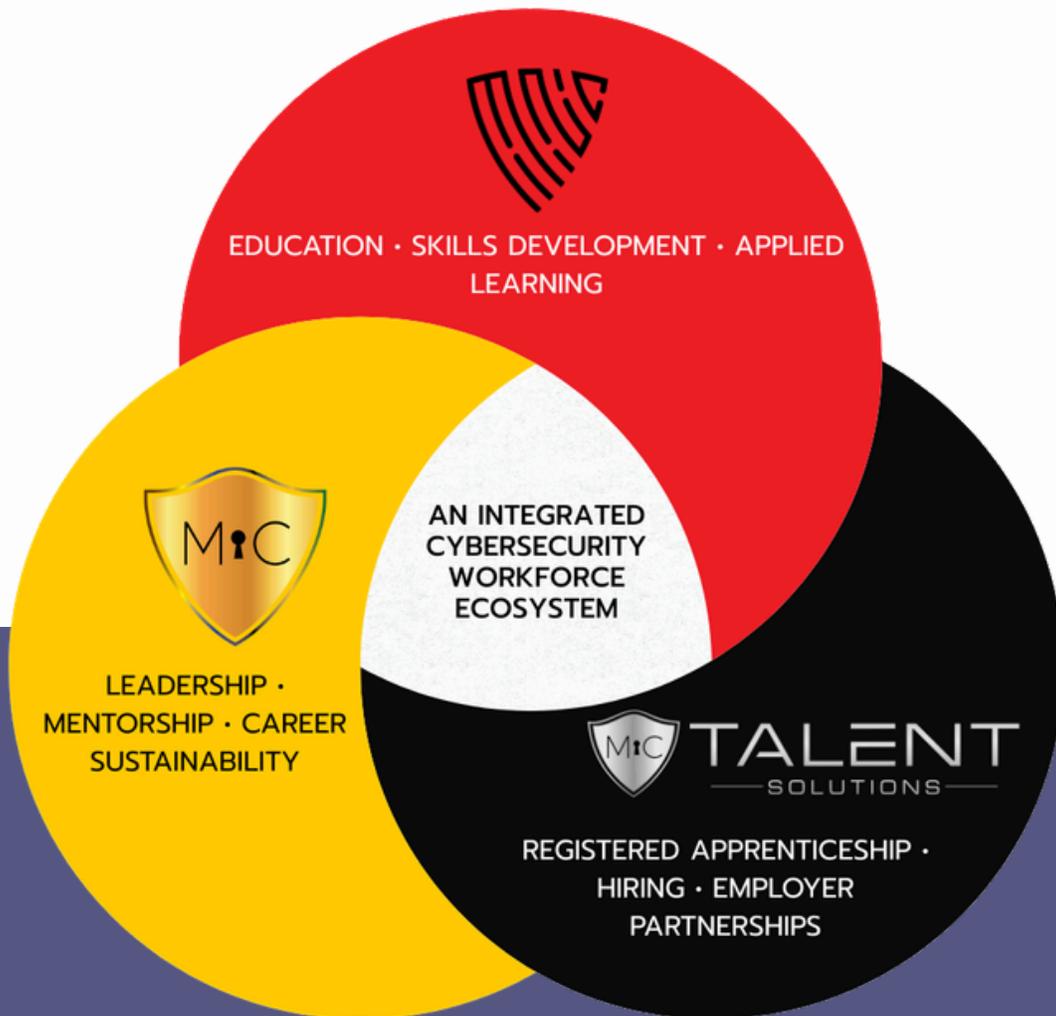




NEWSLETTER

MIC NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026



**ANNOUNCING THE
MNC CYBERSECURITY
WORKFORCE HUB**



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

ALEJANDRO IBANEZ



ALEJANDRO IBANEZ

Tell us about yourself.

My career didn't start in tech. It started in event planning, coordinating chaos for a living and learning how to keep a calm face while everything behind the scenes was on fire. That skillset ended up translating perfectly into IT and eventually security. I made the jump into tech through helpdesk work and kept pushing from there: infrastructure, compliance, and eventually full security programs. Along the way, I finished grad school, joined MiC, and found a community that actually gets it. Currently, I'm focused on building toward a CISO role and figuring out how to do that without burning out in the process. Outside of work, you can find me trying new teas from different regions, meal prepping, or pretending I have time to read all the books on my nightstand. I'm also a fitness "tryer", which means I'll try any sport at least once, so catch me around town doing muay thai, running, javelin, and etc. I'm excited about what's next.

What initially sparked your interest in cybersecurity? Was there a specific moment or influence that led you to this field?

There wasn't a single lightning bolt moment. It was more of a slow realization that the thing I loved doing, helping people, could show up in unexpected places. At WWU, I was head of the Multicultural Center, and that role taught me what it meant to create space where people felt safe, supported, and seen. I learned how to listen, how to advocate, and how to build systems that actually served the community instead of just existing on paper. When I moved into tech, I kept carrying that with me. I started noticing that security wasn't really about firewalls and compliance checklists. It was about trust. It was about protecting people. The same instincts I built at the Multicultural Center, understanding what people need, anticipating where things could go wrong, advocating for better systems, those translated directly into security work. Once I made that connection, I was all in. Cybersecurity



became another way to do the work I'd always cared about: making sure people are protected and that the systems around them actually work.

Not many know this but you have a background as an event planner. What is the #1 skill from managing "event chaos" that makes you a better cybersecurity professional today?

Triage, without question. When you're running an event and the venue loses power, the keynote speaker is stuck in traffic, and a vendor just no-showed, you learn fast that panic doesn't fix anything. You assess, prioritize, and move. But here's the other part: the guest should never feel the hiccup. The stage looks flawless, the drinks are flowing, everyone's smiling, and meanwhile the back of house is on fire and you're solving three problems at once through a headset. That's the job. You absorb the chaos so the people you're serving don't have to. Cybersecurity is the same game with higher stakes. Alerts firing, stakeholders panicking, inboxes blowing up. The skill is knowing what actually matters right now versus what just feels urgent, and handling it without making everyone around you feel the heat. Event planning taught me that staying calm under chaos isn't something you're born with. It's something you build. And honestly, some of the folks on my old planning roster would run a SOC better than some security leaders I've seen. I said what I said.

As the new host of the "Aspirers" program (recently renamed Leading with a Capital A), what is your main goal for the sessions

you'll be hosting this year?

I want it to feel like we're actually talking, not performing. The goal is to create space where people can be honest about where they are, what they're struggling with, and what they're working toward. No corporate fluff, no pretending we have it all figured out. But I also want people to walk away excited. Cybersecurity is fun. I need people to hear that. It's not all hoodies in dark rooms staring at code. It's problem solving, it's building trust, it's protecting people. And here's the thing: almost every job is cyber now whether you realize it or not. GRC, IT, operations, finance, HR, if you're touching data or systems, you're part of the security conversation. I want these sessions to help people see that there's a place for them in this field, even if their path looks nothing like the "traditional" route. Mine sure didn't. I came from event planning and the Multicultural Center. I know what it's like to look at an industry and wonder if there's room for someone like you. There is. Part of my job as host is to make sure people feel that. Whether you're live on Fridays at 5 PM or catching the replay on a midnight flight home like I did last year, I want these sessions to reach you and remind you that this field has space for your story too.

You've mentioned you are "manifesting" a CISO role. What does that leadership goal mean to you, and how are you preparing for it?

CISO isn't just a title to me. It's about being in a position to shape how an organization thinks about security, risk, and the people doing the work. I've seen too many programs that protect



the business on paper but burn out the team in practice. I want to build something different. To get there, I'm focused on three areas: health (mental and physical, because you can't lead running on empty), skills (managerial, technical, and social), and financial stability (because investing in yourself looks different at every stage, whether that's education, coaching, or just building a foundation that gives you options). I'm also paying attention to leaders I admire and building my own remix of what good leadership looks like. MiC has been huge in helping me think longer term instead of just year to year.

How important has the MiC community (mentors, peers, staff) been in supporting your journey so far?

I can't overstate it. MiC gave me something I didn't even know I was missing: a global community of people who get it. Before MiC, I thought breaking into security meant you had to follow the majority path. Go to Defcon, go to Blackhat, know the right people in the right rooms. And those spaces are great, but they weren't where I found my people. MiC connected me to folks from all over the world who came into this field through different doors, just like me. What I value most is that I came out of this program with people I can see in any room, any conference, any Slack channel, and say "hey, can I borrow you for five?" That's not networking. That's community. It's knowing someone has your back when you're stuck, when you're doubting yourself, or when you just need someone to think through a problem with. The frameworks and the content were valuable, but the relationships? Those are what stay with you.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to someone who feels like they are just "reacting" to their career rather than planning it?

Block one hour. Just one. Sit down and ask yourself what you actually want this year and what you'd regret not going after. Pick one goal and three categories that support it. That's it. You're not overhauling your life overnight. You're laying the first brick. Most people stay stuck in reactive mode because they never give themselves permission to plan. The system builds itself once you start. And here's the thing no one tells you: every new level in life is going to demand a different version of you. You're not going to be ready for that version today, and that's fine. The check-ins and the planning aren't about perfection. They're about making micro adjustments so you're building toward that next version of yourself, one day at a time. Start with the brick. The house comes later.

Any fun facts, favorite books, or new "manifestations" you'd like to share with our readers?

I'm leaning back into becoming a global traveler. There's something about being in a new place that resets your brain and reminds you how big the world is outside of your inbox. My recommendation to readers? Get a passport. And if travel isn't accessible right now, start with your own city. Be a tourist where you live. You'd be surprised what you've been walking past. I'm also big on supporting the arts. Museums, live shows, local galleries. It feeds a different part of your brain and honestly makes you a more interesting person to talk to. Book I keep coming back to: "The First 90 Days" by Michael Watkins. Every reread hits different depending on where I am in my career. And my biggest ongoing manifestation? Staying in this field for the long game without losing myself in the process. 2026 is the year I lay the bricks for that.



A NONLINEAR PATH IS STILL YOURS TO DEFINE

BY SIARRA GUILLORY

I never imagined I'd end up in cybersecurity. My journey in tech started with curiosity—a fascination with how things work, a love for problem-solving. My path certainly has been unique.

I got my start in tech working for contracts in DoD, learning the ropes of coding, UX, and digital strategy. Each project taught me something new—not just about technology, but about resilience, adaptability, and the power of asking questions.

Fast forward a few years, and I found myself stepping into cybersecurity. It wasn't a straight path—it was messy, exciting, and full of challenges that pushed me to grow faster than I thought possible or was ready for.

The constant learning, the thrill of protecting systems, and the knowledge that the work I do matters in a very real, tangible way.

Cybersecurity isn't just about code or firewalls—it's about thinking critically, anticipating problems before they happen, and building systems that keep people safe. And that's what keeps me inspired, even on the harder days.

For anyone wondering if they can pivot into a new field, or if they're "ready" for a bigger challenge—know this: curiosity, grit, and willingness to learn will take you further than you think. The tech world is big enough for everyone, no matter what your journey looks like.

Thanks for reading, and remember—your path might be nonlinear, but it's yours to define.





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