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Ribbon Cutting for Cybersecurity Center Comes as Danger Increases

By MARK SCHREINER (/PEOPLE/MARK-SCHREINER) • FEB 6, 2015

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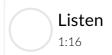
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A display at the Florida Center for Cybersecurity shows just 1% of the millions of worldwide computer hacking efforts going on in near real-time.

MARK SCHREINER / WUSF 89.7 NEWS

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With a seemingly endless number of recent computer data breaches, the need for improved cybersecurity continues to grow. A statewide initiative based out of the **University of South Florida (http://www.usf.edu/)** is stepping up its efforts to fill that need.

Friday's formal ribbon-cutting ceremony for the **Florida Center for Cybersecurity (http://www.usf.edu/cybersecurity/)**, or FC-squared, came a day **after it was announced (http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/02/05/383961185/hackers-strike-health-insurer-anthem-inc)** that hackers gained access to the data of 80 million customers of health insurer Anthem. It also came the same week **President Obama proposed (http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/02/us-usa-budget-cybersecurity-idUSKBN0L61WQ20150202)** spending $14 billion on cybersecurity efforts.

The Center, which is based at the University of South Florida's Tampa campus, brings together the 12 schools in the State University System in an effort to make Florida a leader in cybersecurity research and education.

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson said that the Center is needed to address the growing dangers online.

"If a terrorist took an explosive satchel and went to a major electrical utility and blew it up, it is a terrorist attack. Well, they can do the same thing with a cyberattack," Nelson said.

In addition, the Center's proximity to MacDill Air Force Base and U.S. Central Command should also be beneficial to both groups.

It's a people problem, but then there's technology nestled around it, so how do you use people and technology together?

"I have a tremendous amount of talent on the team and those individuals serve both in and out of uniform, and to continue to sharpen what they do, where they go for that continued education, there's no better place," U.S. Marine Colonel Dennis Crall, the Chief of the Joint Cyber Center, said. "So I think it's potentially a great relationship."

There's another reason Tampa is an ideal location for the Center - a study by computer security company **Enigma Software (http://www.enigmasoftware.com/)** found it's the most hacked city in America.

FC-squared managing director and chief operating officer **Sri Sridharan (http://www.usf.edu/cybersecurity/contacts/sridharan.aspx)** said there's three reasons for that: one, Florida's growing population (Orlando was the second most hacked city, Miami 13th); two, our older Internet users are more vulnerable to cyberattacks; and three, a fact that's probably not going to be in too many Bay Area tourism pitches.

"The third one, which we learned from the FBI, is that there are lots of pornographic subscribers in this region and also lots of sexual predators that are in this area," Sridharan said. "Since they go to all of these different websites, etc., their computers get infected."

The Florida Center for Cybersecurity **began offering master's degrees (http://www.usf.edu/cybersecurity/education/index.aspx)**, as well as graduate and industry certificates, this past fall.

"The program is amazing because it brings you to the real world problems that corporations face," Jim Risler, a Cybersecurity student and CISCO Security content strategy manager said. "It's a people problem, but then there's technology nestled around it, so how do you use people and technology together, and this program teaches you how to combine those two to solve these problems that we face, to stop these attacks.

"Because it's not if you're going to be hacked, you have been hacked, they're in your network, how do you find them? That's the key," Risler added.

FC-squared has also held a **number (http://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/post/cybersecurity-focus-usf-conference)**of **conferences (http://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/post/usf-has-big-goals-cybersecurity-center)** already, and will **host an open house (http://www.usf.edu/cybersecurity/outreach/events-new.aspx)**Friday, February 13.

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