

Long-Term Intern Turned CBC Engineer

By Kiara Boone



Simeon Sykes, the Center's newest test and evaluation engineer, is supporting the mask fit study and the JPEO wearables program. (U.S. Army photo by Ellie White)

colleges and recruits talented students for the Center's summer internship program. Once students are selected for the program, they receive a mentor who is their acting supervisor for the duration of the internship. Janet Betters, a CBC employee who is matrixed to JPEO was Sykes's mentor.

Vickers recruited Sykes from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University in 2020 for the Department of Defense Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Servicing Institutions summer internship program to work at DEVCOM CBC. After two and a half years as an intern, he was offered full-time employment with the Center in 2022.

Sykes graduated with high honors from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University in the spring of 2022 with a major in electrical engineering, concentrating in nuclear power. He officially started working for CBC in November.

Around the time Sykes began his internship at CBC, the nation experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, so he worked his entire internship virtually for two years.

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD -- The U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC) hosts students from various colleges for summer internships every year. This year, the Center had the opportunity to extend full-time employment to a long-term intern, Simeon Sykes.

Each year, Eugene L. Vickers, Sr., the diversity, equity and inclusion officer at DEVCOM CBC, engages with many

“Completing a virtual internship was challenging since I couldn’t connect with my colleagues in person,” said Sykes. “However, it provided me the opportunity to have a more focused approach in learning my job duties”

After completing his original summer internship, Sykes was selected for the Army Educational Outreach Program Apprenticeship program and continued his internship experience with CBC until he finished college in May.

Throughout Sykes’ time as an intern, he worked closely with scientists at CBC analyzing data. He also supported the Center’s internally funded machine learning and artificial intelligence effort STEWARD, short for Software Tools and Educating the Workforce to use Artificial Intelligence for Research and Development.



Simeon Sykes and his mentor Janet Betteres, program manager for the wearables program. (U.S. Army Photo by Ellie White)

The internship ended in August and his mentor, Betteres, was pleased with his work and wanted to find a program that would help her bring Sykes on as a government employee.

One of the programs she came across was called “Rebuild the Bench.” CBC recognizes that a significant number of employees have left due to the pandemic and retirement. The organization also understands that there is a shortage of young

technical talent. The purpose of the initiative, “Rebuild the Bench,” is to close that generation gap and rebuild the workforce.

“It’s up to the mentors to engage with students. If you take the time and get to know them, you can really help create a future for the Center,” said Betteres.

Sykes now works full-time for the Center as a test and evaluation engineer. He still supports the wearables program and is also involved in a mask fit study to determine if physiological data from a wearable device can identify if an individual is wearing a respirator properly.



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“The work I have completed at the CBC has been very meaningful, it’s nice to see the projects come together,” said Sykes. “I look forward to new challenges as we progress into the future.”

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For more information about the DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center, visit <https://cbc.DEVCOM.army.mil>

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