapidly and impacting real-world systems in critical ways."

Creating a dedicated event for the "mentor/mentee global program" was proposed as a unique opportunity to leverage these relationships that have been forged virtually. One participant vocalized that "every affiliate should have a meetup." Another attendee sees values in including more interdisciplinary panels focused on the intersection of cybersecurity, AI, and education.

During the Male Allyship Summit, one participant indicated that he needs "more guidance; a tangible plan of action" for bringing his colleagues into the fold on how to embody an ally. Several of the attendees inquired how they can serve "more meaningfully" as a proactive ally throughout the year. The sponsor of the Male Allyship Summit recognized the untapped potential and commitment of this group, and pledged its support to host other forums during the year that are an outcropping of this engagement.

WiCyS 2025 – Conference Evaluation

WiCyS partnered with Dr. Blake Urbach, Principal Consultant of Preferred Program Evaluations, to conduct an evaluation of this year's conference. The evaluation of WiCyS 2025 included observations, informal interviews, and anonymous surveys for participants and sponsors. The purpose of the evaluation was to better understand the experience, value, and impact of the conference among its stakeholders, and to inform future WiCyS programming.

The participant survey was designed in SurveyMonkey, and at the conclusion of the conference, the survey weblink was distributed to 2,249 attendees. A total of 196 participants responded to this survey (response rate of 9%). Similarly, a weblink to the sponsor survey was emailed to 101 conference sponsors once WiCyS 2025 concluded. A total of 19 sponsors responded to this

survey (response rate of 19%). The findings from the participant and sponsor surveys are provided in the results dashboards starting on page eight and 32, respectively, of this report.

During the four-day conference, Dr. Urbach spoke one-on-one with participants and sponsors to gain insight about their WiCyS 2025 experience. She interacted with students seeking to improve their technical skills, mid-career professionals searching for inspiration, faculty members looking for innovative ways to share their research, and sponsors pursuing talented candidates to join their ranks. Select insights and sentiments shared by the attendees and sponsors are provided herein.

- My company is not deterred from its long-standing goal of creating a diverse and inclusive workforce. We are committed to hiring candidates who represent the diversity of the cities where we are located, and the constituents we serve.

- We have been a sponsor for the last five years. The return on investment of our conference sponsorship has consistently exceeded expectations.

- My company is here because our mission fully aligns with that of WiCyS.

- Look around – this tapestry of students is a beautiful thing. What WiCyS has created is quite remarkable.

- Last year we hired four employees who we originally connected with at the WiCyS conference. The quality of candidates we meet at this conference surpasses that of the other hiring events we attend throughout the year.

- We are seeking employees who communicate well, are motivated, and work effectively in a team environment. Our focus on technical skills is secondary to finding the right candidate for our company's culture and values.

- The excitement at the Career Fair is tremendous, but the volume level is too loud for me to engage in memorable conversation with those at my company's booth.

- I work as a pen tester and decided to volunteer in the Career Growth Hub. I am having informal discussions with students about the difference between red team and blue team, and more importantly, sharing guidance on how they can land their first cybersecurity job after graduating from college.

- I am a career transitioner from human resources and want to help others who are entering cybersecurity from an unrelated field. I am engaging with students in the Career Growth Hub who are looking to broaden their network in order to have a job lined up once they finish their bachelor's degree in the next year.

- This is my second year volunteering to review resumes. I feel really good about giving back to this community, and believe what I offer will strengthen the attendees' resumes and opportunities to find employment they are excited about. I have encouraged the participants to make the resume revisions I suggested and then return to the Career Growth Hub for a second review with one of the other volunteers.

- I am here participating as a private citizen because my employer is a government agency and my department head was hesitant to allow me to attend this conference. I feel that the mission of WiCyS is so important that I paid my own way to be in attendance.

- I currently work in cybersecurity and am trying to position myself for a promotion. I am participating in the career roundtables to seek direction on what type of position would be best suited for my skillset.

- I am so excited to meet my mentor in-person. That is the highlight of my conference experience.

- Please offer another escape room opportunity at a different time, and consider spacing the sessions out a little more so we can walk from one meeting room to another without being late to the next session.

- I feel like I am part of something so much bigger than myself.

- I feel seen, heard, and respected in this safe space.

- I am graduating this spring and would like to receive a job offer very soon. I am attending WiCyS 2025 with the hope of interviewing at the conference and securing a job for May 2025 when I complete my degree. (The evaluator crossed paths with this individual the following day, and the student was delighted to share that she had landed an interview with one of the Fortune 500 companies in attendance.)

- I am an officer of the WiCyS Student Chapter at my college. I am thrilled to be here; the energy and excitement is like nothing I've experienced before. I'm speaking with other officers about programming, industry speakers, facility tours, and social and art-based activities they have offered their chapter members.

- This conference has provided me with a very new perspective on what it must feel like for women in male-dominated professional spaces. I am one of only a few males in the room, and it is definitely not the dynamic that is familiar to me.

- My wife works in the cybersecurity arena too, and she encouraged me to attend this conference. I have been impressed so far and am eager to learn more about how I can be an ally – not just in name. I feel compelled to do more to ensure my workplace is embracing women employees.

- I really liked that we were not required to sign up for workshops. In previous years I missed out on attending workshops because I didn't register in advance.

- My experience at this conference reinforces that I am on the right professional track. Seeing so many other women excelling in their cyber careers is a real confidence boost.

- The opportunities for strategic networking have been really important to me.

- I am reinvigorated to share what I've learned with my colleagues. I wish that more of them were able to attend and have this experience with such a supportive community.

WiCyS 2025
Participant Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

The WiCyS 2025 participant survey was designed to assess the experiences and perceptions of conference participants, and to inform future WiCyS annual conferences and programming. The survey weblink was distributed to 2,249 participants at the conclusion of this year's conference. A total of 196 conference participants responded to the anonymous survey in whole or part. Ninety-four percent of the respondents identified as women; males accounted for 4% of the survey sample, and non-binary participants totaled 2% of those surveyed.

RESPONDENTS BY ROLE

Nearly one-third of the respondents identified as students, and 45% identified as security professionals.

Role	Percentage
Security professional	45%
Student	32%
Educator	13%
Other	8%
HR professional	2%
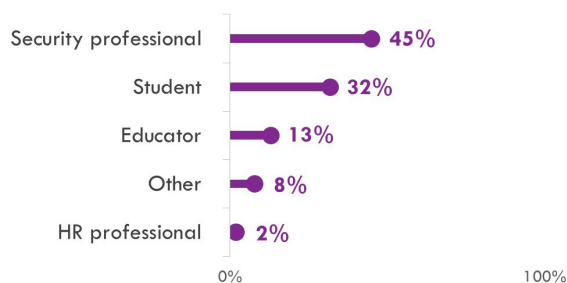
STUDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL STANDING

Over half of the student respondents were pursuing a bachelor's degree, and another 32% were enrolled in a graduate program.

Educational Standing	Percentage
Bachelor's degree-seeking	53%
Master's degree-seeking	25%
Associate's degree-seeking	12%
Doctoral degree-seeking	7%
Cybersecurity training program	2%
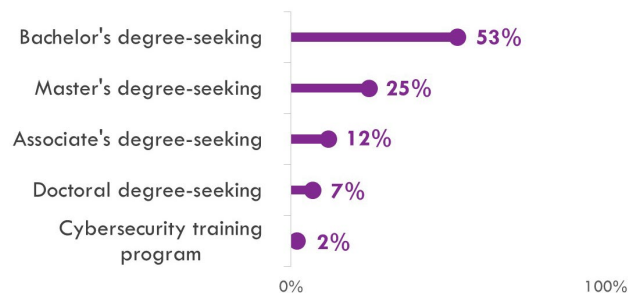
WiCyS 2025
Participant Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

The mission of WiCyS is to help build a strong gender-diverse cybersecurity workforce by facilitating recruitment, retention, and advancement for women in the field. The WiCyS annual conference is the nation's largest cybersecurity conference with comparable representation of aspiring and working professionals in the industry.

RESPONDENTS BY CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

For nearly 58% of the respondents, WiCyS 2025 represented their first time participating in the WiCyS annual conference.

First time in attendance — 58%
Attended more than once — 22%
Attended only once — 20%
0% ... 100%

ADEQUACY OF LEVEL-SPECIFIC SESSIONS

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents indicated that the variety of sessions offered at the conference met the needs of participants at their level (i.e., student, entry-level, senior-level, etc.)

Strongly agree — 43%
Agree — 29%
Neutral — 11%
Disagree — 7%
Strongly disagree — 8%
Unsure — 1%
0% ... 100%

WiCyS 2025
Participant Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025
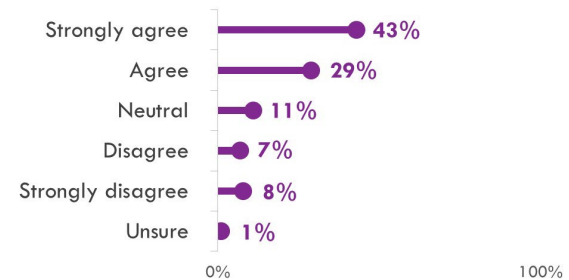
WiCyS represents a global community of women, allies and advocates dedicated to bringing talented women together to celebrate and foster their passion and drive for cybersecurity. The attendees at WiCyS 2025 represented a racially diverse group of attendees from the U.S. and 28 other countries.

RESPONDENTS BY RACE

One-quarter of the respondents represented a race traditionally underrepresented in STEM.

Race	Percentage
White	49%
Black or African American	22%
Asian	19%
Prefer not to answer	9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1%
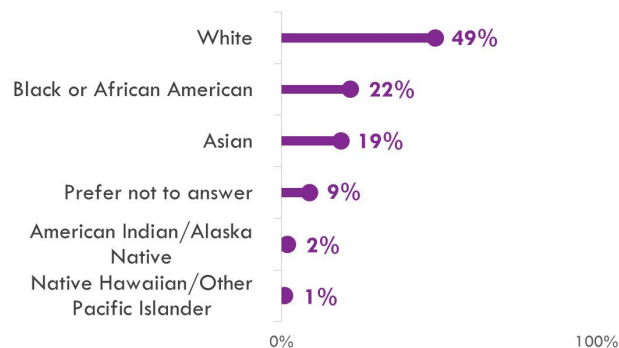
RESPONDENTS BY ETHNICITY

Ten percent of the respondents identified as Hispanic or Latine.

Ethnicity	Percentage
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latine	85%
Hispanic/Latine	10%
Prefer not to answer	5%

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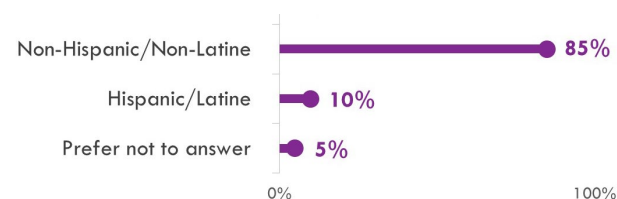
PERCEPTION OF CONFERENCE UTILITY AMONG STUDENTS

Respondents who identified as students were asked to rate the influence of attending WiCyS 2025 on their academic pursuits. Over 90% of the respondents reported feeling inspired by the role models they encountered at the conference. Eighty-six percent of the respondents experienced a gain in self-confidence to pursue a career in cybersecurity. Roughly eight out of 10 respondents indicated that the additional day of the conference provided them an opportunity to network and engage in more programming. Twenty percent of those surveyed did not consider WiCyS 2025 to be a primarily technical conference.

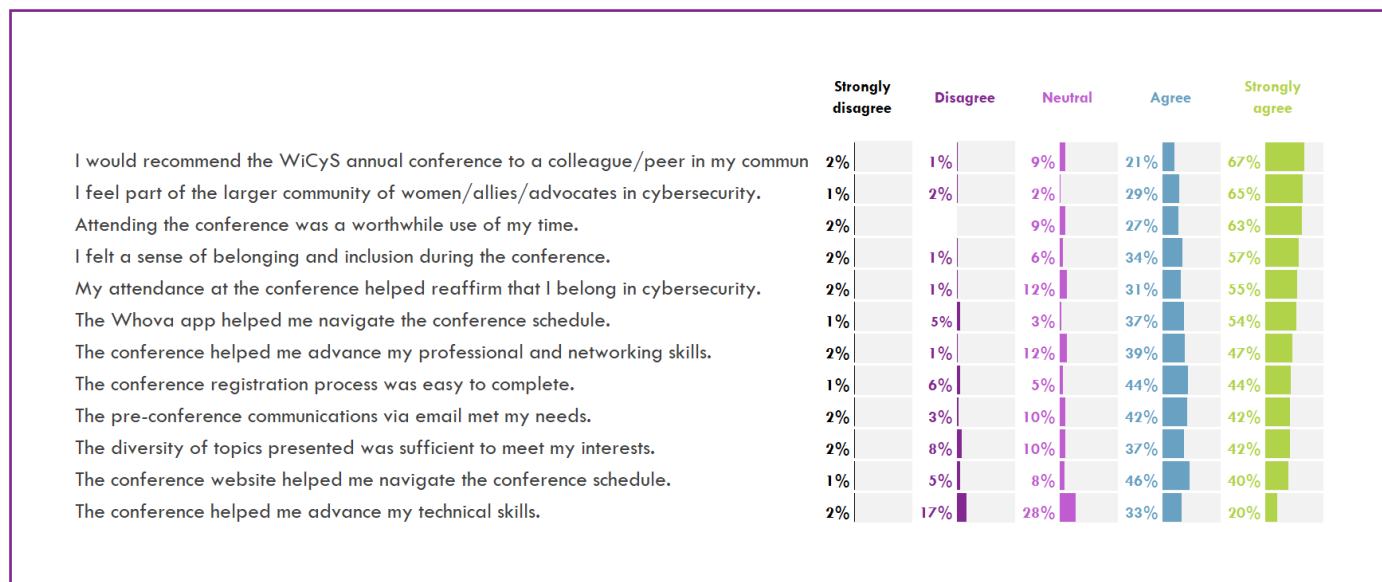|	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
I was inspired by the role models I encountered at the conference.	3%	2%	3%	24%	67%	
The conference increased my confidence to pursue a career in cybersecurity or related fie	3%		10%	20%	66%	
The additional day offered me an opportunity to network.	4%		12%	16%	63%	6%
The additional day gave me a chance to engage in more programming.	4%		8%	27%	60%	2%
The conference helped me learn about career opportunities in cybersecurity or related fie	3%		5%	36%	56%	
The conference increased my commitment to complete my current degree program.	3%		12%	29%	56%	
Attending WiCyS 2025 inspired me to give back to the cybersecurity community.	2%		5%	38%	55%	
The additional day provided me another occasion to take part in the Career Fair.	4%	2%	13%	19%	48%	13%
The conference helped me learn about academic programs in cybersecurity or related fiel	3%		22%	31%	44%	
The conference inspired me to start or join a WiCyS student chapter.	3%		34%	31%	32%	
I consider WiCyS 2025 to be a primarily technical conference.	3%	17%	25%	41%	14%	

PERCEPTION OF CONFERENCE UTILITY AMONG PROFESSIONALS

Respondents who identified as professionals were asked to rate the influence of attending WiCyS 2025 on their professional pursuits. Nine out of 10 respondents reported feeling more connected to professionals in their field and more enthusiastic about their work. Three-quarters of those surveyed felt inspired to give back to the cybersecurity community. Roughly seven out of 10 respondents indicated that the additional day of the conference provided them an opportunity to network and engage in more programming. Eight percent of the respondents did not feel that the conference advanced their knowledge/skills in cybersecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
The conference helped me feel more connected to other professionals in my field.			3%	25%	68%	3%
The conference helped me feel more enthusiastic about my work.		3%	8%	23%	64%	3%
The conference provided ideas and/or resources that I intend to share with my colleagues.		3%	8%	33%	53%	3%
The additional day gave me a chance to engage in more programming.	4%	7%	8%	24%	48%	9%
The additional day offered me an opportunity to network.	4%	9%	9%	22%	48%	7%
Attending WiCyS 2025 inspired me to give back to the cybersecurity community.	1%	4%	12%	31%	47%	6%
The additional day provided me another occasion to take part in the Career Fair.	5%	13%	9%	13%	36%	24%
The conference advanced my knowledge and/or skills in cybersecurity.	2%	6%	16%	42%	32%	3%
The conference inspired me to start or join a WiCyS affiliate in my area.	3%	7%	24%	17%	29%	21%
I consider WiCyS 2025 to be a primarily technical conference.	2%	26%	18%	33%	22%	

12

ATTENDEE PERSPECTIVES ON CONFERENCE ELEMENTS AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents would recommend the WiCyS annual conference to a colleague or peer, and 90% indicated that attending the conference was a worthwhile use of their time. Nine out of 10 respondents reported feeling part of the larger community of allies/advocates in cybersecurity, and a sense of belonging during the conference. Nineteen percent of those surveyed did not feel that the conference helped advance their technical skills.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I would recommend the WiCyS annual conference to a colleague/peer in my commun	2%	1%	9%	21%	67%
I feel part of the larger community of women/allies/advocates in cybersecurity.	1%	2%	2%	29%	65%
Attending the conference was a worthwhile use of my time.	2%		9%	27%	63%
I felt a sense of belonging and inclusion during the conference.	2%	1%	6%	34%	57%
My attendance at the conference helped reaffirm that I belong in cybersecurity.	2%	1%	12%	31%	55%
The Whova app helped me navigate the conference schedule.	1%	5%	3%	37%	54%
The conference helped me advance my professional and networking skills.	2%	1%	12%	39%	47%
The conference registration process was easy to complete.	1%	6%	5%	44%	44%
The pre-conference communications via email met my needs.	2%	3%	10%	42%	42%
The diversity of topics presented was sufficient to meet my interests.	2%	8%	10%	37%	42%
The conference website helped me navigate the conference schedule.	1%	5%	8%	46%	40%
The conference helped me advance my technical skills.	2%	17%	28%	33%	20%

WiCyS 2025
Participant Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

STUDENTS' PREFERRED WICYS 2025 FORUMS

Using a scale of "not at all valuable" (1) to "very valuable" (4), respondents were asked to rate the value of each conference forum offered as part of WiCyS 2025. The forums favored by students over professionals are rank-ordered in the following figure. ("Not applicable" was eliminated from the calculation.)

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Participant Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025
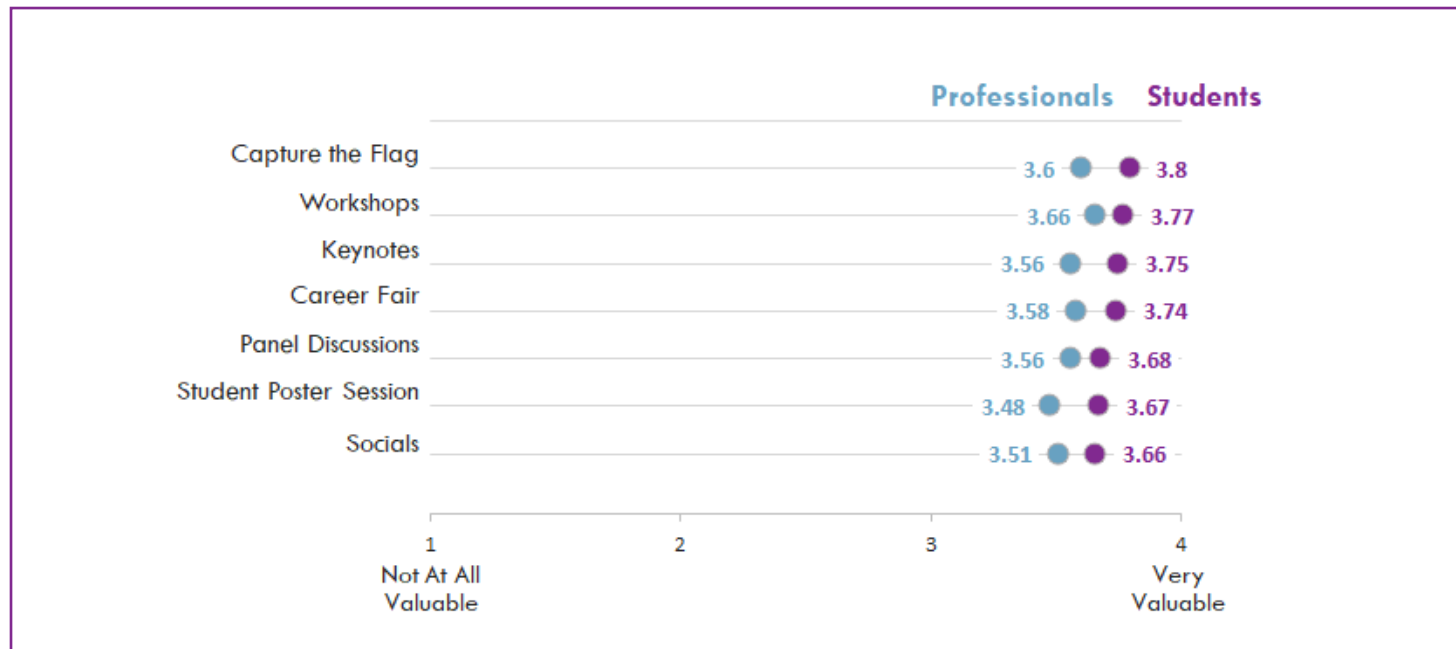
PROFESSIONALS' PREFERRED WICYS 2025 FORUMS

Using a scale of "not at all valuable" (1) to "very valuable" (4), respondents were asked to rate the value of each conference forum offered as part of WiCyS 2025. The forums favored by professionals over students are rank-ordered in the following figure. ("Not applicable" was eliminated from the calculation.)
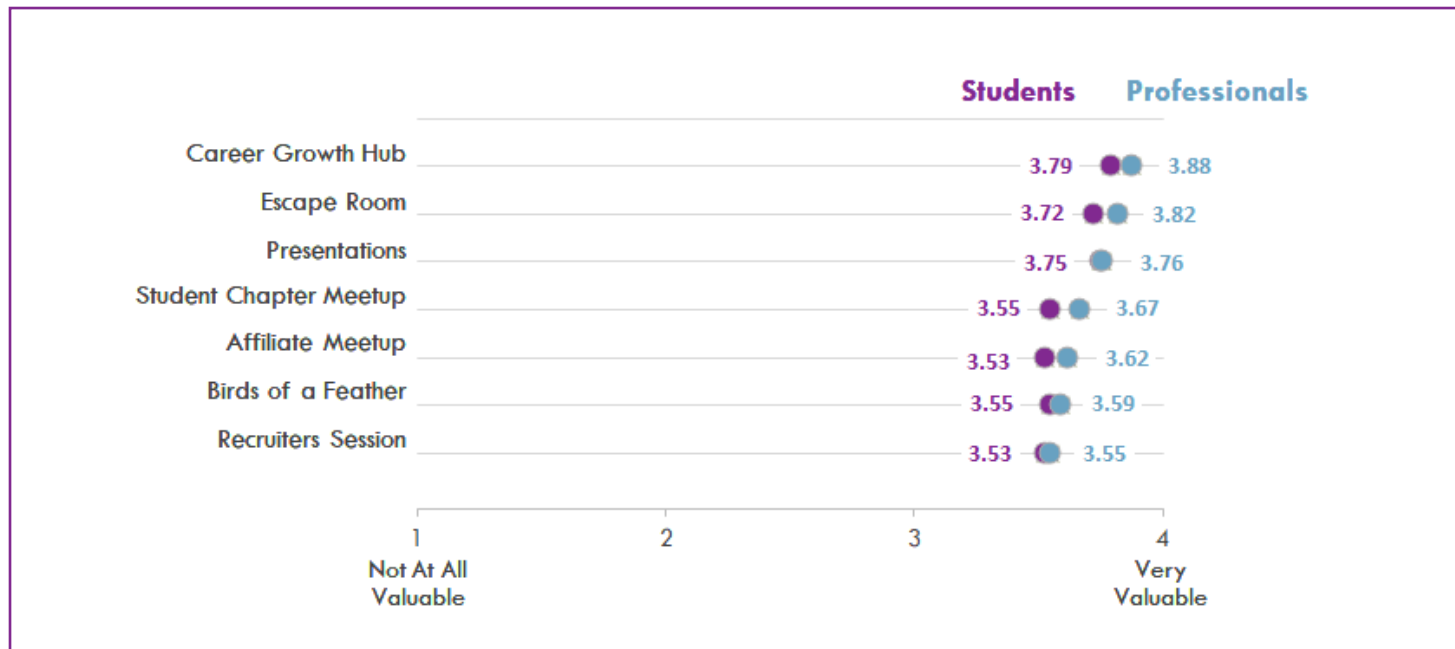
Among those who have participated in more than one WiCyS conference, the following improvements were noted:

". . . it was nice to see the addition of the escape rom to make something more hands on for participants."

"I loved the escape room. I appreciated that there was more seating available in the hallways for downtime. I loved the coloring pages. There were enough tables for the scholarship breakfast."

"I appreciated the additional sessions and ease of access. The escape room was a great experience."

"I attended WiCyS 2024. The 2025 conference was larger with more opportunities for Sessions and Workshops."

"I appreciated the extra day and all the opportunities for CEUs."

"I thought there was a great addition to technical talks during this conference and appreciated the workshops not requiring pre-registration."

"There were more sessions and more opportunities to participate"

"Loved the expanded days and coding of sessions"

Among those who have participated in more than one WiCyS conference, the following improvements were noted:

"Diversity and scale of topics, sessions, and expected level of expertise."

"Lots of additional team building opportunities like the escape room, better advertising of the CTF so I participated for the first time."

"The extra day was absolutely wonderful and needed to squeeze the most out of the conference. The CTF was also amazing but would love to see it highlighted more as it provides hands-on, technical challenges to attendees."

"Volunteer coordination was much improved"

"Yes, registration process and more activities."

"I liked the fact that you did not have to sign up for sessions ahead of time. I was able to change my mind or go to another session that piqued my interest more."

"The signage was great. I really like the QR code to scan at the end of sessions instead of having to get your badge scanned."

Among those who have participated in more than one WiCyS conference, the following improvements were noted:

"I would say the itinerary has been improved overall for sure, as the board is always finding ways to best improve attendees' experience."

"very smooth event and still had the same great energy"

"WiCyS has done a fantastic job of offering a wonderful conference. The greatest improvement I experienced was the exceptional communication and involvement opportunities for volunteering."

"It was nice that career fair people got swag bags as well"

"Workshops were open and sign up not required."

"Yes, I felt this one was more organized, had better representation in terms of audience and programming, and it was more convenient layout of the convention"

"The layout of the hotel (most of the events in the same area) was better than last year, which was a bit disorienting."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"It gave me more information on the field and how to enter the field at my level."

"Personally, after meeting many brilliant women, I have gotten reassurance and confidence that I am able to thrive in cybersecurity."

"Professionally, I have received valuable advice and feedback on my academic and professional aspirations, that helped me make my mind around the choice of PhD or work."

"Attending this year gave me more courage to continue my journey. I questioned myself, if I was doing the right thing. I questioned myself as to if I was way to[o] old to make this type of change in life, and I got to see my answer was no, nothing is too late."

"I was able to learn a lot and wish I could have been in two places at the same time. The presentations and workshops were very good. I also met like minded people and made friends."

"Attending WiCyS 2025 opened up to vast network of professionals in my field who are uplifting each other."

"I got to meet new people and connect with the ones from my chapter more so."

"It helped me understand the value of the WiCyS partnership to young professionals."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"My attendance at the conference helped to feel more connected to colleagues is the cybersecurity profession. I came away with several insights and ideas that will help be improve my approach to how I position myself professionally."

"Lots of network, inspiring talks reaffirming my commitment to continuous learning and applying to jobs in Cyber Security."

"I got to volunteer which was very rewarding. I got to learn about a new field and make great connections."

"Attending help expand my knowledge about the bigger scope of cyber security since I work in a small niche area of it and on the Government side."

"Going to the WiCyS 2025 conference made me feel connected to my community and re-ignited my passion for my work. I have been going to this conference enough years now to where it is almost like a family reunion. I get to see old friends and see how we've progressed in our careers and passions."

"I saw my mentor again and that was the highlight of my entire experience this year. Everything else was a panic inducing rollercoaster and needs more resources for neuro divergent people."

"I was able to meet my mentees in person. We are spread out across the country and it was nice to meet in one central location."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"I was able to expand my network, gain hands-on experience with my first CTF, and learn more about cybersecurity as a whole"

"I was able to increase my skillset and meet new people at the conference. I also had the opportunity to have dinner with most of my mentees in person."

"As a first timer on a scholarship, this conference was a great way to engage in technical workshops and interact with industry professionals. I can only expect and hope that it gets better and scales up in quality and quantity of content and applicable info."

"Kept me informed about developments in the field and its future direction, and helped me connect with several colleagues."

"There were a number of sessions, web app, mobile and AI hacking that will directly benefit my day to day as a tester."

"By attending WiCyS 2025, I increased my cybersecurity network and learned valuable information on what is currently happening in today's cyber world."

"I learned more about AI and Quantum computers they were very informative. Because of this I am going to pursue some certifications."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"It fuels me to be able to give back to young professionals. Thank you for giving me the space and opportunity to do that."

"I felt like I belonged for the first time ever at a tech conference! I was able to connect with others like me both personally and professionally."

"WiCyS allowed me to connect with my colleagues and attend a variety of talks. I also received robust feedback at the career growth hub, which I greatly appreciated."

"I was encouraged to continue pursuing my Bachelor's in Information Assurance/Cybersecurity."

"A great source of inspiration to keep learning, a sense of belonging in a supportive community of brilliant problem solvers, built up my confidence, motivated me to keep growing"

"As a first time attendee, I was simply mesmerized by the community of women and allies at the conference. Being in the presence of these amazing individuals and their inspiring stories made me feel seen, heard and like I belong."

"Perhaps the greatest gift from WiCyS 2025 was the incredible network I gained—a tribe of talented, supportive, and inspiring women who have been an extraordinary source of encouragement and solidarity. I'm so grateful for this community, which has only deepened my commitment to WiCyS."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"The WiCyS conference gave me the ability to see the struggles women go through in the cybersecurity field. I knew that this was a male dominated feeler but never really took thought of how hard it must be for women to work, thrive, and feel included. Attending the allyship dinner really helped me to see some of the struggles of the women in our field and how the men in our field can help resolve this issue to make it more inclusive and a more welcoming environment."

"I learned a lot from the hands-on SOC workshop and the ransomware incident response game, plus some really useful insight into federal cyber roles and navigating USAJOBS. The career fair helped me think more clearly about my next steps, and the keynotes gave me a lot to reflect on."

"The WiCyS conference provided a platform to engage with companies and explore job prospects through the Career Fair. Learning about cutting-edge tools, technologies, and best practices will help keep me ahead in the cybersecurity field, and I am glad I can share this knowledge with my cybersecurity community here in Nigeria."

"Professionally, I gained valuable insights into cutting-edge cybersecurity research, best practices for inclusive pedagogy in my teaching, and real-world applications of AI in cyber defense -- areas directly relevant to my academic work"

"The military breakfast was an outstanding networking opportunity; the mid-level- senior level meeting was a great idea and I missed it this year (due to teaching schedule and late flight)."

Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2025

"As a mentor, it was incredibly meaningful to connect with emerging talent, share insights from my own journey, and support others navigating their paths in cybersecurity. The conference also allowed me to strengthen my own network, engage with thought leaders, and stay up to date on critical issues shaping the field."

"Professionally, WiCyS opened my eyes to emerging trends, especially in areas like threat-informed defense, AI in cybersecurity, and IoT vulnerabilities. The hands-on workshops helped sharpen my technical skills, and I left with actionable knowledge that I'm already excited to apply in my career. I had quality interactions with recruiters and professionals, and I walked away with real opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and future roles."

"This year's highlight was volunteering at the Career Hub. Volunteering at the Career Hub really made me feel a larger part of the community. I was also able to volunteer as an additional poster judge pre-conference. Volunteering is very important to me both personally and professionally."

'I was able to connect with other mid-career professionals during the mid-career breakfast - the format was good for fostering conversation and networking. I also gathered great information on starting a WiCyS student chapter for my students."

"The career fair was valuable. Some of the workshops were informative. Speakers were motivating."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"Better communication regarding the shuttles & where they pick up/drop off at the conference hotel."

"I stayed at the Marriott. The SHUTTLE WAS A MESS. You ever knew when it was coming or going. No schedule posted. When calling the non-emergency number, the information they gave about every 1/2 hour was incorrect and could not be possible with ONE SHUTTLE BUS. Please tighten this up."

"The location of Career Fair could use a little bit bigger space. It was packed on the first day."

"Bigger career hub to handle the crowds."

"Also, for the employers at the career fair, make sure they are actually hiring to have them at the career fair. I met so many who were only hiring for internships or not hiring at all and it was so confusing as to why they were even there. Frustrating for the students and probably them as well."

"The career fair was a waste of time. 'Here's the QR code to see what jobs we have @ was annoying and not helpful.' Companies should not be allowed to participate if they don't have active CURRENT openings. It feels performative that they're there."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"I would like to see more hands on areas, like small villages where lock picking, soldering, reviewing digital forensic files, etc. can be done as a stop by station through out the conference."

"Creating a dedicated event for the mentor/mentee global program. This helps connect those who had only been seeing online. I was able to run into my mentor from the program!"

"There is power in storytelling students too can have an opportunity to tell their stories on how they are navigating their learnings. [L]et's have stories at different levels and not just senior professional. Plus more diversity in the presenters will go a long way."

"What I like about the conference is the motivation I get when listening to the different stories people go through to get where they are. The stories are unique and very inspiring. I only saw one person on wheel chair do we have opportunities for the disabled?"

"Post-Session Office Hours or Q&A Lounges: Sometimes Q&A periods are short -- consider allowing speakers or panelists to hold informal 'office hours' after their sessions to engage more deeply with attendees."

"Consider adding a dedicated session on Identity and Access Management (IAM) to provide deeper insight into this critical area of cybersecurity. Additionally, a session focused on navigating ageism in cyber for professionals over 50 would offer valuable support and strategies for seasoned individuals entering or advancing in the field."
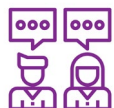
Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"I think it would be great to have an additional escape room if possible, it was very popular. I think it also would be nice if a volunteer could send out an alert on Whova so attendees know if a particular session is full. The voucher for food for the first day was really helpful, I hope that will be continued for future conferences."

"Maybe have a day for experienced security professionals. In the current setup a lot of experienced folks were unhappy with the programming. It was also missing GRC related content. If the programming does not improve, me and other experienced leaders will stay away and make it also less valuable for aspiring professionals."

"Clearly explain the scholarship process. I had folks back her asking me how they could have applied and been selected by WiCyS and then they had to find someone to foot the bill for the flight. It was not clearly explained to them. What does getting a scholarship mean, how can they get a scholarship, etc..."

"Scholarship recipients weren't able to get their food vouchers if they arrived after badge pickup. Perhaps having badge pickup open later on Wednesday would help prevent this. I also didn't feel comfortable going to sponsor socials without a badge in the conference space - and having been able to pick up my badge would've helped with this."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"The WhoVa app was clunky. I hated the chat feature -- when I got to the conference, I had 1200 messages. Plus, the Career Growth Hub had their own app, Signal. I didn't understand why I needed three apps for one conference."

"The Whova app felt very overwhelming at times. I think a Discord server would make more sense for the format of this conference."

"It would be extremely helpful to decrease the number of emails strategic partners and conference participants receive in advance of conference. It would be great to receive a weekly email update with relevant information and updates, upcoming dates, and action items to have all of the information in one place, and reduce the number and frequency of emails."

"While the communication was great pre-conference, I found it to be too much. I had so many unread WiCyS e-mails prior to the conference that I just couldn't get to due to the sheer volume. It would have been nice if they could have been consolidated more."

"Every affiliate should have a meetup. In addition, the importance of attending affiliate meetups should be emphasized and information about how to connect with your chapter should be strongly emphasized and a sign-up area should be established."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"There needs to be a greater variety of cybersecurity sessions. I did not see anything for testing, certifications, networking cyber, etc . . . so much focus on AI."

"The conference being in the Fall was more beneficial for employers because of more entry level openings in the Fall vs Spring. Having the conference on the west coast would be ideal to give more diversity. Lower the prices of the swags to purchase."

"As someone who is interested in policy and GRC, I was admittedly disappointed. At every conference I go to there are always many more technically related sessions. I would like to see more equality and balance between tech and GRC."

"I would recommend more technical presentations and would love to heard more about different positions in cybersecurity."

"The conference has now become very entry level focused. The attendance was majorly students and early career. For a senior like me, it was honestly a waste of my time. Nor did [I] find many sessions that were worth my while."

"More Hands-On Technical Workshops: Offer additional deep-dive, hands-on labs or capture-the-flag (CTF) sessions for both beginners and advanced practitioners. These can include secure coding, reverse engineering, cloud security, or threat hunting."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"Breakfast and lunch fell short of expectations. It would be helpful to provide menus before the conference starts (this would also be helpful for people with dietary restrictions - like myself). Dinner was great! Lunches especially fell short though, which seemed to be echoed by many attendees."

"First, provide a more solid lunch. It can be small but more than a salad with minimal substance."

"Also, the totes were an awesome swag but since they are the same, there is a tendency for people to mix up their bags. So, a tag of some sort with names will help."

"Having affinity lunches could be great. For example, having rooms designated as first-gen, BIPOC, neurodivergent, grad students, etc. would be great to network in a smaller setting."

"This was my first time attending, and I was pretty disappointed. I found the mood to be 'victimization' and 'blame white males.' As a woman who has worked in the field many years, I know this is fruitless. While having a safe space to discuss challenges is important, it shouldn't be the main theme."

"The extra day was great, but [I] noticed that a lot of people left early on the last day and many talks were empty and there was a lack of engagement. I wish Wednesday and Saturday were swapped for content. I also noticed that a handful of talks were canceled so I would love a backup list for more options."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference

"The conference was very well organized, but I would recommend the following to further enhance the experience: Expand technical deep-dive sessions for faculty and advanced professionals who are looking for more hands-on or research-oriented workshops."

"Include more interdisciplinary panels, especially at the intersection of cybersecurity, AI, and education."

"Hoping for more of technical workshop related to malware and phishing analysis."

"As much as I love volunteering, I wish the sign ups were designed a bit differently. I get antsy just sitting around and doing nothing, and with multiple people in the room standing around, it felt almost like a waste of time. That could be on me for choosing a location that was not busy, but if there is a way to spread the love around a bit more throughout the whole conference, that would be ideal. Please put me to work!"

"One logistical improvement could be adding a 10-minute buffer between workshops. This would make it easier for attendees to move between rooms and fully absorb the content without feeling rushed."

"A way to search in the 'Meet-Ups' forum to find keywords for meet-ups you may be interested in and see if they exist."

"Record more sessions, better notate where to park for those driving in, more than just salad for lunch, make it known when snacks are provided and where they're located"

WiCyS 2025
Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

The WiCyS 2025 sponsor survey was designed to assess the experiences and perceptions of conference sponsors, and to inform future WiCyS annual conferences and Career Fairs. The survey weblink was distributed to 101 sponsors of WiCyS 2025 at the conclusion of the conference. A total of 19 conference sponsors responded to the anonymous survey in whole or part.

RESPONDENTS BY TYPE OF COMPANY

Eighty-four percent of the respondents were affiliated with a privately held for-profit business.

Industry	16
Government or non-profit	2
Academic	1

0   19
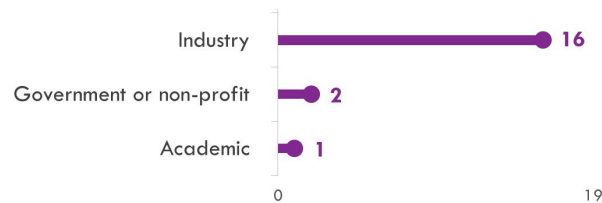
YEARS OF CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP

Nearly 80% of the respondents represented a company that has been a sponsor of the WiCyS annual conference at least once before.

Returning sponsor	15
First time sponsor	4

0   19

WiCyS 2025
Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025
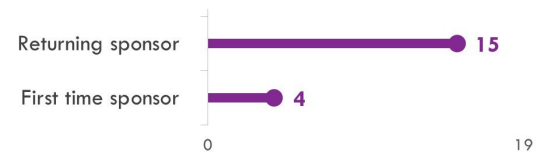
Respondents shared that their companies' interest in sponsoring the WiCyS annual conference is to champion WiCyS' mission, gain access to a diverse hiring pool, and increase awareness of their program/brand. The sponsors in attendance appreciated the opportunity to enhance their knowledge, and network with their contemporaries.
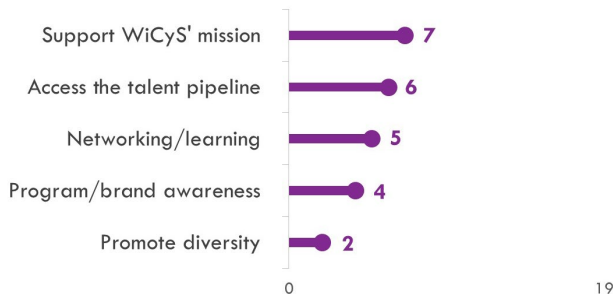
MOTIVATION FOR REPEAT SPONSORSHIP

Among the repeat sponsors of this event, their motivation for continuing to participate in this capacity is multi-faceted.

Support WiCyS' mission	7
Access the talent pipeline	6
Networking/learning	5
Program/brand awareness	4
Promote diversity	2

0   19

RECRUITING FROM WICYS EVENTS

Three-quarters of the respondents have recruited from a WiCyS event on at least one occasion.

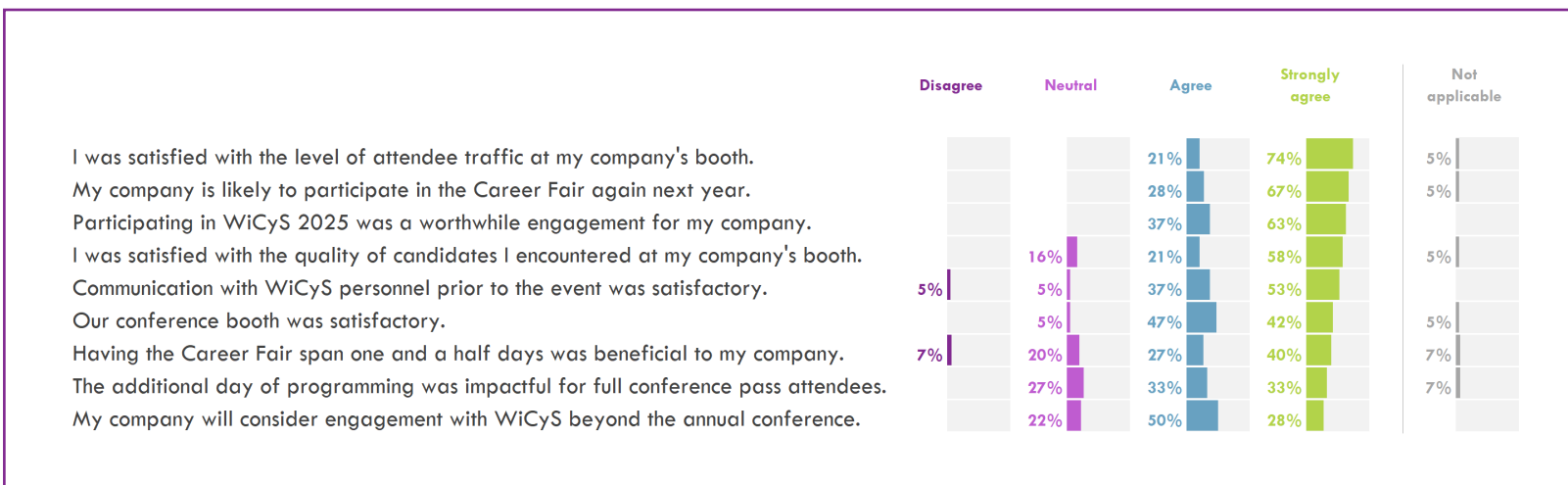|	
We have recruited	12
We have not yet recruited	4

0   19

WiCyS 2025
Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with several components of WiCyS 2025 using a scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The sponsors were overwhelmingly pleased with the quality of attendees they encountered and the level of attendee traffic at their booths. Nearly every respondent indicated that participating in WiCyS 2025 was a worthwhile engagement, and that their company is likely to participate in the Career Fair again next year.

Two-thirds of those surveyed indicated that having the Career Fair span one-and-a-half days (instead of one) was beneficial to their company, and that the additional day of programming at this year's conference (totaling 19 additional sessions and workshops) was impactful.
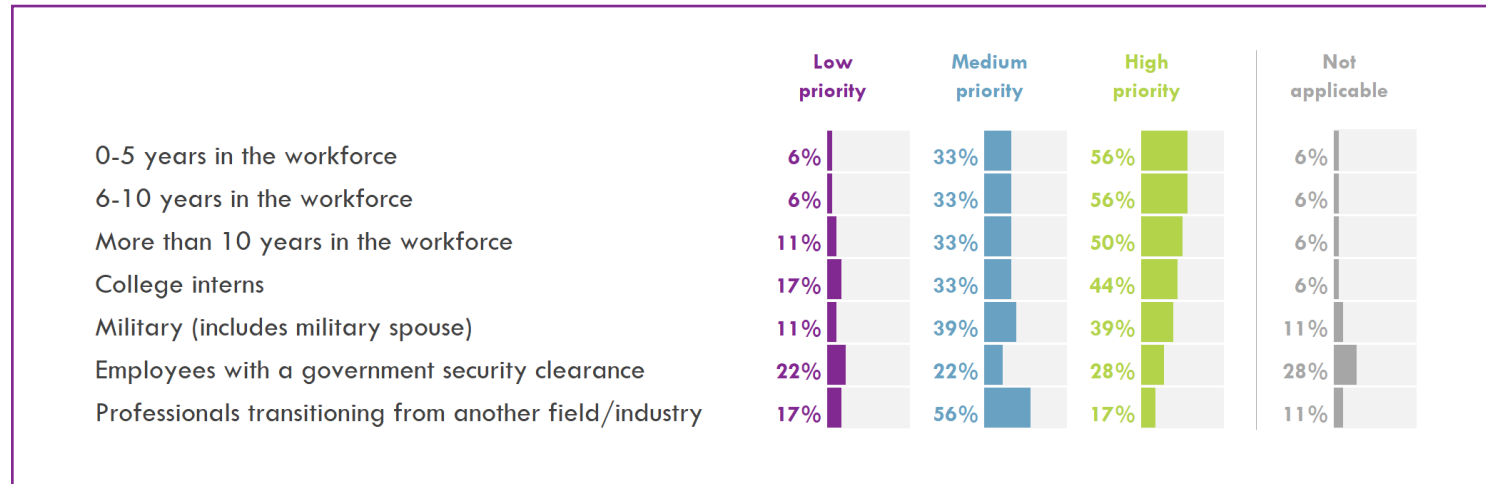
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
I was satisfied with the level of attendee traffic at my company's booth.			21%	74%	5%
My company is likely to participate in the Career Fair again next year.			28%	67%	5%
Participating in WiCyS 2025 was a worthwhile engagement for my company.			37%	63%	
I was satisfied with the quality of candidates I encountered at my company's booth.		16%	21%	58%	5%
Communication with WiCyS personnel prior to the event was satisfactory.	5%	5%	37%	53%	
Our conference booth was satisfactory.		5%	47%	42%	5%
Having the Career Fair span one and a half days was beneficial to my company.	7%	20%	27%	40%	7%
The additional day of programming was impactful for full conference pass attendees.		27%	33%	33%	7%
My company will consider engagement with WiCyS beyond the annual conference.		22%	50%	28%	

No respondent selected "strongly disagree" for any survey item, so the scale has been condensed accordingly.

Respondents were asked to rate the priority level of recruiting several classifications of workers for their company. The top three worker groups given a "high priority" rating were employees with workforce experience spanning 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and more than 10 years. This year's sponsors were actively recruiting entry-level, intermediate, mid-level, and senior/executive level employees to join their ranks.

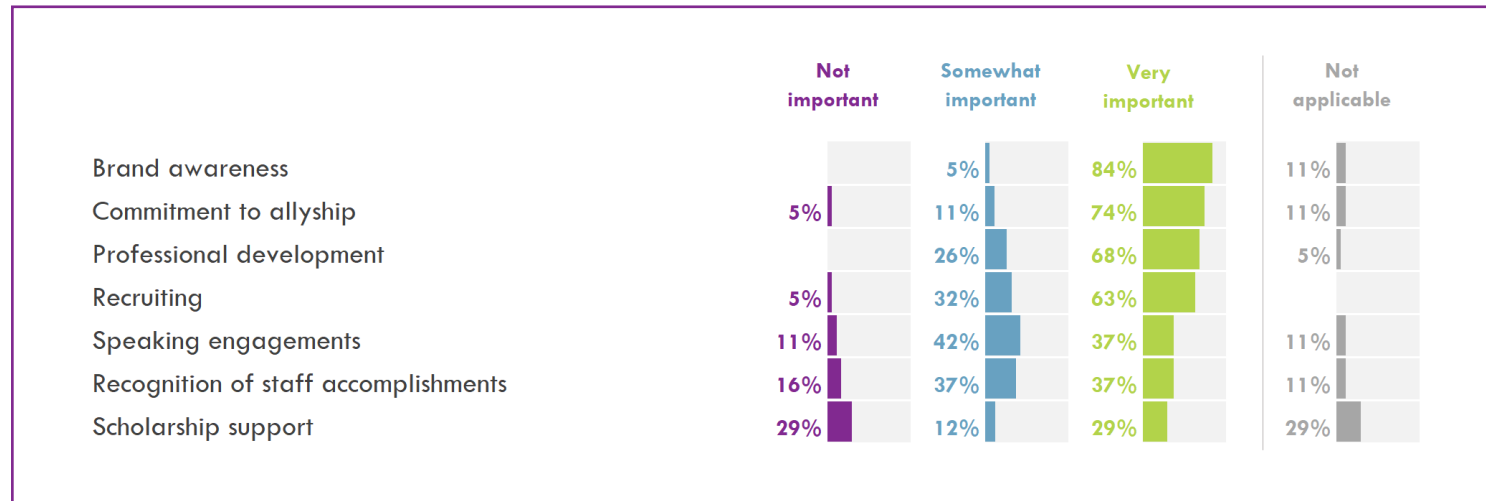|	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority	Not applicable
0-5 years in the workforce	6%	33%	56%	6%
6-10 years in the workforce	6%	33%	56%	6%
More than 10 years in the workforce	11%	33%	50%	6%
College interns	17%	33%	44%	6%
Military (includes military spouse)	11%	39%	39%	11%
Employees with a government security clearance	22%	22%	28%	28%
Professionals transitioning from another field/industry	17%	56%	17%	11%

WiCyS 2025
Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – June 2025

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several benefits related to their company's WiCyS 2025 sponsorship. The top four benefits rated "very important" were brand awareness, commitment to allyship, professional development, and recruiting. Nearly one-third of those surveyed deemed scholarship support an unimportant benefit of their sponsorship.

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
Brand awareness		5%	84%	11%
Commitment to allyship	5%	11%	74%	11%
Professional development		26%	68%	5%
Recruiting	5%	32%	63%	
Speaking engagements	11%	42%	37%	11%
Recognition of staff accomplishments	16%	37%	37%	11%
Scholarship support	29%	12%	29%	29%

Did the costs associated with having your employees participate for one additional day of this year's conference impact the level of your sponsorship?

"No, my company knows how important this conference is to us employees and also would likely chalk it up to inflation."

"no - we would have been diamond sponsors regardless"

"No - our sponsorship remained. I do think having the career fair span another day means that employees could not participate in the sessions. If possible, would be great to limit the conference to just the weekdays."

"No, not this year. However, I anticipate it may impact the level of our sponsorship next year given the current political climate/market volatility."

"no but will in the future, our funding at the university is being cut"

"Yes. With a rough economy with new administration and tariffs, we must consider any dollar we spend going forward."

"yes - Seems they benefited without any feedback that it was too much"

Among respondents whose companies have sponsored the conference more than once, their opinion on the growth and direction of the conference is:

"I think [it] was the best WiCyS yet."

"It has been a breath of fresh air to see the conference grow with students and the amount of engagement the students bring to us, the sponsors."

"I'm glad it has continued to grow throughout industry and universities, I even met soon to be graduates from European universities."

"I'm glad to see it growing, but man is it so confusing to juggle all of the moving parts leading up to the event because of it!"

"It's great to see the growth and expansion of the conference. And, it seems like the WiCyS team managing both the strategic partnership and conference are quite lean. As a strategic partner, I think there are opportunities for communications connected to the partnership and conference to be more streamlined (e.g., a weekly newsletter/update rather than several emails sent from several different people with different updates)."

"I think the conference is growing in all positive ways."

Among respondents whose companies have sponsored the conference more than once, their opinion on the growth and direction of the conference is:

"I think having the extra day really has provided the space and opportunity for participants to deepen their connections to the opportunities WiCyS offers and given students time to meet with m[o]re industry partners."

"I think for the cost of sponsoring, all passes given to sponsors should be conference passes and not just career fair passes."

"We appreciated the requirement for sponsorship of student attendees this year. It offered the opportunity for more professionals to attend."

"Feedback on sessions was strong this year. Balancing cyber technical skills with business skills is important."

"The growth has been massive - it's great to see but really changes the feel of the conference. It's not worse! It's just different."

"I really like that it is offering more mid-level support"

How did sponsoring WiCyS 2025 benefit your company's mission and goals?

"Morale of the women who were able to attend from my company was great after the conference. It is great brand recognition as well."

"At Victoria's Secret, our mission is advancing women both as associates and customers."

"Helps us to recruit a more diverse population"

"diversity and collaboration"

"we have been able to recruit many students to our programs and provided exposure for our WiCyS students to career opportunities because we can bring more with our sponsorship"

"We believe diversity in our company makes us stronger. We have women who are leaders of Women in Cyber committees in education and otherwise. This aligns strongly."

"Great way to show appreciation for current employees and engage recruiting pipeline. Great educational opportunity for folks"

"We have found wonderful candidates through the career fair and company attendees network and learn"

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference and/or Career Fair

"Curbing international students requiring sponsorship"

"Consider having conference and career fair in the fall (or perhaps just a fall career fair) - better time for recruiting for internships and early career talent"

"Have the job fair hall evacuated during the lunch period including sponsors. Product is often stolen from booths during the meal break."

"Really appreciated the additional time in career fair. Heard from students that many participating companies were not hiring this year, sure it was a result of what is going on in the political world for the US but wanted you to know the students noticed and were a little concerned/discouraged."

"Also, PLEASE enforce breaks for the career fair and shut them down. Talking for hours back to back is exhausting and the breaks were not enforcing, making it hard to step away even for water."

"I would not have the career fair on Friday. It's a lot of expense for the company to have team members return just for 2 hours."

"Keeping the career fair to one day worked. Limit weekend conference sessions."

Suggestions for improving the WiCyS annual conference and/or Career Fair

"Two of our swag boxes got lost between fedex and the exhibition vendor. I know that's not a WiCyS problem, but if there is anything that could be done in the future to facilitate better communication between the exhibition vendor and Fedex, that would be great."

"Alliance charges astronomical prices for bringing 1 case and 1 box to the Career Booth. We paid $1000 without shipping. There has to be a better option out there."

"Add more advanced topics in the schedule. There are great introductory level topics and speakers, but adding more advanced topics may add value for those interested."

"Beginning communication about conference earlier (in the fall)"

"The weeks leading up to the event are a NIGHTMARE. So many emails, so much confusion. There needs to be a portal for each employer/sponsor with each item, its details, and whether or not it was completed. Like lodging - how many people have been approved for lodging already. Or the means - how many invites do we get for the leadership luncheon, how many people do we have signed up."

"Streamlining communication from WiCyS (i.e., a weekly newsletter/update with all the relevant information for the week)"