

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

UTSA hires cyber security guru

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UTSA has received a grant from the Texas Emerging Fund to create an institute for cyber security research.

According to UTSA Today, the \$3.5 million grant is part of an initiative created by Governor Rick Perry to support industry and educational initiatives in Texas.

The creation of UTSA's Institute for Cyber Security Research (ICSR) brings Dr. Ravi Sandhu to the university to act as the founding executive director and chief scientist for the institute. Sandhu will also act as the Lutchter Brown Chair in Computer Science.

As stated in UTSA Today, the mission of the ICSR is to combine world class research with commercialization, focusing on the protection of the nation's critical cyber infrastructure.

"The goal of the institute is to find commercial application for the research that we do," said Sandhu. "We just don't want our ideas to be taught in the classrooms; we want them to be used out in the streets."

According to Dr. Robert Gracy, the vice president for research, the institute would also provide additional opportunities for collaborative partnerships in research in information assurance and cyber security.

UTSA would partner with different industries, the military, state and federal governments and other academic institutions.

Cyber security is needed to secure information that is stored on computers like that of records or data.

"Every person is fearful of identity theft; it happens no matter what age or business they're in," said Gracy. "It's a huge problem in his country. Bank accounts, business transactions and things that may threaten national security are all vulnerable."

Research conducted at the ICSR not only benefits the city, the state and other countries but it would also directly impact the students at UTSA.

One advantage of housing the institute at UTSA is that students will be able to conduct research in the field of cyber security, and apply what they have learned in the classroom through hands-on experience in the form of internships.

It would also allow research students a great opportunity for training and education at all levels.

"UTSA will be able to utilize the talent they already have," said Sandhu.

One strength of the ICSR is that it is multidisciplinary. The college of science, the college of engineering and the college of business will all participate with research conducted with in the institute.

"It is very necessary to bring these three disciplines together in solving security problems," said Sandhu.

Another strength is Sandhu. He will leave George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia where he is currently a professor of information on security and assurance. He is also the chief scientist and co-founder of TriCipher, which markets software to protect business and their customers from online fraud.

"Dr. Sandhu will benefit us tremendously; he's internationally known and famous in this area," said Gracy. "It automatically brings attention to UTSA and it'll be easier to attract world class faculty and students in this area and bring in additional funding from the partnerships mentioned."

With the ICSR being the first of its kind in the state of Texas, another goal is accomplished.

"There is no clear leader in the field yet, and our goal is to make UTSA one of the premier research institutes in this field," said Sandhu.

As the founding director and chief scientist, Sandhu hopes to provide direction and mold the institute into the best of its kind.

"I am looking forward to building an institute that will have a long lasting reputation," said Sandhu. "I'm really very excited for this opportunity and grateful for being chosen to direct this institute; it's not everyday that you get to start something from scratch."

Sandhu has a bachelor's and master's degree in electrical engineering from the Indian Institutes of Technology in Bombay and Delhi, and a master's and doctoral degree in computer science from Rutgers University.

Sandhu was also a fellow of the Association for Computing Machinery and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. He has published 160 papers on information security and has had his seminal work in role-based access control incorporated into standards for Institute of Standards and Technology-American National Standards Institute model.

"I'm very excited about him; not just as a important asset to our faculty at UTSA, but also as a huge asset to San Antonio and Texas in general," said Gracy.

Sandhu will begin his work at UTSA June 1.

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