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Exclusive: UTSA to stand up cybersecurity hub with national security focus

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The University of Texas at San Antonio is laying the groundwork for a major new investment meant to make San Antonio an even bigger hub for cybersecurity, the Business Journal confirmed.

The plan includes the new National Security Collaboration Center, which will likely encompass a new stand-alone building that could cost tens of millions of dollars, and hiring more faculty members while growing the depth and breadth of cybersecurity opportunities for students. The project's overarching goal is to contribute to the country's national security.

The university already has about 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students – out of more than 30,600 students overall – in the program.

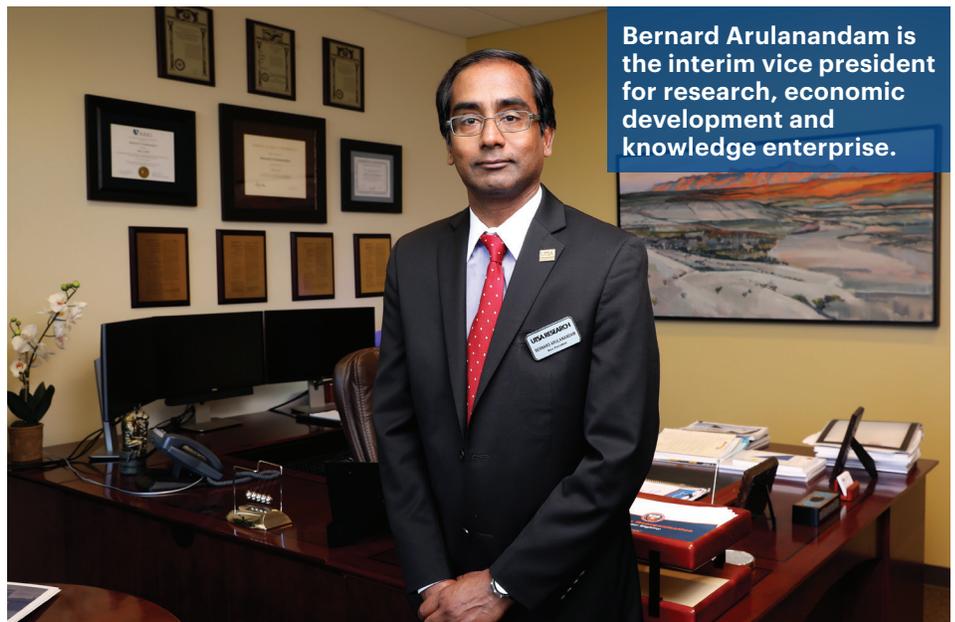
Bernard Arulanandam – interim vice president for research, economic development and knowledge enterprise at UTSA – is leading the strategic plan.

UTSA will “have a sandbox made up of academia, industry partners and the federal government,” Arulanandam told the Business Journal in an exclusive interview. “If you bring that all together, you have a creative means to come up with solutions for the next generation of problems within the realm of cybersecurity but also broader national security.”

The goal is for students to have a strong pipeline into defense contracting or the federal government in cybersecurity.

“We now have a cadre of cybersecurity professionals across all four colleges,” he said. “Imagine students working on a combined project [led by faculty] for a company [or for a federal mission] and after graduation that could lead to an internship, either on the private sector or public sector side.”

UTSA was tapped in 2015 by the Department of Homeland Security to develop standards for its Information Sharing and Analy-



Bernard Arulanandam is the interim vice president for research, economic development and knowledge enterprise.

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sis Organization initiative.

The door is still open for businesses seeking to connect with the collaboration center as the initiative is being seeded now. A timeline for construction has not been released.

Federal agencies already have some presence on UTSA's main campus, such as the U.S. Army Research Laboratory and the National Security Agency in Texas. Under the plan, those existing offices will be brought together and a secure facility for classified research will be built out. Additional plans include bolstering the university's expertise in machine learning and building an “innovation factory” for cybersecurity technology startups.

Other government entities invited to participate in the new center include: 24th Air Force Cyber Command, 25th Air Force, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, among others. The university already has relationships with those entities and aims to

broaden those as part of the new center.

There is also a cadre of local companies and global businesses invited to join the roster, such as Raytheon, LGS Innovations and Loki Labs. Likewise, USAA, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Microsoft Corp. have been invited to the center.

One of the organizations already committed to the new center is a Washington, D.C.-area research and development nonprofit Noblis NSP LLC, a subsidiary of nonprofit federal research organization Noblis Inc., the Business Journal previously reported. Noblis is opening its cybersecurity division in San Antonio this year. Noblis NSP is a research arm with expertise in machine learning and big data analytics for cybersecurity agents working in security operations centers. Its local expansion is tied to some collaborative research projects with the 24th Air Force and the University of Texas at San Antonio, Michael Cameron, director of cybersolutions at Noblis NSP told the Business Journal previously.