

Lydia Robb
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Professor Duvall

Tour of ODU Data Center

BLUF:

Today, in class, we experienced a guided tour of Old Dominion University's data center, conducted by Mr. John Pratt, Executive Director for Research and Cloud Computing. The visit provided valuable insight into the university's technology infrastructure, operations, and disaster recovery strategies that support research and cloud services.

Environmental Control and System Cooling

One of the most striking features of the data center was its cooling system. The facility uses three large air conditioning units that circulate cool air beneath the raised tiled floors. This setup helps manage the intense heat produced by the servers and ensures consistent performance and equipment longevity. I found it fascinating how something as seemingly simple as airflow management is crucial to the stability of such an advanced computing environment.

Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity

Mr. Pratt discussed the existence of a disaster recovery center located in Suffolk. This offsite facility serves as a backup location to restore critical operations in case of a major outage or disaster at the primary data center. Learning about this strategy demonstrated how seriously the university takes data protection and operational resilience. It also underscored the importance of planning for worst-case scenarios. This is a principle that applies across all areas of information technology and cybersecurity.

Foundational Skills for Technology Careers

Another key point from the tour was Mr. Pratt's emphasis on the value of understanding programming languages like Python, cloud computing platforms, and operating systems. These foundational skills are essential for anyone pursuing a career in IT or cybersecurity. He spoke to what he believed to be the top three most important genres of knowledge in order to get started in cybersecurity. His advice reinforced the importance of continuous learning and versatility in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Conclusion:

Overall, the ODU data center tour was an eye-opening experience that deepened my understanding of the infrastructure and expertise required to maintain high-level computing environments. I especially appreciated Mr. Pratt's insights into both the technical and strategic

aspects of managing research and cloud systems. This experience strengthened my interest in pursuing a future in cybersecurity and inspired me to further develop the technical skills necessary to succeed in this field.