Criminal Investigations and Network Analysis
A DHS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

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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.

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

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.

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 effectivness of policing crime hot spots, watch the below interview with Criminologist and George Mason University professor and CINA Science Committee member, David Weisburd.

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.

Visit our website's digital archive to view research and upcoming events hosted by CINA.

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