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Fall 2016, UNH Manchester Inaugurates New Major in Homeland Security

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UNH Global

UNH Manchester Inaugurates New Major in Homeland Security

James Ramsay, UNHM (Coordinator-Homeland Security Program, Professor of Security Studies)

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Security is an inescapable part of our everyday lives. It lives at the individual level, at the household level, for organizations, states and nations. And in an ever connected, online and global economy, one might even say “global security” is increasingly relevant to individual lives. UNH is leading the way among public land grant universities in offering a BS degree in homeland security. In fact, within the next few years, UNH will offer a set of security studies programs (homeland security, cybersecurity management and policy and emergency management) in order to assist industry and offer relevant and compelling programs to students. Today, students on both the Manchester and Durham campuses can either major or minor in homeland security. At UNH, we offer a state-of-the-art undergraduate degree in homeland security which provides valuable and marketable skills to its students. But don't let the name fool you, “homeland security” is about protecting people, property and even the environment using risk-based tools and strategies. In other words, it really applies to all people, all organizations and all nations.



Prof. Ramsay (l.) in one of his classes

Homeland security has evolved tremendously since the events of September 11, 2001. Though it's true that this tragic event gave rise to the notion of academic homeland security, academic programs really didn't start until 2006. Since then, what began as a few scattered programs with little to no consistent academic focus, has matured into a focused professional discipline that includes annual international conferences, several peer reviewed journals, almost 400 programs across the US and several dozen programs across the UK, Europe and the Middle East. In other words, the concepts, theories, skills, and knowledge in an academic homeland security program work for organizations and nations, regardless of where you call home.

At UNH, our homeland security program is a classically liberal arts program. That is, it is centered on knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, provides intellectual and practical skills such as critical thinking, critical writing, social engagement and service learning, quantitative and information literacy, teamwork and problem solving, personal and civic responsibility, ethical reasoning, and a foundation for lifelong learning. It also requires students to integrate, analyze, evaluate problems and find solutions while it bestows truly marketable skills such as writing continuity of operations plans, emergency management plans, how to do strategic planning and make decisions, how to write and read legal briefs, how to develop intelligence reports, and how to perform security and risk assessments. Students hone their professional development by completing a 300 hour internship and by a consulting oriented capstone project that requires them to work with real organizations and design real applications to solve problems in order to make the organization safer, more secure and more prepared. At the end of the day, HLS majors understand risk, how to measure vulnerability to risk and how to design and implement cost effective

countermeasures designed to mitigate the risks organizations have whether those are risks to hazards from Mother Nature, technology (such as cyber-attack or failure of critical infrastructure) or risks that come from criminals or terrorists.

In addition, the UNH homeland security program is structured in such a way that it allows all majors to select either another major or two minors, or to come in with an associate's degree without adding any time to the degree. This structure helps students combine the passion to help and protect others with other disciplines. This structure provides a critical advantage to homeland security majors since we know all employers want their employees to be able to wear many hats.

There is not one aspect of our program that pertains to citizens of just one country. The skills and abilities students master in our homeland security program can be applied literally anywhere as well as combined with any other degree. Indeed, in over 10 years of designing curricula, leading programs and teaching courses, I've been honored to have taught students from Australia, the UK, Germany, France, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Kenya. I've also greatly benefited from many nontraditional and prior military students who really find their passion within the homeland security curriculum. And students have found wonderful careers in the private sector, state and federal government and the military as well as gone on to law school, medical school, and dozens of graduate degree programs including: as a security operations specialist at the NY Port Authority, as a regional security specialist at Google, in the Diplomatic Security corps, the FBI, in the Defense Intelligence Agency, in the US State Department, the US Coast Guard, as a cybersecurity specialist in the Bank of America, as local or state law enforcement officers, as a preparedness officer at FEMA, in the American Red Cross, even in a state's emergency management department, as a Customs and Border Protection agent, or as an investigator in the state department of homeland security, etc.

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