First Leidos Grants Awarded

The new UMD-Leidos Seed Grant Program is off and running. The program was launched this fall to help facilitate and incentivize collaborations between UMD researchers and experts at Leidos, a national security, health and engineering solutions company, and UMD researchers and experts at Leidos, a national security, health and engineering solutions company, formerly known as SAIC. The program is part of a broader initiative led by the MITRE Corporation to bring together key stakeholders from each campus, ranging from computer science and engineering to criminology, psychology, business and public policy, including at the Maryland Cybersecurity Center.

More than 50 faculty members are engaged in cutting-edge cybersecurity research across campus, ranging from computer science and engineering to criminology, psychology, business and public policy, including at the Maryland Cybersecurity Center.

“We are thrilled to continue to reach for new discoveries with our system, industry and government partners,” says UMD Vice President and Chief Research Officer Patrick O’Shea.

The new FFRC, sponsored by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), is the first to focus exclusively on cybersecurity to protect national information systems. The contract was awarded for five years, with an option to renew every five years up to 25 years and with funding expected to grow each year.

“We will look to solve cross-cutting and sector-specific challenges,” says Joseph Jala, who will serve in a leadership role in the new FFRC, partnering with MITRE. He holds a joint appointment in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the Institute for Advanced Computer Studies. “Every sector faces its own types of challenges and the new FFRC will bring together key stakeholders from each one to develop model cybersecurity examples and practice guides to address their technical cybersecurity challenges.”

In response to the increasing frequency and sophistication of cybersecurity attacks, which cost businesses $500 billion per year, the FFRC will focus on bringing together experts from industry, government and academia to provide cost-effective cybersecurity solutions based on commercially available technologies that can be easily scaled and adopted throughout the business sector.

The new FFRC will support the National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (NCCoE), which NIST, the state of Maryland, and Montgomery County, Md., established in 2012 to help businesses secure their data and digital infrastructure. Though the FFRC will be located in Rockville, Jala says UMD faculty and students will be involved in the center’s activities. He hopes to establish labs on campus to test prototypes developed at the center and to offer internship opportunities to students.

“We want to involve students not only from computer science or computer engineering, but also from business, psychology, public policy and criminology,” he says. “We want students from across campus to participate.”

UMD Research Hits the Road

The Division of Research and the Big Ten Committee on Institutional Cooperation hosted “Disaster Resilience: The Intersection of Research and Policy” at the Capitol Hill Visitor Center as part of the A. James Clark School of Engineering’s Impact Week.

From left: Robert H. Smith School of Business Dean Alexander Triantis; A. James Clark School of Engineering Dean Darryl Pines; Associate Vice President for Research Development Ken Garm; Vice President and Chief Research Officer Patrick O’Shea; and Department of Aerospace Engineering Chair Norman Wereley.

Whether it’s Target, the White House or JP Morgan Chase, organizations around the world face a constant barrage of cybersecurity threats that can compromise sensitive data, bring down networks and disrupt commerce and government. A new federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) led by the MITRE Corporation brings together researchers at the University of Maryland, College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who will work with other universities on the FFRC’s Academic Affiliates Council as well as key stakeholders from industry and government to tackle these challenges.

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Census Data Research Center Comes to UMD

U.S. Census Bureau data has long been part of the fabric of UMD research, but until recently certain U.S. census data could only be accessed by driving to agency headquarters in Suitland, Md., with a proposal and a $10,000-per-year fee. After analyzing data exclusively on census machines, data tables would have to be approved by the bureau and sent back to the researcher at a later date.

Things are changing for these data-seeking researchers. A new Census Research Data Center coming to the university will provide faculty and students with faster, easier and inexpensive access to valuable information.

“There’s a lot of advantages of having it here,” says center Director Michael Ball, senior associate dean for faculty and research at the Robert H. Smith School of Business. “We see this as a resource for the whole campus. We also potentially see an intellectual community growing around this kind of data and data analysis of this type.”

The new center at Maryland, one of 19 in the country, will be in Van Munching Hall. In addition to being a boon for faculty, Ball anticipates it helping graduate students who can’t afford to access the data under the old system. The center is supported by the Smith School, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences and the School of Public Health, as well as the Division of Research and the Office of the Provost.

Michael Ball