



Tech Teams Keep Health Care Industry Going as Field Continues to Grow

BY MIKE MAKSYMOW

TECHNOLOGY IN THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY is more important than ever.

The breadth and depth of information technology is vast, especially in a growing health care system like Beebe Healthcare. The Lewes-based health care nonprofit has grown significantly throughout Sussex County in recent years – as has the need for a robust information services and technology department.

From coding, security, project implementation or building out site locations, there is something for anyone looking to enter the IT field and a need for entry-level workers looking to start a career.

When many look at a hospital, they immediately think of the great doctors and nurses that work hard every day to heal and save lives. What people do not usually associate with a hospital are the support teams, like IT, that work hard behind the scenes to ensure that these doctors and nurses can do their jobs and provide a safe environment of care.

Not all of these positions deal with just security. IT is an important part of enhancing patient experience in this high-tech world.

Community partnerships

Understanding the evolving platform of technology in the health care industry, Beebe quickly realized they needed a new way to fill IT jobs. Two programs were then developed to build the IT talent pipeline and support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) jobs in Sussex County.

One is a high school student volunteer program that allows those who have the aptitude and interest in IT to participate in a variety of tasks – providing them general, but relevant workplace experience, independently and/or collaboratively. Student volunteers are engaged through Cape Henlopen High School and other student-based organizations in Sussex County.

The other is a work-based learning partnership between Beebe and Delaware Technical Community College's Owens Campus that has flourished in the years since. The internship program is an exceptional experience for top performing students, providing meaningful and practical work

related to the student's field of study while being more structured than the student volunteer program.

"Collaborations like the one with Beebe and Del Tech are a vital part of leading Delaware toward 21st century education practices," explains Bryan Horsey, director of the Office of Work-Based Learning. "Local workforce development opportunities simultaneously advance the competitiveness and career readiness of our students while helping both the employer and student – it's a win-win."

The 16-week program directly aligns with the Delaware Tech Information Technology and Networking (ITN) Associate Degree Program where the student's academic track (networking, security, programming, etc.) is matched with the appropriate Beebe IT's functional team. For example, a student enrolled in the ITN Security track will be assigned to Beebe's IT Security team, who will introduce the student to specific activities and tasks related to their course concepts, mentoring them along the way.

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Dr. Rick Kravelich, collegewide information technology and networking academic director at Delaware Tech, remarks, "We are fortunate to have Mike and his team in our students' corner. Time and time again, they have shown interest in helping our students to truly understand what it takes to be an information technology professional. Their thoughtful guidance, teaching, and coaching has not only made our interns better; it's made our program better on the whole. We're grateful for their partnership."

During the first two weeks of the program, students work with other functional teams to provide the exposure to other areas within an IT department.

Getting work experience to augment the formal classroom education is one key to landing a good job after graduation, but another important factor is building a peer network. Students learn that whether it's their first job, or the job after that, the opportunity will likely come from someone you know.

While working as a volunteer or intern, get to know the team members, ask for a reference, build your network, and keep in touch.

Planning for the future during a pandemic

COVID-19 has changed how Beebe conducts some aspects of business, such as transitioning some of our patient visits to telemedicine. Although this allowed patients to see their physicians safely from their own homes, increased use and adoption will allow Beebe to reach patients in rural areas or those with limited to no means of transportation.

Advanced technologies, many of which Beebe uses today, such as surgical robots and 3D imaging, will continue to evolve with the incorporation of artificial intelligence and virtual reality. Beebe recently developed a mobile app for COVID-19 screening and scheduled testing for the community. It was a huge technology win for an independent, nonprofit health system like Beebe.

With such advancements of technology comes one of the most basic and fundamental challenges in health care – providing single instances of patient records that can be updated in real time. They must be able to share securely as well as with any care provider at any time with high data integrity.

These examples prove that as the industry continues to grow, health care and STEM related jobs continue to intertwine. Over the next decade, there will likely be even more as technology continues to advance. ■



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