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UCI Hopes Campus Collaboration Leads To Cybersecurity Institute

TECHNOLOGY: Computer science, law, engineering schools drive effort

University of California-Irvine is in the early stages of establishing a cybersecurity research institute that will become the first of its kind in the state with a national scope and profile.

A trio of deans— Hal Stern of the Bren School of Information & Computer Sciences; the Samueli School of Engineering's Gregory Washington; and UCI School of Law's Erwin Chemerinsky— are leading the effort and seeking input from counterparts at the School of Social Sciences and the School of Social Ecology.

Representatives from those departments, along with members of the engineering school's Leadership Council and law enforcement, were expected to be among the 60 to 70 invited guests scheduled to participate in the institute's inaugural meeting that was slated for May 20 as the Business Journal went to press.

The institute is seeking partnerships with the technology, finance, communications, medical, insurance and real estate sectors, among others. It also hopes to forge working relationships with national, regional and local law enforcement agencies.

The Department of Homeland Security has taken part in early discussions about developing the institute, which was first suggested about a year ago, according to Stern.

"This is intended to address both industry needs but also government and law enforcement needs and nonprofits," he said. "Cybersecurity has emerged as an enormous threat posed to individuals and corporations."

The institute also could leverage expertise and technological advancements honed at the FBI's Regional Computer Forensic Lab in Orange, a 21,000-square-foot facility established in 2011 to serve seven counties in Southern California.

"We have connectivity in the intelligence community," Special Agent in Charge James Struyk said during a panel discussion last week on cybersecurity at OCTANE's annual Technology Investment Forum in Irvine. "A lot of these breaches are foreign-based."

Stern emphasized the early nature of the talks. He said the institute would likely aim to offer professional training to law enforcement agencies, as well as put on public policy seminars and symposiums. A master's or professional degree program could grow out of the effort, though no formal decisions have been made regarding the curriculum.

The interdisciplinary emphasis will provide a unique approach to combating one of the nation's most pressing challenges, according to Chemerinsky, a constitutional law expert who has argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"That's what makes this different and important," he said.

It appears that UCI has secured the necessary financial commitments to take the next steps in launching the initiative. The institute has identified an international cybersecurity expert to lead the program on a permanent basis and is nearing an agreement with an interim executive director to oversee formation efforts in the meantime, according to informed sources.

The university also has compiled a list of potential founding advisory board members who are considered national leaders in technology, privacy and civil liberties, academia, law enforcement, law and cybersecurity.

Privacy Awareness

The initiative comes amid mounting public concerns about privacy and heightened efforts in academia to prepare students and researchers to combat new digital threats, state-sanctioned espionage and corporate security breaches related to intellectual property and trade secrets.

The National Security Agency and the Homeland Security agency recently designated several schools as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education, including University of Delaware, University of Cincinnati's Information Technology School, University of Missouri— St. Louis, University of West Florida, and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Daytona Beach Campus.

The national privacy debate gained prominence following the December terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, where 14 people were killed and 22 seriously injured in a mass shooting and attempted bombing by Syed Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, who lived together in Redlands.

Apple Inc. for months refused to help the FBI unlock the iPhone 5C smartphone used by Farook, prompting legal and privacy rights challenges across the country.

The FBI hacked into the phone in late March, without Apple's help, reportedly paying a security contractor more than \$1 million to do so.



"We're trying to engage with a variety of groups that are concerned with private security," Stern said.

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