MU designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research

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COLUMBIA, Mo. – The National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security have recognized the University of Missouri as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research. The distinction is designated through June 2024.

“This designation indicates that, once again, Missouri’s flagship institution is on the forefront in critical areas that affect our collective safety and future,” MU Chancellor Alexander N. Cartwright said. “I am so proud of the hard work of all of our tremendous faculty, staff and students who made this possible.”

The NSA and the Department of Homeland Security jointly sponsor the National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense program. The goal of the program is to reduce vulnerability in America’s national information infrastructure by promoting higher education and research in cyber defense and producing professionals with cyber defense expertise.

“A highly skilled cybersecurity workforce is a strategic national security advantage,” said Rory Smith, National Security Agency program director for the National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research. “The United States Government will continue to invest in and enhance programs that build the domestic talent pipeline, from primary through postsecondary education.”

Rohit Chadha, an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science in MU’s College of Engineering, was instrumental in the university’s distinction. Among his research interests are formal engineering methods for computer security. He also has experience working with software tools for verifying randomized security protocols and computing information leakage in programs.

“This distinction is a recognition of sustained excellence in cutting-edge research, education, and outreach demonstrated by our faculty and students in the vital field of cybersecurity,” Chadha said. “The College of Engineering and the University of Missouri have identified cybersecurity as a strategic area to invest resources, given the national importance of the field.”

In addition to Chadha, Prasad Calyam, associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science in the MU College of Engineering, and William Harrison, former associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science, have both made invaluable contributions to the development of cybersecurity research and curriculum at MU, and mentored students in this field. Harrison has worked closely with government agencies on research directed toward the national interest in cybersecurity, including the NSA, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and US Naval Research Laboratory.

Calyam’s research interests include the areas of cyber security for applications in healthcare, education and manufacturing. He has organized and led student teams that have won regional and national level cyber challenges. Calyam has also been active in community and industrial outreach, including organizing summer camps for high school students and workshops for industry partners.
Chadha, Calyam and Harrison established the Cyber Security Initiative at Mizzou, which includes faculty from the College of Engineering, College of Arts and Science, Trulaske College of Business and School of Law.

“This is a testament to the excellence of our faculty and our research strength in the area of cybersecurity,” said Mark McIntosh, vice president of Research and Economic Development for the UM System, and vice chancellor of Research and Economic Development at MU. “Their efforts have had a tremendous impact in this increasingly important and ever-changing field.”

The National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education will be hosting a conference in Phoenix, AZ in November, where Chadha will be recognized on behalf of MU.

MU joins Missouri University of Science and Technology as the only universities in the state to be designated as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research. University of Missouri-St. Louis is designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education.

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