

# IUP SECURES FUNDING FOR FULL-TUITION SCHOLARSHIP FOR CYBERSECURITY DOCTORAL STUDENT

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania has received \$203,130 from the National Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) Program that is managed by the National Security Agency to support a qualified student seeking a doctoral degree (PhD) in cybersecurity.

Brad Messner, from New Stanton, a current doctoral student at IUP in the Business PhD program, has been selected by the project team as the successful applicant for the pilot program.

The project team is Waleed Farag, director of IUP's Institute for Cybersecurity, who authored the grant proposal; his co-authors are professor of management Prashanth Bharadwaj and professor of economics David Yerger from the Eberly College of Business.



The team selected Messner for this pilot program following a competitive application process. Messner earned his MBA with a concentration in information systems from IUP in 2015. As the successful applicant, Messner will receive full cost of tuition and fees, funding for books, a stipend for living expenses for two years of study, and funds to attend one cyber-related conference and complete a cyber-related certificate.

The initiative, spanning September 2022 through September 2024, is designed to address the national shortage of qualified cybersecurity instructors at National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity colleges and universities, “to bridge the gap of qualified cybersecurity instructors at NCAE-C institutions,” Farag said.

IUP is one of the first institutions in the nation to receive the Center for Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD) designation by the National Security Agency, and has held this designation since 2002, one of only 16 universities in Pennsylvania to hold this designation.

IUP also offers a Ph.D. program in business, one of the only universities in Pennsylvania to offer this part-time program, designed for working professionals. Around 60 students are currently studying in this program.

“This initiative fits perfectly with IUP’s commitment to our doctoral mission, to research, and to strong teaching and mentoring,” Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research Hilliary Creely said. “Farag has a well-deserved reputation as a cybersecurity educator and researcher, and Drs. Bharadwaj and Yerger add great expertise in business teaching and research. It’s a very exciting opportunity for students interested in this field and is an important step in helping to address the critical shortage in the cybersecurity workforce,” she said. “Our congratulations go to the project team, and to Mr. Messner for being selected for this initiative,” she said.

Over the last five years, Farag has secured more than \$2 million through a Department of Defense program that has provided 37 full scholarships to students in IUP’s cybersecurity bachelor’s degree program. Part of the scholarship opportunity is a guaranteed position with the Department of Defense after graduation.

This fall, IUP has 11 students in the undergraduate scholarship program, the largest number to date; in fact, IUP students make up more than 7 percent of the number of new students nationally chosen for the program.



“We are confident that the combination of our quality curriculum, dedicated faculty, and support from the Institute for Cybersecurity, along with unique opportunities in cybersecurity and business that we offer to our students, will provide the education and support system needed for IUP students to become highly skilled cybersecurity professionals,” Farag said.

The project includes four implementation phases: promotion of the scholarship, candidate assessment and recommendation (which has been completed), student mentoring and monitoring, and program assessment.

In addition to mentoring and advising, the program requires the student to complete culminating coursework in the information specialization with Farag in addition to completing coursework with both Drs. Bharadwaj and Yerger.

This classroom relationship building, and mentoring, will be enhanced further throughout the dissertation process, Farag said. This pilot program places a strong emphasis on students converting their dissertation research into published academic journals to facilitate their placement in academia.

“The primary benefit to the NCAE-C community is the production of high quality, skillful graduates with PhD in cybersecurity who possess needed skills to be effective faculty members at various NCAE-C institutions,” Farag said. “The net result will be a greater pipeline of qualified cybersecurity professionals for both government and industry.”

“I am truly honored to have been selected as just one out of five participants in this initial program,” Messner said. “The NSA recognizes the need for talented and passionate university faculty to both teach future cybersecurity professionals as well as research upcoming trends, and I am proud to represent both IUP as well as western Pennsylvania nationally and globally with this award.”

In the last six years, IUP’s Institute for Cybersecurity, founded in 2005 to further encourage and promote cybersecurity at IUP and the surrounding community, has secured more than \$15 million in federal funding for IUP sponsored initiatives and programs.

This \$15 million in funding includes \$4.98 million from the Department of Defense for the first three years of a novel project to enhance Cybersecurity and STEM education in Pennsylvania (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), received in September, the largest single grant that has ever been awarded to IUP. The project period of performance is expected to be six years with a total funding of about \$11 million.

This \$15 million in funding also includes more than \$1 million in federal funding for IUP to enhance cybersecurity training for middle school students and teachers through the GenCyber program. More than 450 middle school students and teachers have completed GenCyber camps since 2016.

In 2017, a team of faculty at IUP led by Farag **received a grant of \$212,000 from the National Security Agency to enhance cybersecurity education in western Pennsylvania.** The team included faculty from English, Professional Studies in Education, and Political Science and students at IUP.

The project, completed in 2018, resulted in the development of a cohesive set of services to innovatively address known challenges facing cybersecurity education, incorporating an interdisciplinary approach in designing and implementing these services that will appeal to diverse cyber talent—including women and minorities—and serve a geographical area that is predominantly rural. This project was part of the Cybersecurity National Action Plan: Investment in Expansion of CAE-C (Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity) Education Program.

The IUP Institute for Cybersecurity also continues to organize and present an annual Cybersecurity Day and conducted a research study during 2020-2022 on **improving IoT (Internet of Things) systems security, funded through a \$250,000 grant from** the NCAE-C Cyber Curriculum and Research 2020 Program.

IUP began offering its Bachelor of Science in Computer Science/Cybersecurity Track (originally Information Assurance) and a minor in cybersecurity in 2002. This program combined core computer science and cybersecurity classes with a minor in criminology, creating a novel curriculum that helped students gain a broad understanding of the field and be work-ready.

The IUP cybersecurity program has about 120 students enrolled, and about 20 students annually complete the program and receive their bachelor’s degree in the Computer Science/Cybersecurity Track. IUP’s program also focuses on cybercrime detection, loss prevention, and how to collect the evidence to prosecute cybersecurity offenders.

IUP has a longstanding commitment to research on all levels and in all disciplines. In 2021, IUP was one of only two public universities in Pennsylvania and one of only 93 public universities in the United States selected for the “High Research Activity” designation by the Carnegie Classification of Higher Institutions of Higher Education.



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