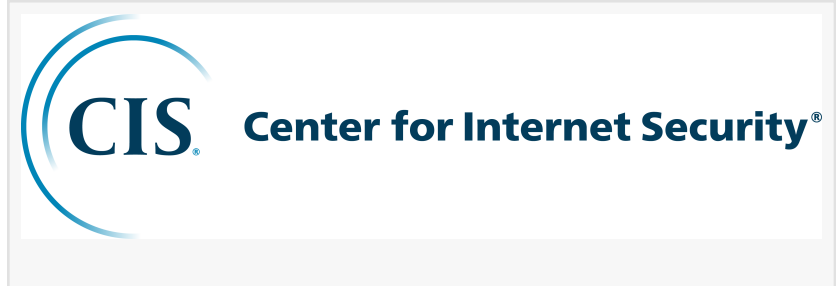


CIS Honors University of Georgia with 2026 Alan Paller Laureate Award

Award-winning project will deliver a threat-informed, cost-aware approach to implementing CIS Controls for resource-constrained organizations



CLIFTON PARK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Center for Internet Security, Inc. (CIS®)

today announced that the University of Georgia (UGA) is the 2026 recipient of the [Alan Paller Laureate Program](#), awarding \$250,000 to support the development of an innovative, open-source tool designed to help organizations prioritize implementation of the [CIS Critical Security Controls® \(CIS Controls®\) v8.1](#).



This project demonstrates exactly the kind of innovation Alan Paller championed: practical solutions that help organizations take meaningful action."

John Gilligan, President and CEO, Center for Internet Security

The selected project, "An Open-Source, Swarm Intelligence Decision Support Tool for Cost-Threat-Aware Prioritization of CIS Controls v8.1 Implementation," will turn cybersecurity assessment data into practical, threat-informed, and cost-aware roadmaps. By combining CIS Controls maturity data, real-world threat intelligence mapped to MITRE ATT&CK® and cost considerations, the tool will deliver transparent, prioritized recommendations to guide cybersecurity investments.

The work is led by Dr. Thirimachos Bourlai, Professor at the University of Georgia and Director of the Multispectral Imagery Laboratory, whose work spans biometrics, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. He is joined by Hayat Cue, a Ph.D. candidate and researcher focused on transforming CIS Controls v8.1 assessments into threat-informed, cost-aware cybersecurity strategies.

"This project demonstrates exactly the kind of innovation Alan Paller championed: practical solutions that help organizations take meaningful action," said John Gilligan, President and CEO of CIS. "By simplifying complex decisions and aligning them to real-world threats, this work will help organizations strengthen their defenses in a measurable way."

Many organizations, particularly small businesses, nonprofits, K-12 school systems, and local governments, struggle to translate cybersecurity assessments into actionable next steps due to limited resources, expertise, and budget constraints. This UGA-led project directly addresses that challenge by treating cybersecurity planning as a resource allocation problem, helping organizations determine what to implement first based on risk, cost, and effectiveness.

“Too often, organizations know where their security gaps are but lack the clarity to decide what to do next,” said Tony Sager, Senior Vice President and Chief Evangelist at CIS. “This project turns assessment data into clear, prioritized actions, helping organizations make smarter decisions about where to invest limited cybersecurity resources for the greatest impact.”

The tool will be released under an open-source license, ensuring broad accessibility and scalability. It will also be validated through real-world testing and supported by a range of deliverables, including a practitioner-focused white paper, training materials, and opportunities for student engagement and workforce development within the University of Georgia’s research and engineering programs.

Beyond its immediate impact, the project will contribute to bridging the gap between cybersecurity research and operational practice by embedding CIS Controls into academic research, classroom instruction, and cybersecurity clinics. The platform will remain available beyond the grant period, supported by academic and community contributors to ensure long-term sustainability and continuous improvement.

The Alan Paller Laureate Program honors the legacy of cybersecurity pioneer Alan Paller by funding practical, innovative solutions that make cybersecurity simpler, more effective, and more widely accessible.



Alan Paller 1945-2021



Alan Paller 1945-2021

For more information about the Alan Paller Laureate Program, visit cisecurity.org. Media inquiries can be directed to media@cisecurity.org.

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About CIS:

The Center for Internet Security, Inc. (CIS®) makes the connected world a safer place for people, businesses, and governments through our core competencies of collaboration and innovation. We are a community-driven nonprofit, responsible for the CIS Critical Security Controls® and CIS Benchmarks®, globally recognized best practices for securing IT systems and data. We lead a global community of IT professionals to continuously evolve these standards and provide products and services to proactively safeguard against emerging threats. Our CIS Hardened Images® provide secure, on-demand, scalable computing environments in the cloud. CIS is home to the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center® (MS-ISAC®), the trusted resource for cyber threat prevention, protection, response, and recovery for U.S. State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial government entities, and the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center® (EI-ISAC®), which supports the rapidly changing cybersecurity needs of U.S. election offices. To learn more, visit or follow us on X: @CISecurity.

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