

IT student finds ‘calling’ in technology

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Information Technology junior, Zoe Murphy, spent the summer as a security analyst intern at Kaiser Francis Oil Company in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Photo provided)

Zoe Murphy’s passion for technology is evident as she talks about her journey into the world of cybersecurity. Initially set on medicine, Murphy began her college career at Tulane University as a pre-med student, but the science courses didn’t ignite the excitement she hoped for. It wasn’t until she discovered the [Information Technology \(IT\)](#) program at the Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) that she knew she had found her true calling.

“I really didn’t enjoy chemistry,” recalled Murphy. “My parents were supportive of me changing my major and I’m really glad that I did.”

Murphy is now majoring in IT with a coordinate major in computer science and a concentration in cybersecurity. This shift opened new doors for her, sparking a

passion that she didn't know existed. Now, as a junior at Tulane, she's not just learning the fundamentals of technology; she's actively preparing to make a mark in the ever-evolving field of cybersecurity.

"There's always something new to learn," said Murphy about technology, which is why she consistently competes in the Student Cybersecurity Challenge hosted annually by Tulane SoPA in collaboration with [Operation Spark](#) and [Idea Village](#). This year's competition took place on Friday, Oct. 25, at Operation Spark, a local nonprofit that provides skills training and job placement in high-wage tech careers.

The invite-only event is exclusively for eligible students from Tulane University, Southeastern Louisiana University (SELU), Operation Spark alumni, and other area university students with a foundational knowledge of cybersecurity.

"It brings together some of the areas brightest young minds in cybersecurity," said Ralph Russo, director of Tulane SoPA's IT program. "The students are really challenged, and you can see their confidence grow after they've solved what's put before them."

Murphy said her participation in cybersecurity challenges has allowed her to sharpen her problem-solving skills and connect with like-minded students. Being a part of the cybersecurity club has deepened her commitment to the field, and the competitions provide an environment where creativity and strategy are essential.

"I find that delegating tasks among my teammates really sped up the process," she said, recalling how her team worked together seamlessly to secure second place out of six teams.

This year, Murphy is armed with experience as a summer security analyst intern at Kaiser Francis Oil Company in Tulsa, Oklahoma and feels more prepared than ever.

"Now that I've competed a few times and have a better understanding of strategy, I'm hopeful to take home a win," she said with a grin, "especially when there's sometimes a drone as the top prize."

Murphy's story is one of resilience and discovery. From navigating her initial major to finding her true passion in cybersecurity, she embodies the spirit of a future leader in tech. With her Security+ certification already in hand thanks to CompTIA opportunities available for Tulane SoPA's IT students and her growing experience in the field, Zoe Murphy is poised to make waves as one of the next generation's

cybersecurity professionals.

“There’s always something new to learn.”
Zoe Murphy, Information Technology junior



Students, faculty and mentors pause for a photo following the 2024 Student Cybersecurity Challenge hosted by Tulane SoPA in collaboration with Operation Spark and Idea Village. (Photo by Don Cooper)