

# Telecommunications Systems Management Alumni Spotlight

**Name:** Sarah (Kennedy) Nance

**MSU Degree:** Telecommunications Systems Management  
(Minor: Occupational Safety and Health)

**Home Town:** Lexington, KY

**Current Town:** Nashville, TN

**Current Job:** Security Vulnerability Engineer at HCA



## **Current Job Description:**

I currently implement and monitor in depth threat and vulnerability management solutions for HCA. I am responsible for ensuring that security best practices, policies, standards, and guidance are being followed across the enterprise. My team manages some really cool vulnerability scanning tools and metric reporting tools. I am new to my job role so I am still in the process of learning what I'll be working on.

## **Previous Jobs held (since graduation):**

Caterpillar Financial – IS Analyst I

- Information Security Officer
- General Application Support and IBM Enterprise Content Manager Administrator

## **Family & Personal:**

When I'm not at work and have vacation days, I love to travel. My most recent adventure was to Moscow, Russia and this December Jacob and I are going to the Galapagos Islands. I also enjoy reading, hiking, indoor rock climbing, video games (right now, I'm playing Destiny for PS4), drawing/painting, and learning about photography.

I am married to Jacob Nance, also a TSM alum. We currently live in Nashville, TN and with my very old dog named Daisy. My parents, Dan and Beth, live in Lexington, KY. My sister, Rachel, is currently in med school at University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Miami, FL. My brother, Richard, is a general manager for Natural Alternatives for Health in Ft. Collins, CO.

## **TSM Q & A:**

### **What did you do for your internship and how did it benefit you?**

I helped with TSM Cyber Cave for one summer and worked at the CTSM office assisting with research during the school year. I believe that teaching at Cyber Cave made me aware of how important effective user education is, especially for people wanting to go into the IT field. Some of the students that attended Cyber Cave believed that IT was exactly what was on TV shows and this is a misconception that continues with people in the workplace as well.

My time spent working in the CTSM office helped me learn many skills, but the one I am most grateful for, is how to do research effectively and quickly under extreme deadlines. It's a very important skill to have in information security, as a major part of my job is researching new vulnerabilities while still continuing to work on my projects.

### **Since graduation, what is the most exciting thing you have been able to experience in your work?**

When I was at MSU, I always wanted to design a process around user education and I never really had the chance, real world knowledge, or self-motivation needed to come up with a complete solution. When I

completed my master's degree we had an open topic capstone paper and I finally understood my process for user awareness training. I decided to submit my capstone paper to Kaspersky Academy's Cybersecurity Conference. I was selected to present my work at the America's Round in Washington D.C. and I placed so was invited to present in Stockholm Sweden at the "CyberSecurity for the Next Generation" conference. I now use my method for educating users every chance I get, be it at work or with friends and family.

**What class(es) were the most beneficial to your career so far?**

Dr. Bowman's policy class and Wes Spencer's security lab classes. I work with policies and procedures every day and I don't think I would have felt prepared for this work without Dr. Bowman's class.

Wes's classes taught me how to problem solve IT issues and it is incredibly important to have this skill in the professional IT world. I truly believe that TSM students are the best IT problem solvers. Wes Spencer, Marcia Combs, and James Weatherly taught us the OSI model and Wes forced us to use it as an outline for troubleshooting problems in the lab. I think without this experience I wouldn't be very good at my job. I have seen non-TSM co-workers attempt to work through IT problems and it's typically a panicked experience; TSM alumni on the other hand are calm, collected, and have a process to follow.

**What activities outside your classwork were most valuable to your career?**

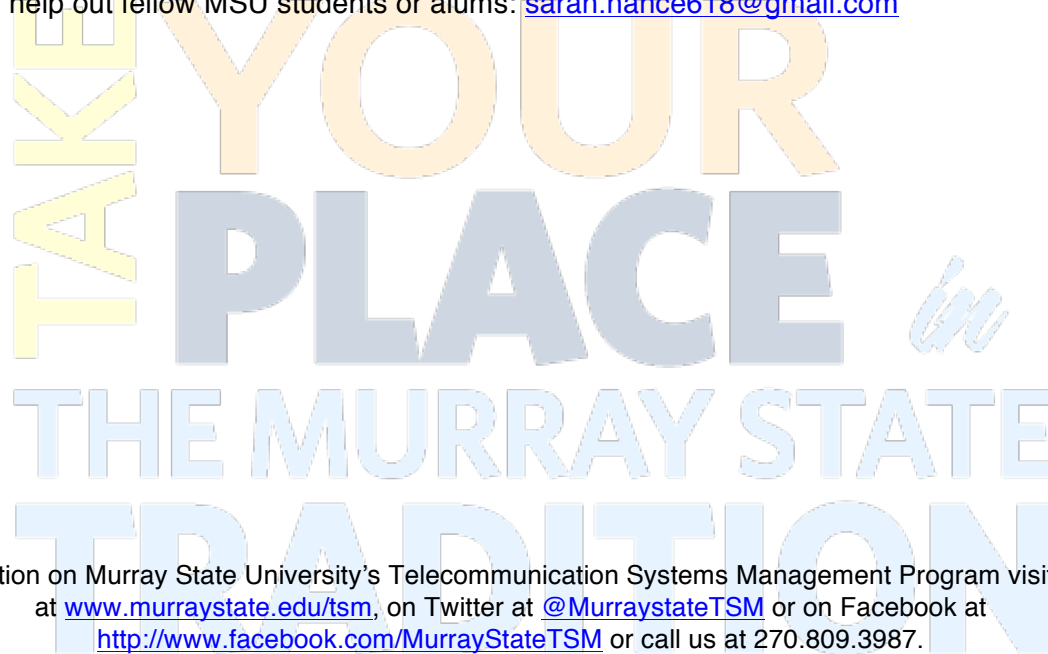
ATSM was certainly one of my favorite activities and I think it helped me connect with my fellow students outside of the classroom. We were able to vent our frustrations with classes, teachers, and course work and feel better about the shared experiences. I cherish the memories from the ATSM meetings and cook outs, especially when we almost burned the building with the grill. :)

**What is one piece of advice that you would give to current or future TSM students?**

Take a real programming class! Learn a programming language before you graduate. Even if you don't plan on programming, you will be able to understand programming logic which is a major advantage in the professional world. Don't miss the opportunity to learn while you are in school and have teachers that are subject matter experts.

An extra piece of advice: learn to ask questions effectively. I remember when Wes wouldn't answer your questions unless you showed him you understood what piece of information you were missing. This technique for question asking saves so much time in professional conversation.

If you ever want help with anything or need to bounce an idea off of someone, feel free to contact me. I'm always willing to help out fellow MSU students or alums: [sarah.nance618@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nance618@gmail.com)



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