

## UT Dallas Researchers to Play Key Role in \$7.5 Million Department of Defense MURI Project

*Effort Aims to Increase Information Sharing Among Government Agencies*

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University of Texas at Dallas researchers will play an important part in a \$7.5 million contract designed to produce greater communication among government agencies.

Part of the federal government's highly competitive Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI), the five-year project is based on the premise that enhanced information security will persuade government workers to share information with one another more freely, confident that it won't get into the wrong hands.

"Assured information sharing has been a problem for decades, but only after 9/11 has so much emphasis has been placed on it," said Bhavani Thuraisingham, a professor of computer science and director of the Cyber Security Research Center in the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science at UT Dallas. "We now hear organizations such as the CIA and the FBI saying they wish they had better ways to share information, so we are developing improved approaches for managing, sharing and analyzing data, including geospatial data such as maps and images."

The UT Dallas researchers will collaborate with teams at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Purdue University; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; the University of Michigan; and UT San Antonio. Other partners on the project are Raytheon Co., Collin County Homeland Security and Kings College University of London. Valued at \$1 million over the next five years, the UT Dallas portion of the project will include several elements:

- Thuraisingham will focus on issues concerning both the enforcement of electronic communications policies and the expansion of what's called the semantic Web, which is an evolving framework that allows data to be much more widely accessed, shared and reused.
- An interdisciplinary team from three UT Dallas schools led by Murat Kantarcioglu, an assistant professor of computer science, will explore the technical, economic and behavioral aspects of what's known as incentive-based information sharing. Kantarcioglu will work with Alain Bensoussan, distinguished research professor of operations management in the UT Dallas School of Management, and Nathan Berg, an associate professor of economics in the university's School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences.
- Latifur Khan, an associate professor of computer science, will work with Illinois researchers on an area called knowledge discovery, which concerns developing methodologies for extracting useful knowledge from data.

MURI supports basic science and engineering research that's considered critical to national defense. The initiative is based on the idea that by bringing together scientists and engineers from different disciplines the government can accelerate both basic research and the practical application of that research. The UT Dallas project is funded by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research.

UT Dallas researchers now have more than \$5 million in grants and contracts with the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the National Science Foundation and other government agencies – such as NASA, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency and the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity – for research concerning data security, the semantic Web and knowledge discovery. UT Dallas researchers in these fields have also formed a strong collaborative partnership with Raytheon on geospatial information management,



Latifur Khan (left) and Bhavani Thuraisingham

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and they've established alliances and partnerships with several other major universities in addition to those they're working with on MURI, including the University of Minnesota and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"Our goal is to conduct high quality research and utilize corporations such as Raytheon to transfer the research to operational programs," Thuraisingham said. "One key aspect of our future work is also to transfer our research to commercial products. We are very customer-focused, we regularly form partnerships with our customers, and our research results have appeared in prestigious journals and at leading conferences."

In addition to Thuraisingham, Khan and Kantarcioglu, who conduct research regarding data security, the semantic Web and knowledge discovery, the UT Dallas collaborative team includes Kevin Hamlen and Vincent Ng, both assistant professors of computer science; I-Ling Yen, a professor of computer science; and B. Prabhakaran, an associate professor of computer science.

"In the area of data security and related topics such as information sharing, UT Dallas is now one of the best in the world, right alongside prestigious institutions such as Purdue University, which is our major collaborator," Thuraisingham added. "Since we are a relatively small school, we can't focus on all aspects of cyber security, and so our focus now is mainly on data security. We have also been very successful in building knowledge-discovery tools for a number of applications."

#### **About the Jonsson School**

With more than 2,600 students, nearly 100 faculty and over \$27 million in research funding, the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science at UT Dallas is in the midst of a \$300 million public-private initiative that includes the recent completion of a 192,000-square-foot interdisciplinary research building. Named after Texas Instruments co-founder J. Erik Jonsson, the school awards degrees in electrical engineering, computer science, telecommunications engineering, computer engineering, software engineering, and materials science and engineering.

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