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MEDIA CONTACT:

Matt Rowley

Assistant Director of University Communications

University of West Florida

MRowley@uwf.edu<<mailto:MRowley@uwf.edu>>

Office: 850.857.6109

Cell: 850.341.3870

UWF Cyber Club places first in statewide Cyber Defense Challenge

Pensacola, Fla. – Nov. 14, 2016 – The University of West Florida Cyber Club recently placed first in the Cyber Defense Challenge at the Florida Center for Cybersecurity's third annual conference, held in Tampa.

This was the first year that the annual competition included a cybersecurity competition, which features several live cyber challenges for various teams. The UWF team competed in the invite-only Cyber Defense Challenge, where they were tasked with defending their networks against pre-programmed cyber traffic and attack scenarios. They faced teams from top Florida universities, including the University of Florida, the University of South Florida and the University of Central Florida. A non-collegiate team placed second and the University of Florida placed third.

"The UWF Cyber Club students are very dedicated," said Anthony Pinto, lecturer in the UWF computer science department and faculty advisor for the Cyber Club. "They practice several times each week, on their own time, and they're interested in learning as much as possible about the field. More than that, they worked well together, organizing the team tasks to get the most out of their talents and time."

John Barlow, senior cybersecurity major and president of the UWF Cyber Club, said it was an invaluable opportunity to practice what he's learned in the classroom in a hands-on, real-world scenario.

"Taking part in competitions forces me to adapt to an unfamiliar environment, apply what I know, learn from those who may know more, and still have fun in the process," he said. "The Cyber Defense Challenge helped me gain a deeper understanding of cybersecurity, and now I can share what I've learned with my fellow students. As a result, the cybersecurity program at UWF will continue to grow and flourish, with new ideas and processes being exchanged between current and future members."

The conference featured keynote presentations from Industry leaders Scott Charney, vice president of Microsoft's Trustworthy Computing Group, and Art Coviello, retired executive chairman of RSA, the Security Division of EMC. Participants also attended sessions focused on cybersecurity workforce development, research, current trends and more, as well as exhibitor displays, panel discussions, networking opportunities and live demonstrations.

"The Cyber Defense Challenge provided our students with the experience of applying the knowledge

gained from their education to a real world situation,” Pinto said. “Networking with industry professionals and other university students was also an invaluable opportunity.”

The UWF Center for Cybersecurity enhances student success through scholarships, professional development opportunities and support for the Cyber Club. The Center for Cybersecurity is the regional hub for cybersecurity education and research, including multidisciplinary programs and certificates, research opportunities, outreach activities, and industry partnerships.

Created during the 2014 legislative session, the Florida Center for Cybersecurity is a shared resource for cybersecurity research, education and outreach across the state and beyond. The Center fosters collaboration between higher education, government, defense and business communities to share knowledge, resources and training opportunities that help mitigate cybersecurity threats and create opportunities for innovative solutions. Located at the University of South Florida, FC2 is leading efforts to position Florida as a national leader in cybersecurity.

To learn more about the UWF Cyber Club and the Center for Cybersecurity, visit uwf.edu/cybersecurity<<http://uwf.edu/cybersecurity/>>.

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