iQ4 Corp. Launches Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge with Global Public, Private and Educational Sector Backing to Create Skilled and Qualified Cyber-Savvy Workforce

iQ4 Corp’s Virtual Apprenticeship “in-a-box” is a turnkey program that will help certify 10,000 new cybersecurity workers in three years

NEW YORK (PRWEB) October 08, 2019 -- iQ4 Corporation, a collaborative, technology-based skills transfer platform helping students, academia, businesses and government transform and massively scale the workforce of the future, today announced that it has officially launched the first-ever Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge (VAC) in recognition of National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Dozens of global companies, universities and partners have signed on to support the program and energize the global movement, which strongly supports diversity and inclusion at its core. iQ4 is a national registered apprenticeship sponsor under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Prominent companies such as T-Mobile, Citizens Bank, Outsecure, AIG, ITSM, Symantec, HiUP and Evanta have joined the program to collaborate with both local and national educational institutions, including the City University of New York (CUNY), Brooklyn College, York College, Baruch College, Queens College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, State University of New York (SUNY), University at Albany College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity (CEHC), Binghamton University, Dakota State University, University of Washington, Yeshiva University, The College of Saint Rose, Saint Peters University and, internationally, University of Greenwich U.K., Cardiff University Wales, Canberra Institute of Technology Australia. They partner with iQ4’s longstanding strategic backers, which include ISACA, NICE, Army USA (AUSA), The National Student Clearinghouse, Infragard and Women in Cyber Leadership, to provide students with meaningful opportunities to gain experience, develop marketable skill sets and ultimately land positions of their choice in the burgeoning cybersecurity industry.

In 2015, iQ4 formed the Cybersecurity Workforce Alliance, an industry driven open source division, to develop and deliver the role taxonomies, project content, and subject matter expertise (mentors) needed to develop our next generation workforce now over one thousand eight hundred members. The VAC connects universities with private sector organizations that will be sponsoring, training and providing thousands of cybersecurity apprenticeships over three years to over 10,000 students. The formalized global movement accelerates student readiness, aligns academic learning, creates credentialed experiences and provides jobs based on NIST/NICE taxonomy standards (the recently approved Presidential Order) in areas that are experiencing a shortage of skilled and qualified workers, both right now and in the near future. The VAC program, launched today, focuses specifically on cybersecurity and risk, however, in the near term the VAC will broaden to encompass additional industry sectors experiencing growing workforce shortages, such as data science, IoT, AI and machine learning in areas such as financial services, engineering, healthcare and manufacturing.

iQ4’s combination of technology, standards and models has been uniquely deployed to mobilize employers and students alike, and at a rapid scale that provides the ability for organizations to accurately capture results and develop competencies, all in an applied learning environment. Since the development of its groundbreaking, turnkey “in-a-box” program, iQ4, in connection with its university and enterprise program partners, have already trained thousands of students to be workforce-ready in cybersecurity. With over 25% of iQ4 students obtaining jobs in cybersecurity, 98% never had a course in cyber and 45% are women. Today’s VAC announcement only adds to the platform’s reach, scale and workforce readiness.
The benefits of the program are that businesses now realize that building versus buying a diverse talent pipeline through virtual apprenticeship programs, where students emerge with up to three to twelve months on the job experience while in school, is a more efficient and effective way to hire talent than traditional outdated recruiting and training practices. The program introduces students, regardless of their major, to careers in cybersecurity, especially those with critical thinking, analytical and communications – the soft-skills that are in high demand by cybersecurity employers.

An Idea Turned Movement: Tons of Support from Partners, Universities, Industry and Business for iQ4.

Partnerships
iQ4 has established many strategic partnerships that make this program one of the most groundbreaking initiatives in the country based on credentials and standards at state and national levels.

“Apprenticeships – characterized by employers who commit to hiring employees while they obtain skills-based training over the course of their employment - are a very affordable and promising pathway to a career in cybersecurity for learners and an effective tool for employers seeking to recruit and retain talent in a very competitive job market,” said Rodney Petersen, director of the national Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. “The Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge is to be commended for how it integrates the NICE Cybersecurity Workforce Framework into the education, training, and workforce development efforts being undertaken by private sector entities and academic institutions as encouraged by America’s Cybersecurity Workforce executive order.”

“We are thrilled to partner on this ground breaking initiative to mobilize and connect industry, students and adult workforce toward the development of much-needed new skills and quality jobs that are essential to increasing the competitiveness and growth of the private sector in Greece and neighboring countries,” said Sofia Zafeiropoulou, Member of the Board and Director of Business Development at Apopsi Group, an Athens, Greece-headquartered firm offering IT, Consulting and Vocational Education solutions to the public and private sector in Europe.

Universities
iQ4 has an established relationship with Universities, including those designated as Centers of Academic Excellence (CAE) with the National Security Agency. It is a recognition standards-based curriculum with over 300 participating Universities around the country. Students emerge from the program with industry credentials using the VAC applied learning curriculum that allows them to develop skills in cybersecurity and risk.

“CUNY looks forward to joining forces with iQ4 in addressing the gaps in skills, experience and even awareness that students across the country have in dealing with the fast-growing challenge of cybersecurity,” said Angie D. Kamath, University Dean, Continuing Education and Workforce Development, City University of New York (CUNY). “The Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge comes at a time when we are expanding our digital skills initiatives on many fronts: from new academic programs, including a master's in cybersecurity that starts next year, to industry partnerships that provide our students with opportunities for experiential learning, internships and eventually full-time jobs. The iQ4 collaboration is a welcome addition. It's an exciting opportunity to help address the cybersecurity workforce shortage -- and put our students on pathways to careers with real impact on the public good.”

“Dakota State University, along with the South Dakota Apprenticeship Network (SDAN), and the iQ4 Virtual
Apprenticeship program have an excellent combination of academic and industry experts - allowing for real workforce development in cybersecurity. SDAN is seeking to stand up about 100 of these apprenticeships/residencies over the next three years,” said Richard Hanson, Ph.D. Dean, The Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences, Dakota State University.

Industry
Industry recognition to support CPE credits for member certifications is behind iQ4 and its program and it is getting support in the US and the UK.

“The partnership between iQ4 and ISACA New York Metropolitan Chapter has increased the awareness and importance of embedding the IT Professional requirements into the classroom. Our partnership has led to a dramatic increase in student groups across the New York Metropolitan area, which is a win-win for all,” said Karen V. Alexander, president, ISACA New York Metropolitan Chapter.

“The Northern England Chapter is enthusiastically ‘getting onboar’ the Challenge by helping industry, education and ISACA excite and inspire the next generation on to career pathways into the cyber, risk and resilience professions. The virtual apprenticeship model enables ISACA’s academic outreach program to step up a gear by taking the pragmatic, proven workplace development platform and model to Universities,” said John Jones, president Northern England Chapter, U.K. ISACA. “Our aim is to jointly develop a funnel and pipeline of risk and workplace talent, which will be held in a growing resource pool of talent. Before our partnership, we were limited to promotional evangelism, anecdotal experience and sometimes 1:1 mentoring to capture the attention of the young. Mentoring one-to-many with industry developed content will help all stakeholders, especially the next generation.”

Enterprise
iQ4 has partnered with global leaders to address internal up-skilling, career pathways, skills optimization and pipeline to high schools and colleges as businesses know that training the workforce of the future is critical path to their success and their future.

“The biggest challenge in cybersecurity is that the competency and skill gap between the attackers and defenders has been constantly increasing in the last decade, when coupled with the skill shortage the technology-powered world is facing a perfect storm. The Cyber Workforce Alliance (CWA) was born out of this simple idea of ‘Industry first’ and creating an industry credentialed applied learning model for cybersecurity that meets the need for addressing the knowledge gap and skill gap through the virtual apprenticeship program is the most logical way to solve the problem,” said Gopal Padinjaruveetil, vice president and chief information security officer (CISCO), AAA, co-chair CWA Advisory Board.

“iQ4 aims to address the massive cybersecurity skills gap with a learning platform that combines both mentorship and instructor-led courses. The Virtual Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Challenge throws down the gauntlet in its mission to create a pipeline of talent that provides immediate value to the industry and grows a qualified cybersecurity workforce at scale while fostering values including diversity and inclusion,” said Jeff Brown, co-chair, Evanta.

“Many thanks to all our enterprise customers, mentors, students, faculty, partners and friends who have helped us pull this together and reach our goal to make this program available to every student on the planet,” said Frank Cicco, founder and chief executive officer, iQ4. “We want to level the playing field and give students the opportunity for success by providing awareness, experience and workforce readiness for the career of their
dreams. We welcome all employers, universities and partners that have answered the call and accepted the challenge to help train over 10,000 students, understanding the potential crisis we are facing with the current and future shortage of skilled cyber workers. We are encouraging more organizations to jump on the bandwagon and join us to transform the learning economy.”

How the Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge Works

The iQ4 VAC program in a box combines technology with industry-driven standards from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) framework, and content and is led by industry experts.

For more information on iQ4’s VAC program and how it works, please check out our release on www.iq4.com.

Additional iQ4 Supporters and VAC Participants

Below are some of the organizations that are already involved and supporting the VAC program, including Universities, Enterprises and Strategic Partners.

University & Higher Education Quotes

“The University of Washington's Center for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity supports innovative efforts like iQ4 Virtual Challenge. We believe that programs like this that are designed specifically to develop and graduate ‘breach-ready’ cybersecurity professionals are required to address both the acute workforce shortage and lack of preparedness generally within this discipline.”

Barbara Endicott-Popovsky, Ph.D. Executive Director, Center for Information Assurance and Cybersecurity, Editor-in-Chief. Colloquium for Information Systems Security Educators (CISSE) Journal

"The Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge (VAC) provides a unique platform for bringing together diverse talent to address some of the most critical workforce development challenges of our times. Data analytics today drives competitive advantage in the industry. We at the New Jersey Big Data Alliance (NJBDA) with our university members are looking for opportunities to join hands to prepare the future workforce for the big data economy. iQ4 provides a scalable model to reach out to a large target population and make this happen. We are looking forward to supporting the VAC activities in the data science and business analytics area.”

Rashmi Jain, Professor, Information Management and Business Analytics at Montclair State University and the Vice President for Education and Training, New Jersey Big Data Alliance.

“Mobilizing higher education and industry to address the acute cybersecurity workforce shortage through innovative programs like the Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge is an exciting development. This program offers students the opportunity to explore and pursue careers in cybersecurity, starting with an apprenticeship that leads to a full-time position in the field at graduation. Apprenticeships that are embedded in the educational experience build robust talent pipelines for industry as they push knowledge application to new frontiers that bolster our students’ successful career entry and achievement.”

Anne Lopes, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Brooklyn College

“The iQ4 course combines the real-world power of a virtual industry mentors with iQ4’s expertise in an instructor-led course that creates a powerful cyber talent pipeline. The course is low cost to the university but provides a high degree of student experience, engagement, and outcome success. The program provides a strong ROI to the hiring companies by bridging the skills-gap and building a talent pipeline. The result is a
much needed model for successful industry-academic collaboration.”
James R. Stellar, Professor of Behavioral Neuroscience, Department of Psychology, University at Albany, SUNY

“The shortage of cybersecurity professionals grows each day and programs like this are required to mobilize employers, education, associations and government to address this issue that impacts all citizens.”
Trevor Moores, Professor of Information Systems, and Director of the Subotnick FSC, Baruch College, CUNY

“Cybersecurity will become even larger in our personal and business lives as systems increase in complexity and connectivity. With increase vulnerabilities and risks, studying cybersecurity presents the ultimate growth potential as learning never ends. Cybersecurity professionals have exciting career prospects across every sector, both private and public. It's not just for techy people.”
Fenio Annansingh-Jamieson, Associate Professor and Chair Business and Economics York College/CUNY

"Having worked in the IT industry for 24 years and academia for 18, I have not seen a more engaging platform and results-oriented curriculum that leads to career pathways for cybersecurity internships, apprenticeships, and full-time jobs."
Edward Moskal- Founding Director, MS Cybersecurity Program at Saint Peter's University and Secret Service Partner, NY/NJ Electronic Crimes Task Force

“Innovative programs like the Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge and the tech bootcamps are examples of employers seeking new ways of building their talent pipeline and no longer relying exclusively on traditional recruiting and training programs.”
David Yang, Co-Founder and CEO of Fullstack Academy

Enterprise Quotes

“After over four years of mentoring CWA students, I am more convinced than ever that “mentorship” is the secret to preparing the next generation of risk and security candidates for success in the field. The interaction between current and aspiring professionals enhances both the mentors and the students, inspiring confidence in their knowledge and their ability to apply it – a true win.”
Teresa G Durocher, Head of Risk, Corporate Security and Resilience Business Services Risk, Citizens Bank

“Symantec, like many industry tech leaders and our customers, identify with the skills shortages in cybersecurity and risk and the urgent need to close both the skills gap and increase diversity and inclusion. A high priority for us is to leverage the Virtual Apprentice Challenge to close both of these gaps while investing our experience and thought leadership into industry action.”
Darren Thomson, CTO, EMEA, Symantec

"The NYM InfraGard is proud to support the Cybersecurity Workforce Alliance's (CWA) Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge. The CWA and iQ4 are helping to close a massive shortfall of cybersecurity skills which has a direct impact on the defense and economic competitiveness of our nation. iQ4, along with its mentors, have been hard at work on these training initiatives for several years, and they are having a clear and positive impact in developing real, applicable and in demand skills. I am proud to invest in the future of these students and help them create career opportunities to become cybersecurity professionals and taking ownership of defending our great nation.”
Tom Mustac, President, New York Metro InfraGard Members Alliance, Inc.
“Today’s cybersecurity workforce is based on the knowledge to know what to do, the skills on how to do it and the abilities (experiences) to learn from the past. iQ4, through its partnership with itSM Solutions and the Cybersecurity Workforce Alliance (CWA), has created an accredited NIST/NICE cybersecurity three step certification training program for employers that not only provides a pathway to rapidly upskilling its existing workforce, but also provides a pathway to new recruits that have followed the same learning journey.”

Rick Lemieux Co-Founder and Managing Partner of itSM Solutions

“SIKER Limited is patently aware of the skills shortages and the lack of cyber risk awareness and workplace preparedness the next generation has for cyber and risk roles, especially in the many sectors that utilize Industrial Control Systems. Our clients are adopting the NIST and other critical competency frameworks. So, the ability to leverage the Cybersecurity Workforce Alliance (CWA) model will fast-track talent from zero awareness to pathways into the roles required to operationalize critical cyber and workforce competency frameworks. We are looking forward to collaborating with iQ4 and the Cybersecurity Workforce Alliance in by providing mentors and bringing the challenge to the attention of our customers.”

Tim Harwood, CEO, SIKER Limited

“iQ4 is providing a powerful medium for shortening the critical cybersecurity skills shortage today. I have mentored for iQ4 and the students involved with this program, and will continue to do so, as the program includes substantive elements to provide valuable industry insights and help for newcomers in cybersecurity.”

Pamela Gupta, President OutSecure Inc.

“We are excited to launch the HiUp and iQ4 global partnership, initially focusing on transforming the traditional training methodology and delivery in cyber across the USA and UK. iQ4 has a practical approach to address cyber needs by providing a digital, scalable solution for the industry by industry experts. HiUp commits to support iQ4 by providing the highest-quality digital content from engaging e-learning to VR/AR solutions.”

Brendan Kavanagh, Group Chief Executive, HiUp

“Several of my staff are keen to be mentors for the students in the virtual program, and I am personally keen that they do so because CyberQ and the world needs the pragmatic solution to building a diverse workforce of the future. I congratulate iQ4, the CWA - and its industry founders - for inventing the virtual-internship and apprenticeship models and look forward to supporting the challenge to develop the next-generation of diverse talent that we will need in the years to come.”

Chris Woods, founder and CEO, CyberQ Group USA and UK

Strategic Relationships & Partnership Quotes

“Apprenticeships are an effective way for veterans to take advantage of and help build their skillset and resume towards employment opportunities.”

Stephen Canonico First Sergeant, US Army (Retired), Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Assistant Director, Retired Soldiers, Veterans and Army Civilians Affairs

“America needs to find a new way, a modern way, to fill these open cybersecurity jobs and quickly! I believe that high-quality registered apprenticeships are the solution. We need an ‘Apprenticeship Revolution.’ Once this happens, we will get a wave of employers who are open for apprenticeships, and we will start to see the transformation of the workforce that is ready for the 4th Industrial Revolution. iQ4 is one of those revolutionaries making a change within the cybersecurity workforce, through its commitment to high-quality
workforce development and their virtual apprenticeship program. We are totally committed to supporting iQ4 to meet the goal of sponsorships and employers in order to train thousands of students and provide cybersecurity apprenticeships over the next three years.”
Paul Champion, CEO TranZed Apprenticeships

“The cybersecurity community has the typical employment conundrum: there aren’t enough experienced cybersecurity professionals to hire. However, how do cybersecurity professionals get experience if you don’t hire them? Cyber professionals are in short supply and hot demand. Competition to hire any seasoned cyber professional is fierce. Combine that with ever increasing salaries and small to mid-size business can’t compete with the salaries and bonuses that Fortune 500 companies can offer. Meanwhile, the need is still the same for protecting an organization’s most valued resource: their data. Training entry-level cyber analysts, such as students, is key to facilitate hiring students and injecting more cyber professionals into the community. Further, training cyber professionals is key for an organization to develop and retain their staff. An initiative which professionally develops a junior cybersecurity analyst/student and makes them more desirable for hiring will only benefit the cybersecurity community at large.”
John Ramsey, Chief Information Security Officer, National Student Clearinghouse

“In my career-long effort to promote equitable economic growth, the iQ4 platform and team have stood out for their ability to offer a truly transformative workforce development solution. A systemic solution that connects all parts of the ecosystem and easy plug-and-play for academia and the private sector alike. I am taken by industry’s response to the Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge and look forward to growing this movement at home in the U.S. and globally, starting with my native Greece. Unequal access to quality jobs and the skills gap are long-standing societal challenges grossly exacerbated today by the rapid evolution of technology. It’s time to re-imagine workforce development.”
Eleni Delimpaltadaki, Independent Board Director of iQ4, Managing Partner at Equivico by NCRC, and a former economic development director at the City of New York.

“iQ4 is a game-changer. Students work in teams, focusing on real-world case studies, guided and supported by cybersecurity experts. This mentor model is unique in the industry. iQ4 is addressing the tremendous shortage of proven talent in the cybersecurity world. iQ4 creates a bridge between education and industry. I feel that the iQ4 mentorship model is the future of work, and the future of education, providing students a career alternative path, and addressing the talent shortage needs of corporations around the world.”
Thomas Capone CEO, NYDLA

“Collaborative efforts like this challenge - bridging the private, public and educational sectors - offer the opportunity to accelerate and scale the shared understanding of the magnitude of the cyber threats we face and the means to combat them. Near and long-term solutions will require mutual trust and collaboration by all stakeholders. History rightfully delivers a harsh judgment for when we fail to protect the public against known and consequential harm—when the complexity of our risks is not reconciled with the simplicity of shareable solutions.”
David N. Lawrence, Founder, the Risk Assistance Network + Exchange and John A. Squires, Chair of IP and Emerging Company Practice, Dilworth Paxson, LLP, co-authors, It's the CyberCrime and It's Sponsors (Not My Cyber-Security), Stupid, Journal of Law and Cyber Warfare (2017)

About iQ4
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.

For more information on iQ4’s Virtual Apprenticeship Challenge, please visit www.iq4.com
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Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.