



# WiCyS 2026

## Conference Evaluation Report – May 2026

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**PREFERRED PROGRAM  
EVALUATIONS**  
"Unlocking Program Potential"

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## WiCyS 2026 – Background and Participation

The WiCyS Conference is regarded as the flagship conference for women and their allies in cybersecurity, and the largest international 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 2026 was held in the Washington, D.C., area on March 11-13, 2026. This year's event marked WiCyS' 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and attracted 2,027 attendees in-person and 1,026 attendees virtually. The event proudly showcased its 80 sponsors spanning five tiers of financial support. Over 500 volunteers and members from three conference planning committees contributed in various capacities before, during, and after the three-day conference. A total of 865 competitive scholarships were awarded. Participants represented 23 countries, the armed forces, and diverse backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies.

## WiCyS 2026 – Conference Tracks and Sessions

The conference schedule featured a variety of tracks and sessions purposely designed to target the interests of attendees ranging from college students to mid-level professionals and seasoned executives. From morning to evening, attendees were provided both formal and informal opportunities to learn, explore, practice, network, and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world scenarios. The conference agenda featured forward-thinking sessions organized by track: Technical Skill Building; Education, Workforce Development & Community; Research & Innovation with Emerging Techniques; Career Development, Advancement & Management, and Tools, Trends, Perspectives & Sector-Specific Applications.

The jam-packed conference schedule included 137 presenters, 96 unique sessions, four empowering keynote speakers, two employer socials, 10 invite-only events for select audiences, one allyship event, one Capture the Flag (CTF) competition, and two escape rooms. A student poster session showcased the research of 30 undergraduate and graduate students. The Career Fair spanned two days, giving participants considerable time to visit the sponsors' booths, explore hiring opportunities, apply for positions, and, in a few cases, participate in on-the-spot interviews.

Fourteen technical workshops geared toward students, educators, practitioners, and researchers were offered. The workshops covered a broad range of topics including AI, large language models, ransomware, simulation and detection, forensics, modular cybersecurity robots, and gamification. Participants were encouraged to scan the QR codes made available at the end of qualifying sessions to receive Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits.

The WiCyS 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 innovative tools, frameworks, and strategies used to address emerging vulnerabilities in the nation's critical infrastructure and strengthen defenses against cyber threats. The presenters explored current issues affecting women in cybersecurity, including developing technical and soft skills for success in the cybersecurity workforce, as well as mentorship and allyship.

WiCyS affiliates, collegiate chapters, and industry and academic leaders joined curated discussions on best practices for supporting and advancing women and their advocates in cybersecurity. More than one hundred attendees participated in the First Timers Panel, where presenters shared insights on the most valuable aspects of the WiCyS Conference and offered guidance on how first-time attendees could maximize their experience. As in previous years, WiCyS 2026 intentionally engaged “career changers” transitioning from an unrelated or adjacent field into cybersecurity, and military veterans moving into civilian careers.

The participants expressed strong satisfaction with the breadth of presentation themes and the opportunities to connect with peers of similar experience levels through social events, chapter meet-ups, hands-on activities, and competitions. They highlighted meaningful interactions with recruiters, productive discussions with contemporaries that may lead to future collaboration, and gaining “takeaways” on emerging cybersecurity trends applicable to their current roles. Per one attendee, the conference “Changed my life. I was lost and now I have a community to lean on.”

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 each other prior to arriving in Washington, D.C., 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 2026 – 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 Conference. The Career Growth Hub is a place for resume review, mock-interview guidance, professional headshots, and roundtable career conversations. This conference element was available to all registrants on March 11, 12, and 13.

Conference sponsors transformed a part of the convention center into a bustling scene of sharing, informing, inspiring, and hiring on March 12 and 13. An impressive lineup of 80 entities representing Fortune 500 companies, small- to mid-size tech enterprises, colleges, universities, financial institutions, retailers, non-profits, and healthcare providers participated. A few sponsors conducted real-time interviews at the conference. The others were focused on growing their applicant pipeline while promoting brand awareness and their cybersecurity divisions.

## Conference Improvement Feedback

### Coordination

The conference organizers were commended for keeping both attendees and sponsors informed about conference logistics throughout the event. Through email communications, social media platforms, and the Whova app, participants received timely updates regarding programming, schedule modifications, and room changes. Although attendees generally appreciated the consistent communication, several sponsors shared that the volume of emails distributed in the weeks preceding the conference felt excessive.

The participants responded positively to the color-coded session tracks, as this feature helped attendees select the sessions best aligned with their interests. Several attendees mentioned their intent to “maximize their time at the conference” because there were simply too many options from which to choose: presentations, workshops, socials, etc. One attendee noted that she used the Whova app to build a personalized conference schedule to prioritize the engagements most valuable to her. Per some participants, there was insufficient time to fully engage with the slate of conference programming offered between Wednesday and Friday. They strongly encouraged the conference organizers to consider extending the annual conference to four days (as previously done in 2025).

Students and professionals inquired about the possibility of making conference merchandise available for online purchase throughout the year. Several of the attendees were disappointed that quite a few items sold out quickly during the event. They recommended increasing inventory to better meet demand for popular items such as graduation cords. Several participants proposed adding WiCyS-branded stickers to the merchandise selection.

### Facilities and Staffing

The conference facilities were described as pleasant, spacious, and inviting. Although some of the students found the grounds “overwhelming,” most of those in attendance explained that clear signage and helpful volunteers enabled them to navigate the conference center without difficulty.

One participant suggested adding table numbers to each tabletop during mealtimes. Doing so would make it easier for attendees to communicate where they are sitting and more easily locate one another in the ballroom.

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. One sponsor shared that an appreciable amount of the swag she brought to distribute during the Career Fair was taken (without permission) by others on the conference grounds before the Career Fair kicked off on Thursday. She suggested putting measures in place to prevent the unauthorized removal of giveaway materials at future WiCyS events.

Some of the sponsors would like the option of joining the lunch program on the day they are exhibiting in the Career Fair. Another request is to ensure exhibitors have access to electrical outlets to plug in their laptops and other devices.

### Programming Elements

Conference attendees described their experience at WiCyS 2026 as inspiring, insightful, enriching, empowering, and high-impact. They called for more advanced workshops across both technical and non-technical areas. The technical topics of interest include quantum computing, large language models, post-attack recovery, and preparing for industry certification exams. The non-technical topics identified include entrepreneurship, leadership, mental health/burnout, working with a global audience, and creating (or maintaining) a polished LinkedIn profile.

A few of the sponsors noted that the Career Fair did not offer enough engagement for mid-career cybersecurity professionals. Per one attendee, it was primarily focused on “junior-level job seekers.” One recommendation to more fully connect with mid-career participants, specifically, is to incorporate strategic or speed networking engagements in a dedicated space.

The students spoke favorably about their hands-on experiences in the escape rooms and CTF competition. Some of the participants who had attended the conference in previous years felt that the sponsor socials were lacking in 2026. Additionally, several of the participants noted there was too much saturation of AI topics, especially among the keynote speakers.

The addition of a faculty affiliate meetup was proposed. A few members of affiliates reported that they would like to play a bigger role in conference planning and management. Several of these attendees showed interest in serving in a volunteer capacity before and/or during the annual conference.

Multiple participants requested online access to the presentation and workshop materials post-conference. One attendee mentioned that she would like to reference these materials to continue “self-study” once the conference concludes. With regard to presentation slides, there were complaints about an excessive amount of text, and font size being too small for visibility. Per these attendees, some of the slides were altogether unreadable from afar, and the projection quality was inferior. Across age groups, some participants felt the need to take pictures of the presentation slides with their phones in order to zoom in and decode the text.

### **WiCyS 2026 – 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 2026 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 2,027 attendees. A total of 206 participants responded to this survey (response rate of 10%). Similarly, a weblink to the sponsor survey was emailed to 80 conference sponsors once WiCyS 2026 concluded. A total of 22 sponsors responded to this survey (response rate of 28%). The findings from the participant and sponsor surveys are provided in the results dashboards starting on page eight and 30, respectively, of this report.

During the three-day conference, Dr. Urbach spoke one-on-one with participants and sponsors to gain insight about their WiCyS 2026 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 are provided herein.

The participants were asked to share what they hope to gain from attending WiCyS 2026.

- I came to the conference to find my community.
- WiCyS offers me a sense of sisterhood.
- Finding allyship
- My favorite part of this conference is meeting people who look like me; representation matters.
- This conference has given me a glimmer of the comfort men must feel every day in the workplace – surrounded by other men. I have never been in the same room with so many other females who study or work in cyber.
- My number one goal for attending this conference is to find a mentor.
- This is my opportunity to meet my mentor and fellow mentees.
- I'm here to learn how stand up an affiliate chapter in my region.
- I am interested in learning how to translate my military skills and experience into what employers are seeking.
- I am trying to find my footing in civilian life.
- I'm a veteran and want to learn how to navigate the sense of urgency I feel to accomplish tasks. Corporate America operates on a different frequency than the military.
- I'm most excited about the career exploration opportunities.
- I am curious to learn how AI is/will change the cyber landscape.
- Based on the sessions I've attended, I am less fearful about AI taking jobs – it is simply reshaping them.

- My objective is to assume a leadership role. I have been networking with the company representatives at the Career Fair.
- I am trying to talk to as many professional as possible to determine the balance of education versus certifications.
- I am striving for a management position. I am hoping to gain some perspective on the best ways to apply for advancement.

The sponsors were asked to share what role industry events like the WiCyS Conference play in employee development.

- Mentoring and networking
- Brand awareness
- The conference emphasizes the power of personal agency, perseverance, and finding your niche (which will likely evolve over time).
- It offers unparalleled access to the talent pipeline for interns, staff, and volunteers. We are pleased with our hires from previous WiCyS events.
- Sponsorship of WiCyS contributes to our overall mission
- Diversity of a quality candidate pool which translates to a diverse workforce
- WiCyS provides us exposure to a global audience.
- Conference attendance is our opportunity to meet others on our team who work remotely or in different locations.
- It's our time to socialize and engage in informal team-building.
- The environment is safe and welcoming for all of our team members.
- The conference is always uplifting and has a wonderfully communal quality. It is a privilege to be selected by our company to attend.
- We use this conference as an annual opportunity for out-of-office community-building.
- Engaging with those in the student chapters and affiliate meetups helps us keep a finger on the pulse of the priorities and expectations of emerging talent.
- Conference attendance is particularly valuable for our team members who transition to a new role; especially those advancing from intern to full-time employee.
- Interacting with employees from other companies is refreshing and brings to the forefront the universal struggle of work-life balance.
- Our conversations in the various conference forums reinforce that career trajectories are not linear.

- This conference allows us to focus on the whole person. It is not advised to allow cyber to become one's entire identity.
- We publish a monthly WiCyS newsletter at our company, and attending the annual conference helps us stay informed of upcoming events and opportunities.

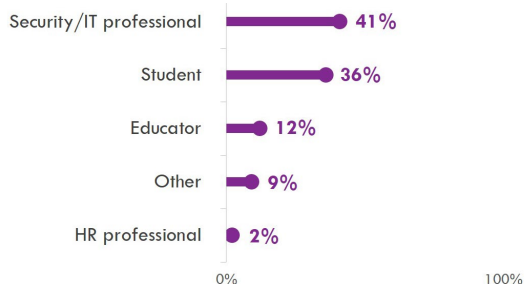
The sponsors were asked to share how they measure success from a recruitment standpoint.

- Our metrics for a conference like this include more connections via social media outlets and LinkedIn
- Driving more traffic to our company website is one indicator of success
- Subscribers, resumes uploaded, follow-up messages on LinkedIn
- Audience growth and brand visibility
- We are active in WiCyS programming: sponsors, board, committees, volunteers, and mentors. Our commitment to WiCyS exceeds that of our need to recruit for current or proposed openings.
- This year I was impressed with the number of students I encountered at the Career Fair who already knew a good bit about our company. The opportunity to connect with students who both take initiative and have impressive credentials will be the reason we remain a conference sponsor.
- All of the applications we receive through the conference are tagged "WiCyS." We are consistently pleased with the number (and caliber) of resumes that originate from our conference attendance.
- We are focused on our ability to secure candidates who are adaptable and can harness new technologies, like AI.
- The conference is valuable because it gives us a bird's-eye view of what other companies are doing to recruit top talent. It exposes us to new approaches we hadn't considered or implemented. Our team members will share these ideas in the coming weeks, and brainstorm how we want to modify our efforts for next year's conference.
- We are largely insulated within our respective divisions. This conference is our opportunity for cross-pollination within our company. We get to meet one-on-one with HR reps to communicate our specific needs for new hires. Doing so in-person is more productive than trying to convey our priorities and preferences electronically.
- We are in desperate need of operations technologists. We would hire on-the-spot if we encountered someone at the Career Fair with these credentials.

The WiCyS 2026 participant survey was designed to assess the experiences and perceptions of conference participants, and to inform future annual conferences and programming. The survey weblink was distributed to 2,027 participants at the conclusion of this year's conference. A total of 206 conference participants responded to the anonymous survey in whole or part. Ninety-one percent of the respondents identified as women; males accounted for 7% of the survey sample. Non-binary and transgender participants totaled 1% of survey completers.

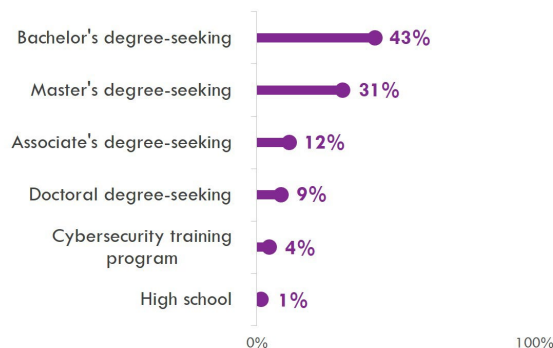
### RESPONDENTS BY ROLE

Forty-one percent of the respondents identified as security/IT professionals, and 36% identified as students.



### STUDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL STANDING

Over 40% of the student respondents were pursuing a bachelor's degree, and another 40% were enrolled in a graduate program.



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 Conference is the largest international cybersecurity conference with comparable representation of aspiring and working professionals in the industry.

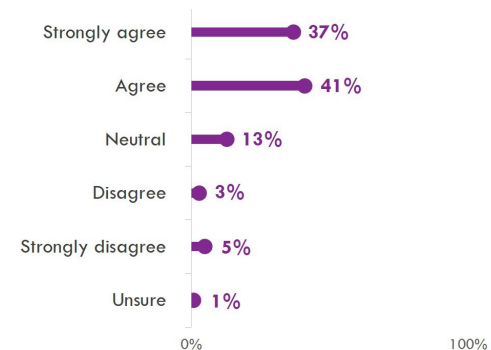
### CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE HISTORY

For 57% of the respondents, WiCyS 2026 represented their first time participating in the WiCyS Conference.



### ADEQUACY OF LEVEL-SPECIFIC SESSIONS

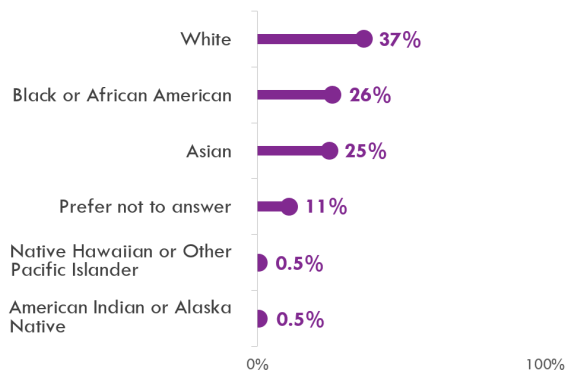
Over three-quarters of the respondents indicated that the variety of sessions offered at the conference met the needs of participants at their level (i.e., student, entry-level, senior-level, etc.)



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 2026 represented a racially diverse group of attendees from the U.S. and 22 other countries. Competitive scholarships were awarded to 865 of this year's participants.

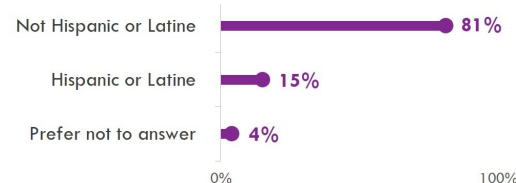
### RESPONDENTS BY RACE

A significant proportion of the respondents represented a race traditionally underrepresented in STEM.



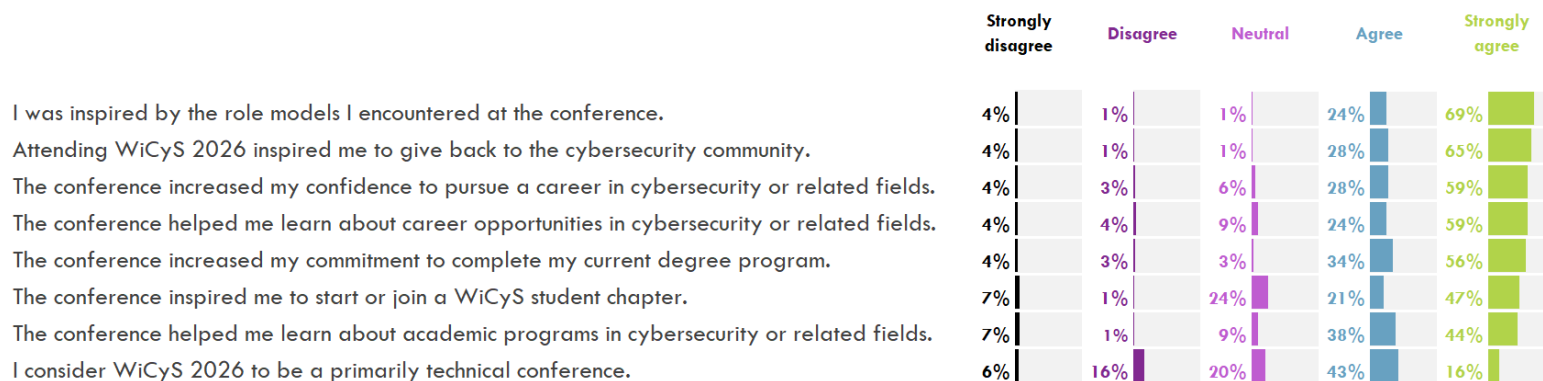
### RESPONDENTS BY ETHNICITY

Fifteen percent of the respondents identified as Hispanic or Latine.



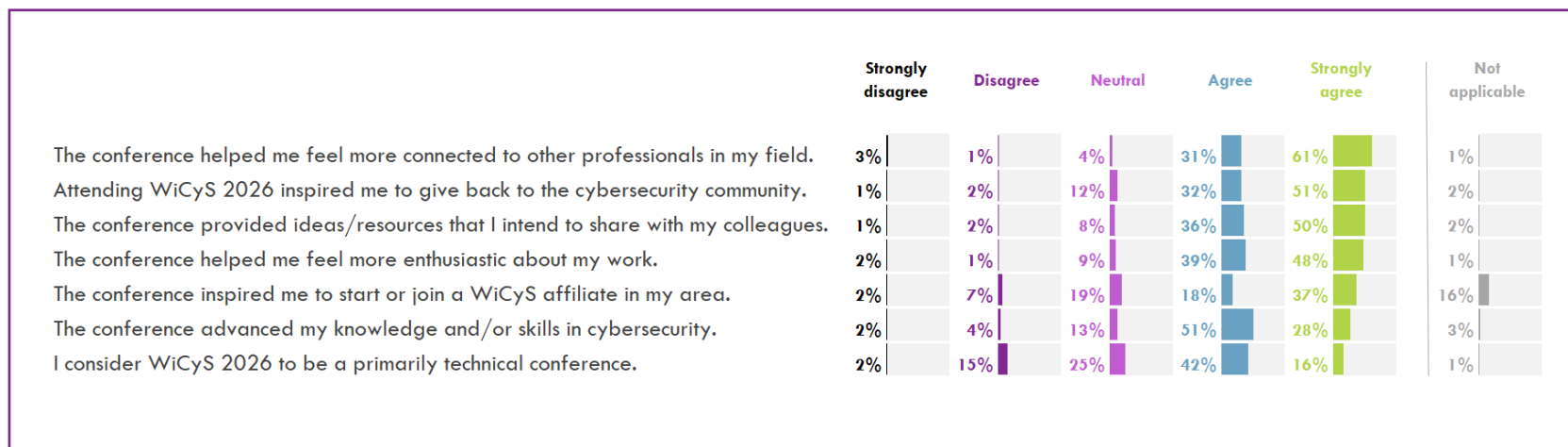
### PERCEPTION OF CONFERENCE UTILITY AMONG STUDENTS

Respondents who identified as students were asked to rate the influence of attending WiCyS 2026 on their academic pursuits. Over 90% of the respondents reported feeling inspired by the role models they encountered at the conference, and inspired to give back to the cybersecurity community. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents experienced a gain in self-confidence to pursue a career in cybersecurity. Twenty-two percent of those surveyed did not consider WiCyS 2026 to be a primarily technical conference.



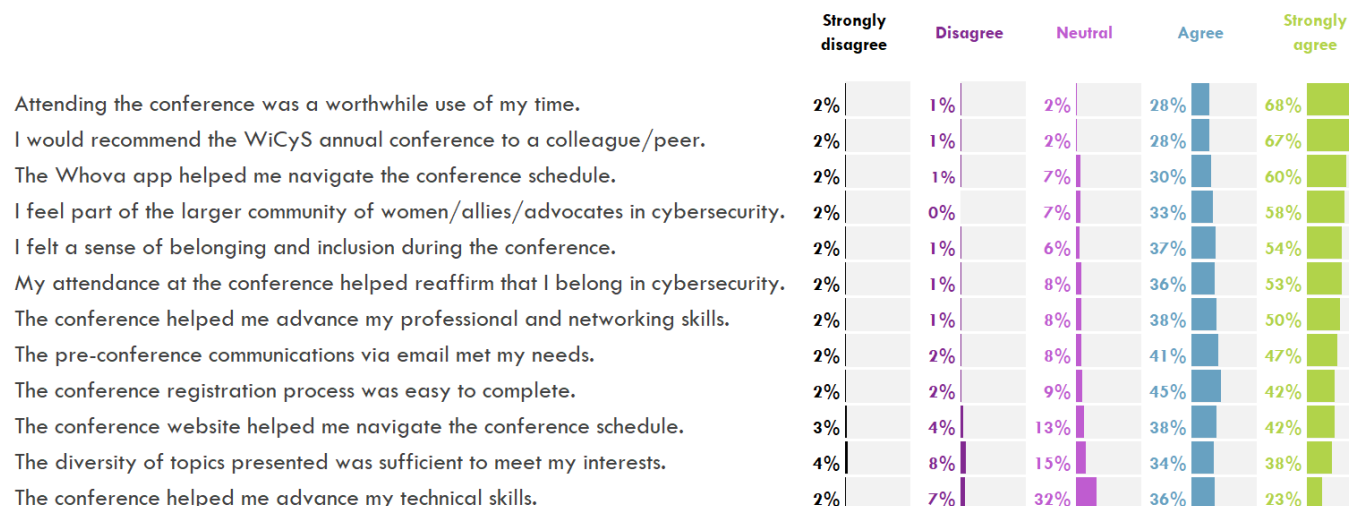
### PERCEPTION OF CONFERENCE UTILITY AMONG PROFESSIONALS

Respondents who identified as professionals were asked to rate the influence of attending WiCyS 2026 on their professional pursuits. Nine out of 10 respondents reported feeling more connected to professionals in their field, and nearly the same proportion intend to share ideas and resources acquired at the conference with their colleagues. Eighty-three percent of those surveyed felt inspired to give back to the cybersecurity community. Seventeen percent of the respondents did not consider WiCyS 2026 to be a primarily technical conference.



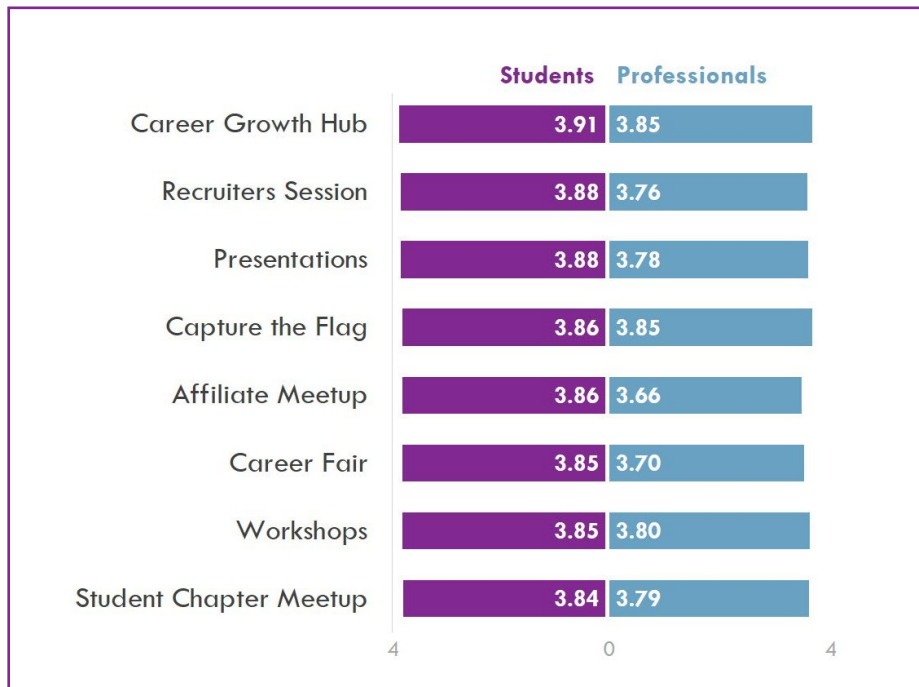
### ATTENDEE PERSPECTIVES ON CONFERENCE ELEMENTS AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Ninety-five percent of the respondents would recommend the WiCyS Conference to a colleague or peer, and 96% 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. Only nine percent of those surveyed felt that the conference did not help advance their technical skills.



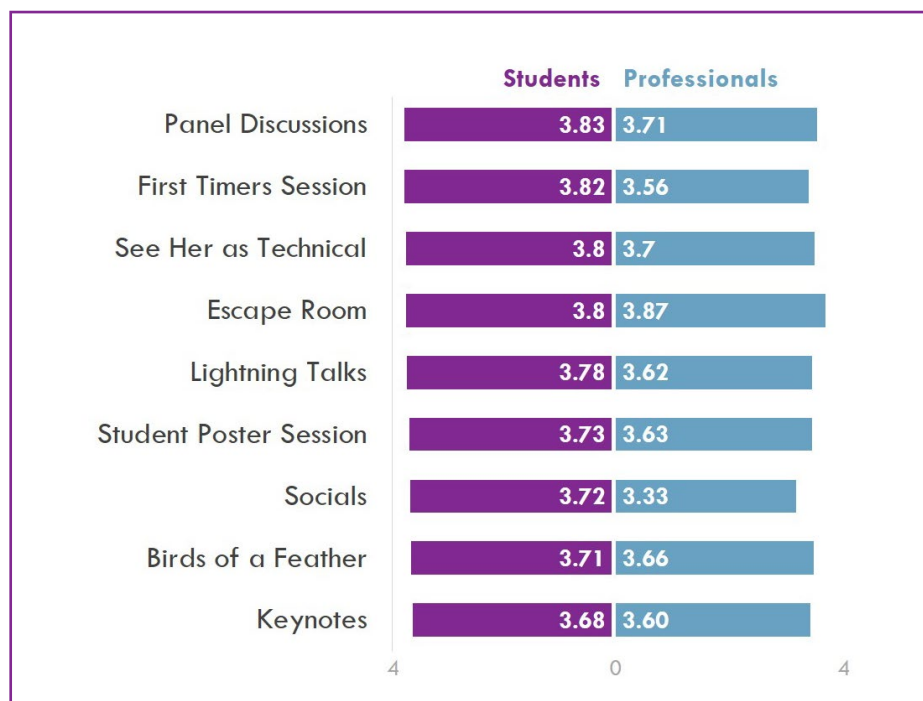
### PREFERRED WICYS 2026 FORUMS

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 2026. The weighted average for students and professionals highlights the preferences of these two groups of attendees. (“Not applicable” was eliminated from the calculation.) The five highest ranked forums among students include Career Growth Hub, Recruiters Session, Presentations, Capture the Flag, and Affiliate Meetup. Among professionals, the top ranked forums include Career Growth Hub, Capture the Flag, Workshops, Student Chapter Meetup, and Presentations.



### PREFERRED WICYS 2026 FORUMS (CONTINUED)

Overall, the attendees were pleased with the conference program and variety of conference forums offered at WiCyS 2026. Requests were made for a greater variety of technical and non-technical workshops, such as soft skills and entrepreneurship. Several respondents indicated there was too much redundancy among the keynote speakers, and an overemphasis on AI. Some attendees requested a longer conference (as previously done in 2025) in order to more fully participate, and the incorporation of designated blocks of time in the conference schedule for structured or facilitated networking.





### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“My participation as a WiCyS Austin Affiliate member was highly beneficial. Engaging with other successful affiliate members provided a valuable opportunity for knowledge exchange and professional growth. It allowed me to learn from their experiences, “borrow” effective strategies, and consider best practices that have supported their success in achieving organizational and professional goals.”

“I learned about the latest technologies, experiences, knowledge, and presentations from the presenters.”

“WiCyS 2026 provided the perfect platform to bolster my professional network and exchange insights with fellow experts. On a personal level, the conference was an inspiring reminder of the power of community-building, leaving me more motivated than ever to contribute to our collective growth in the industry.”

“I gained insight into current trends in cybersecurity, including the growing importance of threat intelligence, secure system design, and the human element in security (social engineering and awareness). There was a strong emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and mentorship as key drivers for innovation in the sector. I also explored emerging areas such as AI in cybersecurity, cloud security challenges, and real-world industry expectations for entry-level professionals.”

“Attending the conference helped me to feel confident that I belonged in cybersecurity and that there are people that I can identify with that are out there. I don’t get that in my current position so it was an eye opener to see so many women with so much knowledge around me.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“As a senior security professional, I found the workshop sessions on the first day to be beneficial as they were interactive. It was also a great opportunity to meet with students and learn about what they are studying in school. My goal was to see how to create a business case for involvement in WiCyS going forward and I think that goal was achieved.”

“As a teaching faculty, attending WiCyS helped me with technical skills and to be part of a larger community.”

“I got to meet my mentor in person and with other WiCyS members, so it broke me out of my introverted shell.”

“It gets me connected with those in the trenches. As an educator I rely on events like this to keep my knowledge current. It also allows me to give back and support those that are up and coming in the industry. As an educator, I want to empower more girls to enter this field. Seeing that there are so many resources and such a large supportive network is so important for these girls.”

“I loved the networking piece. I met a lot of great women and was able to connect with my home state affiliate. That is exciting as the president of my student chapter.”

“I got to network with other people in the WiCyS Florida chapter and learn more about some master’s degree programs in other universities.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“Professional networking, giving back to the community, and an inviting space with like-minded women of cyber.”

“The WiCyS conference was a great event. I was able to make many new connections and felt more inspired to continue to work harder in my profession. I was given a lot of great advice for other conferences or events that could also help me professionally. It was an amazing networking experience to say the least.”

“I’m a scholarship recipient and I would not have been able to attend this conference any other way and I’m incredibly grateful. The magnitude of the conference was overwhelming at first but I quickly found my footing and was able to make the experience more fitting to me. I learned invaluable things about myself and where I have the potential to thrive in cybersecurity. I met incredible people at all levels and it was beautiful to see everyone genuinely wanting to support and learn from each other.”

“Being retired military, soon to be retired civil service that still works hand-in-hand with my fellow shipmates, this conference showed me that all in the [c]ybersecurity field should be attending (e.g., women, men, enlisted, officer, civilian) as well as others under the IW umbrella. As we not only gain firsthand insight into emerging tools, but also emerging threats; and how to defend against them in a hands-on training environment that cannot be replicated on any naval network, while also gaining access to tools that we don’t have as of yet, seeing that we are years behind some corporate and federal technology; but we are rapidly working towards being there.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“On a personal level, it was incredible to connect with so many empathetic people. The energy flowing through the environment was truly uplifting. On a professional level, engaging with such tech-savvy peers was an eye-opening experience. The insightful conversations gave me greater confidence in the direction of my career path.”

“Connections, networking, sense of belonging, inspiration, ideas.”

“Attending WiCyS 2026 helped me understand some of the struggles women face within this male dominated field. It also helped me grow my professional network.”

“Helped to demonstrate how accessible the cyber field is, despite being a highly technical field.”

“The conference is always a highlight for my year. I enjoy meeting people from around the world who are in the same career field as I am. I really enjoyed Birds of a feather talks and will definitely apply to speak next year. The keynotes are always informative and I also love to see someone who looks like me on stage. The SANS executive exercise was the cherry on top for me.”

“The open communication and strong sense of community that wants to see everyone succeed is what all professionals want to experience when attending a conference and WiCyS organically has this sense of community.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“Attending WiCyS helped me gain clearer direction on my transition into cybersecurity, especially toward more technical areas like IAM, SOC, and cloud security. It also helped me understand what skills to focus on next.”

“Through volunteering I was able to gain more insight into the various skill sets of job seekers and also an understanding of the generational expectations.”

“learn new knowledge in cyber and AI integration”

“Attending WiCyS 2026 provided me valuable insights on the next steps of my journey. I got to meet and connect with amazing people who are already in the advanced stages of their career.”

“As an entry-level cybersecurity professional, I really enjoyed the opportunity to explore new and familiar topics in a supportive environment. Learning directly from other professionals about their day-to-day and career paths really helped me to define what my goals are, as well as how to take the next steps towards them.”

“As a 1st time attendee, with nearly 20 years of cyber experience, I am blown away by the scale of this community of women, allies, and advocates. The conference provided a laundry list of resources I’ve already shared with colleagues and I’ve already outlined a plan to engage & give back to others in my area.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“The escape room and some sessions exposed me to scenarios that I had only read or heard about up to that point. There were sessions where the steps for topics like email forensics or resolving a CTF with reverse engineering served as a sort of validation of what I have been practicing on my own. I loved hearing about different backgrounds because it inspired me to feel like I belong in cyber.”

“I was able to learn about topics I had only heard about, like MCPs, and connect with many women who shared their experiences in cybersecurity.”

“I was able to expand my domain knowledge. Doing the escape room opened me to the possibility of pursuing OT/ICS security. Talking with different professionals in the career fair helped me realize how to improve and present myself more professionally, and also be able to understand what recruiters are looking for.”

“Gained valuable networking and knowledge sharing: connected with colleagues and engaged with WiCyS women and allies from diverse industries and career stages (including a scholarship-winning student), exchanging perspectives and expanding my cybersecurity network. Amplified impact through storytelling: by explaining our cybersecurity work at JPMorganChase I provided useful guidance to others while sharpening how I articulate our mission to protect the firm – both rewarding and professionally reinforcing.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“The career fair and networking were the primary benefits for me. Unfortunately the conference was a whirlwind and I wasn’t able to do the workshops due to technical difficulties, but I was ok with that. What mattered most were the people I connected with!”

“Personally, as the days went by I found myself starting and continuing conversations more naturally and confidently that I usually do. Professionally, I got wonderful resume reviews and career advice from the growth hub and a couple of job leads with one leading to an interview at the career fair. It was a wonderful experience and very rewarding. This was my first WiCyS conference and first conference in general and it was amazing. Really looking forward for next year! Thanks to the WiCyS team for this truly rewarding and insightful experience.”

“By attending the career fair I was able to talk to several recruiters and get personalized insight into what positions I best align with, as well as guidance and resources for improving my skills to become job ready for specific roles. As the tech industry is shifting due to the onset of AI in the mainstream, I was able to get insight into how to not be left behind, and am now prioritizing implementing AI in the projects I’m building for my portfolio.”

“I had a remarkably positive experience and a valuable opportunity to interact with industry professionals. Meeting with recruiters gave me insights on how to tailor my resume and the areas that I need to focus on, upskill my profile, and the importance of networking, knowing the interview process, and understanding the job roles and positions.”



### Personal and professional benefits of attending WiCyS 2026

“I appreciated the opportunity to present my Prompt Injection workshop at WiCyS 2026 and attend the affiliate meetups and socials, which created even more opportunities to connect and teach others. It was personally rewarding to contribute to the community, share knowledge, and build relationships with others in cybersecurity. Professionally, it strengthened my speaking experience, expanded my network, and sparked valuable conversations.”

“One of my key takeaways from the conference was the strong sense of belonging and community I felt. As a career changer with little computer science background, I have battled a lot of imposter syndrome. However, being at the conference and hearing the stories of women with journeys similar to mine was incredibly inspiring and strengthened my commitment to becoming as successful as I can in this field.”

“Personally, I was feeling disconnected as I work remotely and have been transitioning in my career. This conference was full of the most welcoming and affirming professional colleagues of any that I’ve attended. I made professional connections with hiring managers and recruiters and obtained sponsorship unlike any other conference. I was validated in my current position focused on cyber in healthcare as a timely topic to study and to disseminate knowledge.”

“It showed my in real time what I’m missing from my day to day regarding innovative tools that we don’t possess.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“Panel or workshop for women working in industries where US positions are moved to other global locations.”

“I would like more diversity in conference topics. It seemed like the majority of talks had an AI component. While I agree it is important to discuss AI for the future of the cybersecurity field, there are other prevalent and important topics that I was hoping to see more of.”

“I felt this year's presentations were heavily focused on AI, which is a very relevant topic, however, I felt that they were all very similar and I had a hard time feeling like they were worth listening to when a majority of them started the same.”

“I kinda wish it was more technical. I felt like the conference benefitted those more early in career, students, or those looking to get into the field.”

“Have advanced topics presented for both technical and non-technical audiences.”

“More non-technical cybersecurity talks, for example strategy, communications, marketing, security awareness, risk-mitigation, etc.”

“I wish there were more workshops. The presentations felt too generic, and repetitive.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“I would like to suggest presentations for other aspects of the cybersecurity industry like sales and entrepreneurship for those of us who are less technical.”

“Dedicated programming for entrepreneurs building businesses in this industry would also be a strong addition.”

“A topic I would have liked to see included: practical guidance on post-attack recovery – concrete playbooks, drills, and lessons learned for restoring services and validating integrity after a cyber incident”

“A way that the conference can be enhanced is by advertising ways attendees can give back and support WiCyS initiatives throughout the year.”

“Keep the technical workshops coming – they add a lot of value. I’d also love to see more meetups geared toward mid-level professionals, since many events naturally lean student or senior leader. It would also be great to have more formalized vendor networking events, such as private dinners and direct recruitment opportunities, that are separate from the career fair or career hub. I’d also welcome more SANS and ISC2-related events or conference tracks, including the option to sign up for a learning track and earn a certification (badge) during the conference, similar to what organizations like Forrester and Gartner offer.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“I was not able to take full advantage of the Career Hub, as I really wanted to find a job. However, since we also needed to connect with other WiCyS affiliate members and explore ways to strengthen collaboration, I did not have much time to visit the Hub due to the long line. I believe that if WiCyS members had priority sessions or dedicated time before the start of the conference to receive feedback from the Career Hub, it would be very beneficial.”

“The only suggestion I have is the timing. I did feel like I didn't have enough time/energy to participate in all of the presentations, meet-ups, etc. I think that the sessions should be spread out a little better or there could be some repeats of more popular topics like the Agentic AI presentation which I was hoping to attend but unfortunately missed. Other than that, all of the presentation topics, the workshops, etc. were great.”

“I think this year's conference was one day shorter than last year. I could not participate in the some of the things I wanted to. The mixers this year was dull instead of the fun and connecting vibe of last year.”

“Make the conference longer.”

“The two days conference is short but I understand making it longer has complex challenges (operations, budgets among others). There are so much to learn and to catch up.”

“More scholarship options should be available for working professionals which cover no[t] just the registration fee but also travel and accommodation since a lot of employers don't provide that option.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“Most of the companies that attended the conference were large conglomerates, so it would be cool to see medium-sized companies located in smaller areas. I think it would be a better representation of the cybersecurity community at large.”

“The suggestion I do have is if it is possible to recruit Sephora/Loreal/Ulta cybersecurity professionals or for the career fair. I brought this idea to many of my groups at the conference and everyone instantly had a glow in their eyes and loved the idea!”

“It might also help to have a few volunteers whose role is to connect people in real time, almost like the ‘Have you met Ted?’ moment from How I Met Your Mother series; someone who can casually introduce attendees to each other and give that little push that makes networking easier, especially for more introverted participants.”

“Have more opportunities for Affiliate meet ups where we can schedule a meet up for our affiliate and then enhanced opportunities for all affiliate leaders to get together in person.”

“Perhaps ask the affiliates how they might want to contribute whether its organizing a session, volunteering, hosting, I think a lot of the affiliates would like to be even more involved with the conference.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“While I appreciated the Whova app’s ability to keep me on track and engaged during the conference, I found it difficult to retrieve my notes (with the pictures) from the app . . . so difficult that I probably will not use the note taking feature next time.”

“Another conference I’ve attended used an icebreaker-type session to have attendees get out of their seat and go to a designated area in the room based on regional origin. i.e. if you’re from Florida go over here, if you’re from Texas go over there. While I did see the affiliate meet up session and I had previously familiarized myself with the affiliates, it may be worth that sort of physical session to get folks from similar places or with similar interests together.”

“The badge tags could include industry/sectors -- I only found 1 other state-gov rep (and that was at a privacy meet up during one of the mid-day keynotes)”

“I suggest making some kind of identifier for the career fair booths’ banner to highlight what levels they’re currently hiring for and whether they sponsor. That would help with the congestion and the encourage more meaningful conversations.”

“I had two WiCyS conference experience, simply compared the two from last and this year. I preferred the setout and programme last year particular those pre-conference workshops, etc. and conference programme was more diverse and expanded almost 4 days which I seen that’s truly value for money.”



### Suggestions for enhancing the WiCyS Conference

“This was my first time attending the WiCyS annual conference, and I genuinely loved my experience. As someone who supports our student WiCyS club from a staff perspective and does not come from a technical background, I would have enjoyed seeing a few additional offerings that were less technically focused—such as soft skills workshops, conversations around mental health and burnout, or even a “Fail Fest” or career stories session where professionals share lessons learned along the way.”

“Strategic Networking: Implementing Executive Speed Networking sessions to facilitate direct mentorship and high-level professional connections. Emerging Tech Deep-Dives: Dedicating more space to cutting-edge topics like Quantum Computing and its impending impact on the cybersecurity landscape.”

“Structured networking: Organize small-group or mentor-matching sessions to make networking more meaningful and less overwhelming.”

“I also think a facilitated networking environment/room would be amazing. While not necessarily speed networking, perhaps there are different topics where you can sit and have conversations with other attendees based on the table topic...or choose a sticky off the wall and chat about that . . .”.

“I would like to see less of the big keynote-ish sessions and way more of the focused events like the breakfasts geared towards specific audiences (military, mid-career, senior, etc.). However, at those breakfasts/events, I would like less of the presentations and more time for networking/meeting other people.”

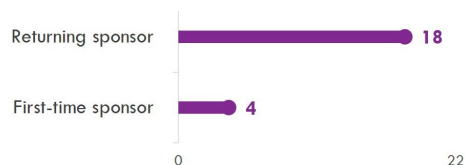
# WiCyS 2026

## Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – May 2026

The WiCyS 2026 sponsor survey was designed to assess the experiences and perceptions of conference sponsors, and to inform future annual conferences and Career Fairs. The survey weblink was distributed to 80 sponsors of WiCyS 2026 at the conclusion of this year's conference. A total of 22 conference sponsors responded to the anonymous survey in whole or part. Fourteen of the respondents were affiliated with industry; seven represented academia, and one worked for a non-profit.

### CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP

Over 80% of the respondents reported that their company or institution has been a sponsor of the WiCyS Conference at least once before.



### MOTIVATION FOR REPEAT SPONSORSHIP

Among the repeat sponsors, their motivation for continuing to support the conference is multi-faceted.

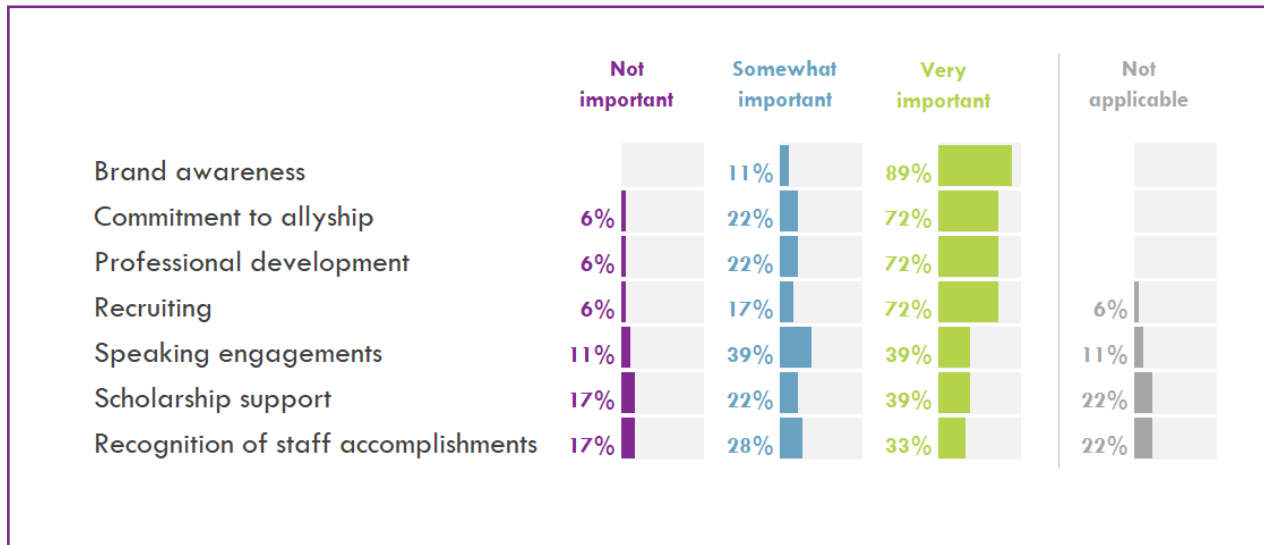


# WiCyS 2026

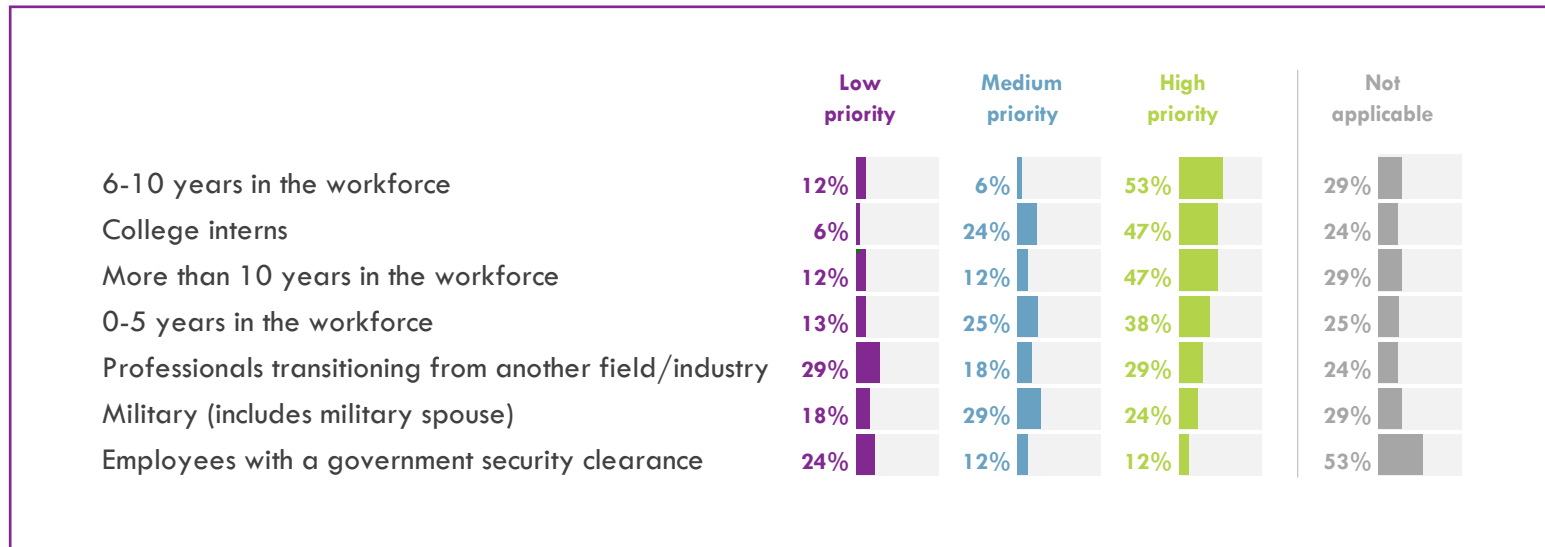
## Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – May 2026



The respondents were asked to rate the importance of several benefits related to their company's WiCyS 2026 sponsorship. The top four benefits rated "very important" were brand awareness, commitment to allyship, professional development, and recruiting.



The respondents were asked to rate the priority level of recruiting several professional tiers of worker for their company. The top three worker classifications given a “high priority” rating were employees with workforce experience spanning 6-10 years, college interns, and individuals with more than 10 years in the workforce.



# WiCyS 2026

## Sponsor Survey Results Dashboard – May 2026



The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with several components of WiCyS 2026 using a scale of “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The sponsors were overwhelmingly pleased with the level of attendee traffic at their booths. More than three-quarters of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of candidates they encountered. The majority of sponsors indicated that participating in WiCyS 2026 was a worthwhile engagement, and that their company is likely to participate in the Career Fair again next year.





### How did sponsoring WiCyS 2026 benefit your company's mission and goals?

"WiCyS aligns with organizational goals by expanding access to high-demand career pathways, connecting students to industry networks, and strengthening outcomes tied to employment and advancement for our ten scholarship students, alumni we connected with at the conference, and future students."

"It also supports strategic priorities around partnerships and program relevance, ensuring what is taught stays closely aligned to workforce needs while building a stronger, more connected student community."

"Supporting the WiCyS conference allows us to help increase the number of women and minorities in community college cybersecurity programs."

"being able to spread the word about our academic institution"

"As a university, [we] do not attend WiCyS for recruiting purposes. Instead, the conference serves as an important opportunity for our student club members to participate and engage. WiCyS provides an invaluable experience for our students to connect with industry professionals, peers from other institutions, and the broader cybersecurity community, supporting their professional growth and sense of belonging in the field."



### How did sponsoring WiCyS 2026 benefit your company's mission and goals?

"It promotes women in the cybersecurity field, and offers development opportunities for members."

"Sponsoring the Women in Cybersecurity (WiCyS) 2026 conference as a Diamond Sponsor was a high-impact move for [us]. In the current 2026 landscape – where [we have] pivoted into an 'Agentic AI' powerhouse – security and trust are the company's primary currencies."

"One of [our] values is to 'Make a Positive Impact.' We do this when we commit our time, resources, and practices to positively impact those around us and our communities. Supporting WiCyS's mission directly aligns to this value."

"One of our values is Always Improve. The conference gives women in our organization an opportunity to learn with and from other women in the industry."



### **Describe the return on investment your company has experienced through its involvement with WiCyS.**

“We have grown our industry connections, our network memberships and our faculty fellowship program.”

“it’s hard to estimate exactly but we imagine that we have created a handful of applications due to participation”

“Through our partnership, we were able to connect with skillrex. We worked with them as part of our programming and that had great feedback from participants. We also really value the opportunity to bring team members from our organization as allies to the conference and support the career fair. Our partnership with WiCyS is helping us bring opportunities and engagements to women in the organization that helps them feel valued and supports their growth.”

“Trust is [our] #1 value, and the sponsorship isn't a donation—it's an investment in the specialized talent needed to keep their Agentic AI secure and reliable for global customers.”

“It's primarily through brand awareness and hiring. I'd like to see our team present at future conferences and share expertise.”

“Our involvement with WiCyS has been a strong source of engagement for our internal team members, a good source of training, and a strong driver of our company image to an importance source of talent.”



### Suggestions for improving the annual conference or Career Fair

“Keynote access when our colleagues are speaking.”

“There is a lot of early career interest and while we do have opportunities in those roles, we often are looking for individuals with more career experience. We would love to see more mid career attendees.”

“The career fair is long that first day. Is there a way to have it end maybe at 5pm instead of 6? It can be a busy day!”

“Speed Networking for Mid-Career: While entry-level talent is abundant, mid-career and senior women often felt the Career Fair was too junior-focused. Implementing dedicated ‘Flash Mentoring’ or senior-level networking blocks would increase value for 25–45% of attendees. The ‘Always-On’ Buffer: Attendees reported ‘networking burnout.’ Adding structured ‘Quiet Zones’ or ‘No-Pitch Lounges’ could help maintain engagement over the three-day event.”

“It would be nice for the conference to provide lunch for the exhibitors as well as outlets to plug in laptops.”