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The NCITEr Newsletter: October 2021

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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THE NCITE_R



National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center | A U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence

OCTOBER 2021

Dear NCITE Community,

Believe it or not, we are nearing the halfway point of our second research year, which — checks watch — is ticking closer to Request for Proposal (RFP) time!

In about 10 days, NCITE will be issuing its RFP for Year 3. Since NCITE works on the federal calendar, research Year 3 formally begins July 1, 2022. But planning for that research starts now.

Our research partners, who have been with us the first two years, know the drill: We issue a formal RFP. You respond with your plans, laid out according to our priority challenge areas. We have a scientific review panel, as well as a government relevancy review panel. All of this wraps up by March 31, 2022, when we submit our formal work plans to DHS. Research begins July 1.

But Year 3 marks a departure from the past: Year 3 research is now open to any higher ed partner who submits. As some of our initial projects have or will come to an end, we will likely have openings for 2-3 new partners' projects in our consortium!

Here's what you need to know to apply:

- **Mid-November** – NCITE's Y3 RFP will be published on our website and through social media channels
- **Early December** – NCITE to host a webinar to explain the RFP and answer researcher questions (will be recorded and posted to NCITE's website)
- **Mid-January** – Proposals due to NCITE
- **Mid-January through March** – proposal review at NCITE and DHS
- **Mid-March** – NCITE to communicate intent to fund to partners (pending DHS approval)
- **March 31, 2022** – NCITE's Y3 work plan submission to DHS
- **May – June** (estimated) – DHS to communicate intent to fund to NCITE
- **July 1, 2022** – Y3 work begins

In other news, NCITE is in growth mode. We've added staff. We've welcomed new researchers. And we even have a new Department of Homeland Security support contractor. "Meet" our new colleagues in this newsletter.

We also invite you to watch our recent panel discussion on Afghanistan. NCITE is based at UNO, which is home to the Center for Afghanistan Studies. And check out events from our NCITE and UNO partners!

As we enter into a busy time of year, I invite you to slow down and reflect on how much was accomplished already.

Be well,



GINA LIGON
NCITE Center Director



SPECIAL GUEST

Last week, Chuck Hagel visited NCITE. The Vietnam vet, businessman, UNO alum, U.S. senator *and* U.S. Secretary of Defense under President Obama, learned about NCITE's vast research portfolio. He also got to say hello to former staffer, now NCITE Business Operations Director Lindsay Odvody. Then he spent an hour talking to students. His advice as they pursue careers in national security?

"Listen," the 75-year-old said.

"You never learn anything by talking. Listening is the most underrated quality there is in life."

NCITE COLLABORATION

PANEL: Afghanistan, What Comes Next?



NCITE recently teamed up with UNO's Center for Afghanistan Studies to host a public discussion on the humanitarian and security threats facing Afghanistan. Panelists included NCITE researchers **Austin Doctor** and **Michelle Black**, both UNO political science professors.

WATCH HERE

NEW FACES

NCITE has added new staff, researchers, and a DHS collaborator

Just one quarter into Year 2, NCITE is celebrating growth. While NCITE said goodbye to **Monica Boyer** and **Lisa Daubman**, the organization also welcomed into new roles **Brandy Gerry** (office associate), **Courtney Sklenar** (education programs and events manager) and **Beth Stinebrink** (DHS engagements project manager).

NCITE also added UNO-based researchers **Matt Allen**, **Austin Doctor**, **Joel Elson**, **Sam Hunter**, **Erin Kearns**, **Kat Parsons**, **Tin Nguyen**, and **Kayla Walters**.

Helping NCITE's OUP program manager **Dana Saft** is new support contractor **Daniel Summers**. He replaces **Hilary Shackelford**.

Meet them here!

NCITE STAFF



BRANDY GERRY
Office Associate

- Started Monday, Oct. 25
- Previously worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, WOWT NBC Omaha, and Ameriprise Financial Services Inc.
- Avid reader: "I'm not exaggerating when I say I can easily read one book a day!"
- Likes disc golf
- Southern roots: Raised in Arkansas and Mississippi, where her family owns and operates a soybean and cotton farm



COURTNEY SKLENAR
Education Programs and Events Manager

- Started Oct. 11
- Background in event planning at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium, Grand Canyon University, University of Texas at Dallas, and Bellevue University
- Omaha native
- Enjoys family time, Husker games, fishing and family golden retriever, Aspen



BETH STINEBRINK
DHS Engagements Project Manager

- Started Monday, Oct. 25
- Theater background and comes with 17 years of experience in event and program management
- Worked previously for The RiverFront, (MECA), Creighton University, Omaha Civic Auditorium and Music Hall, (MECA)
- Loves to read and, apropos to fall, sit by the fire

NCITE RESEARCHERS



MATT ALLEN
Assistant Professor of Management
UNO College of Business Administration

- Starts Nov. 1 on NCITE executive committee
- Over 15 years of experience in I/O psychology consulting and as professor and manager specializing in applied research
- Comes from HumRRO's Talent Assessment and Analytics Program
- Manager of a strategic HR function for U.S. Department of Defense
- Likes to cook, take walks, spend time outdoors and indulge in NFL and NBA fandom



AUSTIN DOCTOR

Assistant Professor of Political Science
UNO College of Arts and Sciences

- Started in August on NCITE executive committee
 - Non-resident fellow with the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point
 - Focuses on causes and consequences of terrorism, political violence, armed conflict, and political instability
 - Nationals fan, fly fisher, enjoys good crossword puzzles
-



JOEL ELSON

Assistant Professor of IT Innovation
UNO College of Information Science
and Technology

- Named to NCITE executive committee
 - Expertise in human-machine trust, computer-mediated influence, collaboration technology
 - Worked in Koraleski Commerce and Applied Behavior Lab at UNO on consulting projects for corporations
 - Loves classical music and playing the violin; once played bass guitar in local rock band.
-



SAM HUNTER

Professor of I/O Psychology
UNO College of Arts and Sciences

- Started in August in NCITE leadership role
 - Expertise in terrorism, counterterrorism, leadership, organizations, and malevolent creativity
 - Left tenured position at Penn State University to join NCITE and UNO as a Professor of Psychology
 - Detroit Tigers fan and owns an impressive collection of Chuck Taylor canvas high-tops
-



ERIN KEARNS

Assistant Professor of Criminology
UNO School of Criminology
and Criminal Justice

- Started in Spring 2021 on NCITE executive committee
- Primary research seeks to understand relationships among terrorism, media, law enforcement, and the public
- Other research interests include violence and nonviolence in conflict and geographic patterns of crime and violence

- Loves to cook and spend time with her partner Brian and their spoiled rescue dog, Maddux. In non-pandemic times, she also loves to travel and go to concerts



TIN NGUYEN

I/O Psychology
NCITE Research Associate

- Doctoral candidate in I/O Psychology
- Research examines social and environmental factors that enable individuals and groups to innovate for good or malevolent ends
- Once decorated cakes professionally, but realized "a life with fondant-covered hands was unsustainable."



KAT PARSONS

Justice, Law, and Criminology
NCITE Research Associate

- Doctoral candidate, started Monday, Oct. 25
- Focuses on variation between support for political extremism, violence, and engagement in violence; previous research includes rise of far-right terrorism in Europe and U.S.
- Former fellow of the Peace and Violence Resolution Lab at American University
- Likes to hike, bike, run, garden, and cook



KAYLA WALTERS

I/O Psychology
NCITE Research Associate

- Doctoral candidate in I/O Psychology
- Research focus in two areas: How different combinations of leadership styles shape outcomes for individuals and organizations and how creativity can be used for malevolent ends
- Reviews projects and deliverables from NCITE research partners to identify how to maximize impact
- Once shared a plate of fries with U.S. Women's National Team soccer player Megan Rapinoe



NAFEES HAMID

Research Fellow
International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College London

- Joined NCITE partner, King's College London team
- Research focuses on psychology of radicalization and social fragmentation in Western countries. Has worked with neuroscientists to study brain scan studies of jihadist supporters. Has researched jihadists, white nationalists, and QAnon members

- Enjoys boxing, kick boxing and performance art. Was a professional actor in the U.S. before moving to Europe to become a cognitive scientist.



DENISE BULLING

Senior Research Director at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

- Expertise in program evaluation, disaster behavioral health, and behavioral threat assessment
- Certified threat manager and licensed independent professional counselor
- Working on an NCITE project related to Suspicious Activity Reporting with **Dr. Mario Scalora**
- Can be found on her bicycle in nice weather; proud supporter of Nebraska Wesleyan University Track and Cross Country (which her husband coaches)

GET TO KNOW

NEW DHS OUP Support Contractor DANIEL SUMMERS



Among the new people serving NCITE is support contractor **Daniel Summers**.

Summers' role is to help **Dana Saft**, who manages NCITE through the DHS Office of University Programs. Summers comes to public service naturally. Born to junior foreign service officers, he grew up in a household dedicated to government work. His parents held posts in southeast Asia and Sweden. Summers is a mechanical engineer by study but has worked for OUP for the past year in a contract support role aimed at smoothing processes.

He calls himself a “big R&D booster.” He said he likes the long game of watching research develop and appreciates that research might not be “immediately applicable.”

“The fruits of the labor can take time to manifest in the system,” he said. “A lot of research fails – which is why it’s so good the government is doing this because you won’t know (success or failure) until it’s done.”

Summers is also a new father, and his infant daughter sometimes makes cameos during weekly calls with NCITE. Safe to say, she steals the show.

INSIDE NCITE



UPCOMING EVENTS

NCITE partner University of Central Florida has launched its fall seminar series called *Finding the Fanatic*. Hear from former DHS official Elizabeth Neumann and see who's on tap next.

SPEAKER SERIES: FINDING THE FANATIC



NCITE researcher visit

Devorah Margolin, Director of Strategic Initiatives and a Senior Research Fellow at the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, will visit NCITE in November.

NCITE students, faculty, and staff, mark your calendars for a special presentation on **Nov. 10**. Margolin's research focuses on terrorism governance, terrorism financing, the role of propaganda, countering violent extremism, and the role of women in violent extremism. She is working with NCITE researcher **Austin Doctor** on best practices for the repatriation of spouses and children connected to foreign fighters.

GRANT AWARDS

Using chatbot to aid in Suspicious Activity Reporting

NCITE researchers **Joel Elson** and **Erin Kearns** won a \$715,102 DHS grant to improve suspicious activity identification and reporting using a chatbot. They will work with Sarpy County on a project that has potential broad, national application.

[READ MORE](#)

Evaluating prevention programs

NCITE and the Research Triangle Institute, an NCITE partner, received \$3.5 million in DHS funds through the Basic Ordering Agreement or BOA funding mechanism.

The funds are for a two-year project that has three tasks, the first two of which are led by **Matthew DeMichele**, director of the Center for Courts and Corrections Research at RTI International and an NCITE research partner. He will lead Task 1: evaluating prevention programming and identifying best practices by allies abroad and Task 2: evaluating soft target security and prevention.

NCITE researcher **Sam Hunter** will lead the third task, which is evaluating current threat assessments and threat management.

Interesting people? Upcoming events?

Send ideas for our next NCITEr edition to NCITE's egrace@unomaha.edu.



NCITE NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM
INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY,
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