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NSA Announces Four New Schools for Cyber Initiative

Four new schools have been selected for the National Security Agency's National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Operations Program, which was designed to cultivate more U.S. cyber professionals in an ever-changing global environment.

After a rigorous application and screening process, NSA selected the following schools to receive the CAE-Cyber Operations designation for the 2013-2014 academic year:

- Air Force Institute of Technology in Ohio;
- Auburn University, Alabama;
- Carnegie Mellon University, Pennsylvania; and
- Mississippi State University.

The program, which now has a total of eight schools, complements more than 100 existing centers of academic excellence (CAEs) in research and information assurance education - jointly overseen by NSA and the Department of Homeland Security.

An outgrowth of the President's National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education, the program identifies institutions that have a deeply technical, interdisciplinary curriculum centered on fields such as computer science and electrical engineering. The agency has long worked with schools to improve education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

In addition, the program offers some participants opportunities to apply their learning or enhance their teaching in summer seminars at NSA. Participating students and faculty members do not engage in actual U.S. government intelligence activities.

Steven LaFountain, an NSA technical leader, said legal and ethical issues in cybersecurity are a required and critical part of the effort.

"In the application process and in all of its work with selected schools, NSA emphasizes the importance of integrity and compliance," he said. "Cyber skills are increasingly important in national defense, but it's even more important to operate as responsible citizens in the use of such skills."

Topics covered are routinely taught in colleges and universities, but this initiative seamlessly integrates the material to help students better understand how they could someday help to defend the nation. Summer seminar participants must undergo background checks and obtain temporary, top-secret security clearances.

The schools chosen in 2012, the program's first year, were Dakota State University, South Dakota; the Naval Postgraduate School, California; Northeastern University, Massachusetts; and the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Like the agency's other CAEs, those in the cyber operations program are evaluated annually. Designations are for five years and schools across the country can compete to join each year.



Retired Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Burgess Jr., a former director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, now serves as Auburn University's Senior Counsel for National Security Programs, Cyber Programs, and Military Affairs. The CAE-Cyber Operations project has real merit, he said.

"Auburn has devoted significant resources and interdisciplinary rigor across campus to expand new cyber initiatives and extensive collaboration with external organizations," he said. "We are extremely pleased that NSA has recognized our efforts by selecting Auburn University" for the program. "It is important to the nation - and we want to be a part of the strategic way ahead and feel we can contribute to this national need."

Details about NSA's Centers of Academic Excellence are available online at www.nsa.gov/academia.

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