



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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## VICTORIA

### CQL, GEMS, & SEAP ALUMNI

Computer engineering sophomore pursuing cybersecurity.

### WORDS OF ADVICE

The academic and professional experiences are amazing but it's those other intangible ways you grow that make the AEOP programs so invaluable. I appreciate all of my GEMS, SEAP and CQL mentors for dedicating their time to my personal and professional growth.

*Through AEOP I learned the basics of electronics, enjoying hands-on, mentor-guided practice that allowed me to develop a deeper and even broader understanding of the computer sciences.*

### BEST THINGS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

I have participated in several AEOP programs. As a result I have experienced a wide array of professional and academic STEM opportunities. Through GEMS I interned in a laboratory and worked in an office. SEAP and CQL introduced me to the careers of DoD engineers. Those experiences introduced me to 3D printing, dissecting a battery and even rocket motor propulsion, and encouraged my enthusiasm to work with new technology and be more comfortable working as a member of a team. The challenges I encountered during my internships prepared me for my engineering courses in college. To top it all off, I received some of the most encouraging mentorship while working at the AMRDEC WDI Propulsion Laboratory with Dr. Patrick Taylor. His guidance proved invaluable as I developed the confidence and endurance to pursue a career in cybersecurity.

### AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAM

In elementary school, I already had a passion for computer engineering but it was more focused on software. Through AEOP I learned the basics of electronics, enjoying hands-on, mentor-guided practice that allowed me to develop a deeper and even broader understanding of the computer sciences.

GEMS, SEAP and CQL also pulled me out of my comfort zone. Before AEOP, I feared public speaking, but my mentors helped me prepare for presentations, something I know is critical to success in the field. Engineering not only requires technical knowledge but also skills to effectively communicate research and ideas to others. AEOP taught me that just because you fear something that does not mean you cannot successfully accomplish it.

### HOW PARTICIPATING IN AEOP INSPIRED YOU TO ADVANCE IN STEM

My experiences in the AEOP programs opened many doors. I hope to secure a career with the DoD. Having participated in the programs, I now have a deep network and demonstrated passion to pursue this goal. I met engineers who specialize in cybersecurity, which is a growing, demanding field. As a result, I became interested in one of the 21st century's Grand Challenges for Engineering — securing cyberspace. AEOP inspired me to continue this involvement in college by joining associations like IEEE, ISSA and SWE. As an added bonus from participating in AEOP, my CQL research project was published for my honors thesis.