iQ4 Corp. Partners with U.S. Department Of Labor to Establish National Registered Apprenticeship Program in Cybersecurity

Using NICE skills standards, tooling, models and content, the industry-driven program will accelerate student readiness, align academic learning, create certifications & jobs

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NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- iQ4 Corporation, a centralized platform, which helps students, academia, business and government collaborate to transform and scale the workforce of the future, announced today that it has signed on as a sponsor of the Virtual Apprenticeship Program in cybersecurity which has been registered and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The program is based on skills and competencies standards set by the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE).

As a national sponsor of the Virtual Apprenticeship Program in Cybersecurity, a DOL registered program, iQ4 will help enable employers to identify and train their future cybersecurity workforce with digital, scalable apprenticeship programs. Powered by iQ4's proprietary Academy platform that combines technology with industry-driven standards and content, iQ4 is a leader and innovator in mobilizing companies, government and universities in bridging the global cybersecurity workforce skills gap through its applied learning programs led by industry subject matter experts. iQ4's Academy platform is also the centerpiece that will develop soft skills using cybersecurity projects to develop to train 10,000 students for CyberNYC, a new initiative by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) to transform NYC into a global leader of cybersecurity innovation and talent development.

According to DOL Expanding Apprenticeship data: Return on Investment (ROI), research has shown that dollar for dollar, no workforce training method packs as much punch as apprenticeships. Employers that invest in the apprenticeship model, have high return on investment. Benefits that firms realize from their apprenticeship programs include: reduced recruiting costs; a more predictable and reliable supply of skilled labor; improved employee retention and; improved employee productivity. For every $1 invested, they see $1.47 returned, and reduced turnover. In addition, according to the report, 91 percent of the apprentices retain employment after conclusion of their apprenticeship program; 89 percent are still in their job after three years of their apprenticeship program, as compared to only 70 percent of college graduates and; close to four million youth under the age of 25 with a high school diploma who cannot find full-time work, could benefit from an apprenticeship.

"By launching this incredible initiative based on NICE standards and with the DOL's vision to extend digital apprenticeships to corporate technology needs, we are transforming the learning economy," said Frank Cicio, founder and chief executive officer, iQ4. "There are currently over 300,000 jobs open in cybersecurity and the national cybersecurity workforce is expected to experience a shortfall of two million cybersecurity professionals by 2022. Early leaders, such as our partnership with T-Mobile, will embrace their current cybersecurity programs under iQ4's registered apprenticeship standards. The time to act

and develop our students is now and our virtual apprenticeship program is the key to filling jobs, training the workforce of tomorrow and setting standards."

The NICE framework is the underpinning of the apprenticeship program where private and public sectors and students will now be able to speak the same language when identifying and defining their needs and their skill sets. These standards will help drive academic learning and certifications that are all industry driven – changing the future of the cybersecurity industry.

In addition, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) framework is the foundation of iQ4's courses in which students collaborate on teams to address real-world case studies developed by industry professionals. Throughout the course, the students virtually present policies and processes to prevent cyber attacks to seasoned professional mentors who offer feedback and knowledge transfer. The iQ4 curriculum empowers students with the knowledge to confront current and future cyber threats while developing and enhancing vital soft skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, data analysis, communication, and collaboration.

"Partnerships like this represent one of my favorite outcomes from having a national cybersecurity framework, the NICE Framework," said Bill Newhouse, deputy director, National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE). "The framework provides a scalable standards-based, usable taxonomy of cybersecurity and a common lexicon that enables our national employers, who need more people ready to join their workforces, to be able to communicate clearly and work directly with education providers in order to develop apprenticeships and skills needed to graduate and get a job in the real world."

How the Apprenticeship Program Works

iQ4 engages with the prospective academic institution on delivering cybersecurity project courses that align to existing credited courses, and then the curriculum is developed in accordance with the needs of the enterprise partner. Student interns, who are selected as part of the program, are assessed over a 14-week virtual mentorship course as potential digital apprentices. The students who perform well are then asked to participate in the digital apprenticeship program with the partner company – which will provide 2000 hours of paid on- the-job training while the student completes his/her academic degree. At the conclusion of the digital apprenticeship, the partner company guarantees the student a full time job upon graduation. iQ4 handles all paperwork and process flows between DOL, company and students.

What our Partners have to say

"Apprenticeships are a cornerstone of President Donald Trump's plan to close the skills gap and ensure the American workforce is prepared to succeed in the jobs of today and tomorrow," said U.S. Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta. "The expansion of apprenticeships makes the greatest workforce in the world – the American workforce – even stronger."[1]

"The program has been an amazing addition to our curriculum and we appreciate being partnered with iQ4 to make this happen," said Barbara Endicott-Popovsky, Ph.D., executive director, Center for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity in Education CAE-CDE, University of Washington. "The digital apprenticeship has allowed us to verify that University

of Washington students are learning the content and soft skills to be workforce ready, and that they align along the NICE framework. As a Center for Academic Excellence we are required to show that we are effectively preparing students for the workforce and this tool allows us to demonstrate with metrics that we are properly preparing our students to be emerging professionals in the field of cybersecurity."

About iQ4

The underutilization of apprenticeship represents a significant lost opportunity to efficiently train American workers with 21st century skills and create a stronger American economy: iQ4 Transforming the Learning Economy! iQ4 is a workforce and mobility platform, which enables applied learning through the strategic collaboration between students, academia, and the business world. The acquisition of skills during the mentoring program empowers students with pertinent knowledge for future prospects. Companies are able to develop the next-generation workforce in accordance with the demands of the market. iQ4 facilitates the creation of a competent workforce by uniting the independent initiatives of industry and academia.

[1] https://www.constructionequipment.com/labor-secretary-acosta-discusses-apprenticeship-development

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