# INFORMATION SECURITY IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

## Strengthening the Information Security Policy and Practice of America's Colleges and Universities

Academic institutions face unique information security threats and increasingly frequent and severe incidents, yet little research has been conducted to address these issues. Incidents such as information theft, data tampering, viruses, worms, and terrorist activity constitute significant threats to public safety and national security.

The clash between academia's open culture and current needs for security, the anonymity and diversity of IT users, and students' high-risk activities (e.g., peer-to-peer networking, wireless, instant messaging) are establishing academic institutions as the weakest link in America's chain of infrastructure security.

The purpose of this research project is to address these issues by providing objective data, recommendations for policy, and a roadmap for implementation. Project goals include:

- Identify and quantify the unique information security issues of academic institutions;
- Create an empirically based profile of threats and vulnerabilities;
- Determine the balance of costs with assets to be protected;
- Create a roadmap for implementation; and
- Distribute project results and insights to universities, government, industry and the public.

Research data will be collected from IT directors of academic institutions across the United States. Approximately one hundred directors will complete a web-based survey, fifteen additional directors will participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and three universities' networks will be monitored for forensic analysis. Outcomes include an information security profile of academic institutions, recommendations for policy, a roadmap for implementation, and publications for all stakeholders. Project close date is March 2006.

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**For more information, contact:**

Steffani Burd, Ph.D.
sburd@infosecurityresearch.org
(917) 783 – 8496

**Or visit our website:**
www.infosecurityresearch.org

**Project Team Members:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Executive Director: | Steffani Burd, Ph.D. |
| Strategic Development Director: | Scott Cherkin |
| Marketing Consultant: | Laurie Venditti |
| Public Relations Consultant: | Aldina Tracey |
| Forensics Expert: | Nasir Memon, Ph.D. |
| Forensics Analyst: | Efstratios Gavas |
| Intrusion Detection Expert: | Michael Poor |
| Academic Institution Expert: | Matthew Haschak |
| Project Coordinator: | Sharon Borovetz |
| Research Advisor: | W. Warner Burke, Ph.D. |
| Policy Advisor: | Andrew MacPherson |