



August 2021

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THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Jim Jones

The CINA Center proudly supported three projects this year through the DHS Summer Research Team Program for Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). We once again had an abundance of strong proposals, and we selected teams from the University of North Texas, Jackson State University, and the New York City College of Technology. Despite the ongoing challenges of a pandemic lockdown, these student and faculty researchers made great progress on projects ranging from data and network analytics to academic program development.

Our MSI Week in-person program returned this month, after pausing last year due to the pandemic. CINA hosted students and faculty researchers on George Mason University's campus for a full agenda of workshops, talks, tours, and meetings with researchers and administrators. Our center had a chance to engage directly with some of the current and emerging talent at MSI schools, sharing the CINA and DHS missions and welcoming them to the community of scholars working on problems of national and global importance.

As I have watched our Summer Research Teams and MSI week participants over the years, I continue to be impressed with the wealth of talent and energy in MSI institutions across the country, and I am encouraged by their appetite for working on hard problems of interest to DHS and our community of stakeholders. These researchers are a valuable addition to CINA's academic network, providing skills, viewpoints, ideas, and solutions which serve to make us stronger, deeper, and more capable.

NEWS



Network Science Service Award

CINA partner Boleslaw Szymański received the NetSci Outstanding Service Award this month for his many service contributions to network science, including being a global strategic leader, fundraiser, and hands-on, on-the-ground institution builder. [Read more about the award.](#)

Meet the CINA Scholar Summer Interns

This summer, two CINA Scholars were selected for research internships with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Strategy, Policy and Plans (OSPP). Using only unclassified, open source data, George Mason University students, [Isaiah Hall](#) and [Jay Suarez](#) worked both independently and on a project team to examine cell phone data and privacy issues.



In partnership with CINA and OSPP, the CINA Scholars researched and developed a new policy framework to support use of location data for law enforcement purposes while stringently protecting privacy. OSPP supervisor, Jason Ackleson offered high praise stating “their enthusiasm, engagement, and most importantly, research-based findings helped our office build capacity in this rapidly evolving policy area.”

The summer project focus was to protect the community and its privacy rights. Both CINA Scholars grew from the collaborative experience, agreeing that the hardest part of the project was actually finding the specific data they needed--which was not easy to get from the public domain. And they were thankful for the DHS guidance they received to successfully meet the challenge

Plus, the CINA-sponsored DHS research experience taught the students how to collaborate within a team, how to mine opensource data and present those findings through discussions with the various components and the strategic policy team at DHS.



CINA Scholar, Jay

[Jay Suarez](#), a junior at George Mason University majoring in psychology, brought an interesting background to his CINA Scholar 2021 summer internship.

As early as high school, Jay Suarez had taken courses that revolved around criminal justice systems, even participating in internships with Fairfax County Police Department and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as part of the first ever

Suarez is a
psychology major from
George Mason
University

simulation experiment (SIMEX) which included law enforcement
and medical health professionals from across the nation.

“This CINA Scholar summer internship helped me better
understand how different DHS components work together,
especially in policy making, revealing the policy gaps to make sure we're doing everything we
can for the people,” Suarez explained.

[Learn more about Jay Suarez](#)

[Isaiah Hall](#) is a senior at George Mason University, majoring in
Criminology, Law and Society, with a minor in Intelligence
Analysis. Hall currently focuses his academic work on
surveillance and privacy in contemporary society, hate crimes,
criminal investigations, and intelligence analysis techniques. In
addition to scholarly pursuits, Hall also serves as a Police
Cadet Private First-Class at Mason's Fairfax Campus.

When asked to reflect on the CINA Scholar OSPP internship
experience, Hall said: “The experience was invaluable. It
confirmed my strong interest in all things related to intelligence
analysis. “I hope to one day be part of a team responsible for
detecting terrorist threats, whether it be federal or private
sector,” Hall added.



CINA Scholar, Isaiah Hall
is a Criminology Law and
Society major from
George Mason University

[Learn more about Isaiah Hall](#)

RESEARCH

Understanding Crime Hot Spots

A CINA research team has combined approximately 25 data
sources to illuminate dynamic patterns of criminal activity and
account for correlations between place and crime.

Criminal activity is not uniformly distributed, but is rather highly
concentrated in small areas, such as individual addresses, streets
or neighborhoods. Changes in these concentrated crime hot spots
can have a dramatic impact on city-level crime trends, so it is very important to understand
accounts for such changes over time.

[Marie Skubak Tillyer](#) (University of Texas San Antonio), [Rebecca Walter](#) (University of
Washington) and [Arthur Acolin](#) (University of Washington) are examining these diverse and
complementary datasets to gain a deeper understanding of crime hotspots and inform
strategies for economic development and crime reduction.



From the Science Committee

Learn more about the effectiveness of policing crime hot spots, watch the below interview with Criminologist and George Mason University professor and CINA Science Committee member, [David Weisburd](#).



DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

Gretchen Peters: "How Organized Crime Weaponized Social Media" - Wednesday, October 13

Tune in on **Wednesday, October 13** at 12:00 p.m. when [Gretchen Peters](#), Executive Director of The Center on Illicit Networks and Transnational Organized Crime who will speak about her organization's work on the way organized crime has weaponized social media. In-person attendance is on a first come first serve basis. You must register in advance to attend.

[Register Now](#)

Dr. Marie Tillyer: "Open Source Data and Predictive Modeling for High-Density Crime Areas" - Thursday, November 11 - Virtual Event

Join us on **Thursday, November 11** at 12:00 p.m. when [Marie Tillyer](#), Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at San Antonio discusses open

source data and predictive modeling to uncover the indicators of high-density crime areas. This event will be completely virtual.

[Register Now](#)

"Cryptocurrencies and Criminal Investigations: From Transaction to Seizure" with Diana Dolliver

Watch a recent Distinguished Speaker event with Diana Dolliver's as she covers the fundamentals of cryptocurrencies, transactions, and blockchain technologies, and how this form of currency can be used to facilitate criminal activity.

**CINA VIRTUAL
DISTINGUISHED
SPEAKER SERIES**

**MARCH 17
12 - 1:30 p.m.**



DIANA DOLLIVER
University of Alabama
FBI Cyber

"Cryptocurrencies and Criminal Investigations: From Transaction to Seizure"

Dr. Dolliver discusses the fundamentals of cryptocurrencies, transactions, and blockchain technologies, and how this form of currency can be used to facilitate criminal activity. The presentation will explain how cryptocurrencies can be obtained and stored, transactions traced, and how these assets can be potentially seized by law enforcement officials through legal processes and the use of digital forensic evidence.



Criminal Investigations
and Network Analysis
A DHS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



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