Two earn cyber scholarships and internships from DoD

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The scholarships, which can be renewed annually through completion of graduate school, include tuition, fees, books, a laptop, and living expenses. The students also were awarded paid
summer internships and agreed to work for one year with the DoD in the cybersecurity field after graduation.

"This is a life-changing opportunity for our students studying cybersecurity and cyber operations," said Dr. Bryson Payne, director of the Center for Cyber Operations Education and principal investigator of the CySP scholarship grant program at UNG. "A large number of our students work part-time to full-time to support their studies, and this full-rider scholarship plus a $25,000 stipend for living expenses will allow these students to focus their effort 100 percent on becoming the best cyber professionals they can be."

The guarantee of having a job with the National Security Agency or DoD after graduation makes the program attractive to UNG students as well.

"Many of our cyber students already want to work at the NSA or in the Department of Defense after graduation, and this scholarship-for-service grant guarantees them one year of experience defending our country from cyber-attacks at the top-secret level for each year they accept the scholarship," said Ash Mady, department head of computer science and information systems.

The program awards UNG two Cybersecurity Scholarship Program scholars, whose names cannot be released because of NSA security requirements, in the first year of UNG's participation in the program. Four UNG students initially were selected, but one graduated early and a second declined because he or she received another full-rider, nationally competitive scholarship.

According to the DoD, only 31 colleges and universities received CySP awards nationwide.

Working closely with three other senior military colleges (SMC), UNG has spearheaded the move to establish DoD cyber institutes at SMCs and other qualified universities with ROTC programs, authorized in the 2019 Defense Authorization Act. While the process to establish the cyber institutes is only beginning, UNG
has proposed that the SMCs establish the first cyber institutes since they meet all the NDAA requirements: an established cyber program; strategic languages; strong leadership development programs associated with ROTC; and math and science programs.

"As the first DOD cyber institutes, the SMCs will be the model and we can serve as mentors and coaches as the other universities seek to be designated," said retired Col. Sharon Hamilton, director of liaison and military operations for UNG’s Institute for Leadership and Strategic Studies. "That falls in line with our role as The Military College of Georgia and one of the nation's six senior military colleges."

The next step, Hamilton said, is UNG will work with senior military colleges Texas A&M, the Citadel and Norwich University on an appropriations strategy to request to fund the cyber institutes, with a focus on student scholarships, additional cyber faculty and necessary equipment for cyber study and research.

The idea has gained broad support from lawmakers and educators. Hamilton particularly noted the support and actions of UNG President Bonita Jacobs; Maj. Gen. Joe Jarrard, Georgia’s adjutant general; U.S. Sen. David Perdue; and U.S. Reps. Doug Collins and Austin Scott as instrumental in approval of the measure.

UNG places as many as 40 to 60 students per year into internships in the fields of computer science, information security and cyber and has placed an increasing numbers of students with NSA and FBI in the past three years from computer science.

The vision of the DoD CySP at UNG is to increase the number of qualified students entering the fields of cybersecurity and cyber operations to meet the nation's need for qualified personnel to protect its information infrastructure. The program is housed in the Center for Cyber Operations Education at UNG, which has been designated a Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.
UNG has offered a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science with a concentration in information assurance and security since 2004. UNG also offers a minor in cybersecurity, a minor in information assurance and security, a graduate certificate in cybersecurity, and two new degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in security and strategic studies with a cyber concentration, and a Bachelor of Science in cybersecurity.²

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