Sac State center prepares students for careers in cyber security

Cyber security has become a national priority in the face of the global terrorism threat. Sacramento State computer science Professor Isaac Ghansah is particularly mindful of that threat as director of the campus-based Center for Information Assurance and Security.

The center was established in 2005 under Ghansah’s leadership and became a National Center of Academic Excellence (CAE) in Information Assurance and Security Education in 2007.

At that time, Sacramento State was one of only 86 universities across the country to receive the national designation. “Our mission,” Ghansah says, “is to provide comprehensive coursework, research and community outreach that enhances cyber security.”

The security field is so fluid that even though Sacramento State’s center was recertified last year, it must reapply again next year, as will all other CAEs.

“I was at a conference in Washington, D.C., last month,” Ghansah notes, “and the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security have revamped the rules that may include campus visits to ensure compliance.” The key is to remain ahead of the curve on cryptography, network security, computer forensics, and computer security and privacy that meet the NSA’s standards for security concepts and knowledge.

The designation places Sacramento State in select company among institutions of higher learning nationwide that participate in this program. Sacramento State senior Joubin Jabbari is a successful participant who spent last summer as an intern in Washington doing research for Mitre, a not-for-profit company that operates several federally funded research and development centers, at the behest of the Department of Defense. He was asked to work on projects as time permits before graduation, when he’s hopeful he’ll be offered a position with the company.
Ghansah and his colleagues provide a wide array of cyber security courses including “Cryptography” and “Secure Software Engineering” to help combat the threat to the country’s critical infrastructure networks that are susceptible to attacks.

“Our enemies are persistent, but we are getting better at tracking and thwarting them,” Ghansah says.

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.— Alan Miller

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