

## WSU News

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# Wichita State's \$2.4 million NSF award aims to recruit, retain cybersecurity students

By Sara Ornelas, Strategic Communications



Beginning in fall 2023, the five CyberCorps Scholarships will be awarded to current Wichita State undergraduate and graduate students, as well as incoming transfer students.

In the nation's ongoing efforts to thwart cyberattacks and scammers, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded Wichita State University more than \$2.4 million to fund scholarships for the next generation of cybersecurity professionals.

Beginning in fall 2023, the five [CyberCorps Scholarships](#) will be awarded to current Wichita State undergraduate and graduate students, as well as incoming transfer students. Recipients will receive funding for tuition, a stipend of \$25,000 for undergraduate students and \$34,000 for graduate students, as well as money for travel and supplies.

Wichita State's CyberCorps Scholarship has two aims, said Dr. Sergio Salinas, associate professor at Wichita State's School of Computing and principal investigator on the project.

"First, the scholarships will support exceptional cybersecurity students, and we hope they will encourage more students, especially those from underrepresented populations, to join our cybersecurity programs," Salinas said.

Secondly, there is a dire need to expand the cybersecurity workforce in the United States, Kansas and local governments.

"Cybersecurity professionals in government organizations protect the critical infrastructure that supports the country," Salinas said. "We wanted to help this crucial effort to protect our national security."

Once they are awarded the CyberCorps Scholarship, students will have access to exclusive opportunities and resources to help them succeed — including professional mentoring, financial management, access to a government liaison who will help students connect with agencies for applied learning and full-time employment after graduation, and a career fair with hundreds of government agencies.

*Interested students can email [sergio.salinasmonroy@wichita.edu](mailto:sergio.salinasmonroy@wichita.edu) for more information.*

Recently, NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan and U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas [visited Wichita State](#) and raved about the important work the university is doing to prepare students for the careers of the future.

"Wichita State University is doing amazing things," Panchanathan said. "When I look at the convergence of what industry needs and what we need to train the next generation of experts, that fusion is right here in action — live — which is phenomenal to watch."

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*– Dr. Sergio Salinas, associate professor at Wichita State's School of Computing*

Moran said the CyberCorps award is indicative of Wichita State's strong relationship with the NSF and the university's commitment to strengthening Kansas' workforce.

"Wichita's strong cybersecurity workforce is bolstered through programs and training opportunities at Wichita State University that equip students to transition right into the workforce after graduation," said Moran. "I appreciated the opportunity to show NSF Director Panchanathan what WSU has to offer last month and look forward to working with both the NSF and WSU to strengthen our nation's cyber defenses."

According to the award abstract, "significant efforts will be made to recruit and retain outstanding students, including those from underrepresented groups. As a result, the project will provide a steady stream of diverse workforce-ready cybersecurity professionals for government service."

Salinas said prioritizing underrepresented groups of students promotes Wichita State's priority of making higher education affordable and accessible.

"There are large segments of the U.S. population who are deprived of the opportunity to be cybersecurity professionals due to the underrepresentation of many groups in this field. Recruiting members of this groups can help reduce the gap," Salinas said.

Additionally, he said, diversity gives teams an advantage when solving with the multifaceted issues of cybersecurity.

"It has been shown that diverse teams are better at solving problems," Salinas said. "Cybersecurity is a complex field with more problems than we can solve with the current amount of cybersecurity professionals."