# Cybersecurity Workforce in the Age of AI

**Whatcom Community College Town Hall | March 13, 2026 | Kip Boyle, Founder & CISO, Cyber Risk Opportunities**

## Where We Are Now

- The workforce question has shifted from “we need more people” to “what skills do people need, and how do we build them?”
- AI is automating tasks that junior analysts used to learn on – log review, alert triage, report drafting. This changes what “entry level” means.
- Community colleges can move faster than universities, stay closer to employers, and serve working adults already in IT.

## Micro Credentials That Matter

- Hiring managers care about what you can **do**, not how many credentials you hold. Portfolio projects and lab work beat multiple-choice exams.
- The best micro credentials are **stackable** – focused areas like cloud security, incident response, or GRC that combine into a full skill set over time.
- Ideal for career changers and IT professionals who need targeted upskilling, not a full degree.
- If a credential does not require you to build, configure, analyze, or write something, it will not set you apart.

## How Community Colleges Fill the Gap

- **The “missing middle”:** Plenty of entry-level certs and advanced degrees exist. What is scarce is practical training for IT workers moving into cybersecurity.
- **Advisory boards matter.** Active hiring managers who review curriculum each semester keep programs aligned with real employer needs.
- **Flexible delivery is required.** Evening, weekend, and hybrid formats serve working adults who need it most.
- **Rebuild the apprenticeship path.** BCG and Harvard research shows AI is collapsing junior roles that used to train beginners. Community colleges are the natural place to rebuild hands-on learning.

- **Weave AI literacy into every course** – not as a separate module, but as part of how students learn to work and think.

## What AI Changes for Cybersecurity Professionals

- AI automates the **production layer** (scanning, triaging, drafting). The **specification layer** is where jobs grow – defining requirements, judging risk, and verifying results.
- "Human skills" matter more: writing findings for executives, presenting risk-based recommendations, and structured reasoning.
- Students must learn to work **with** AI: prompting well, validating output, and catching errors. This is the new baseline.
- **Watch for thinking atrophy.** If students stop doing hard reasoning because AI does it faster, they lose the skills that make them valuable. Course design must keep them engaged.

## Advice for Students and Career Changers

- **Learn in public.** Build a GitHub portfolio, write about what you are learning, join capture-the-flag competitions.
- **Start in IT.** Cybersecurity is not entry-level. A strong IT foundation is the prerequisite, not a detour.
- **Network internally.** Your current employer may be your fastest path to a security role. Volunteer for security projects.
- **Don't chase certs blindly.** One focused credential plus real skills beats a stack of certificates with no hands-on experience.

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*The cybersecurity workforce will be built by institutions that stay close to employers, deliver flexible training for working adults, and teach people to think – not just pass tests. AI makes this more urgent, not less.*