



NEWS RELEASE

## Rapid7 and USF Collaborate on Cyber Training Initiative With \$1.5 Million Grant From Office of Naval Research and National Science Foundation

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Rapid7 threat data, dedicated personnel will facilitate research that explores real-world scenarios and challenges to ready tomorrow's cyber operators

TAMPA, Fla., Sept. 07, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- **Rapid7, Inc.** (NASDAQ: RPD), a leader in cloud risk and threat detection, today announced that the company's proprietary threat data is powering a new research initiative investigating a better way to train cyber operators for maximum readiness. In partnership with the University of South Florida (USF), this effort will be boosted by over \$1.5M funding from the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In addition to providing incident data and intelligence collected from Rapid7's global honeypot network, Rapid7 is dedicating personnel to facilitate the research effort and will play an instrumental role in helping USF researchers understand how the data and intelligence traces the path of real-world scenarios as they are analyzed in a security operations center (SOC).

"The best way to learn in a SOC environment is to get first-hand experience with threat actors' tactics, techniques, and procedures — or TTPs," said Raj Samani, senior vice president and chief scientist, Rapid7. "We expect the funding from ONR and NSF to help us achieve significant results through this research initiative, including the ability to implement world-class training programs that fully prepare the next generation of cyber practitioners."

Through an evidence-based cyber training initiative with a companion research framework, cyber analysts will engage with scenarios and challenges found in real-world security operations centers, and researchers will gauge how these scenarios improve decision-making capabilities in the face of agile adversaries.

“Replicating realistic attack scenarios an analyst may face in operations is a critical aspect of this research, as it allows us to uncover effective training methods that eventually will matter in the trench,” said Xinming Ou, USF professor of computer science and engineering and principal investigator of the research. “Our partnership with Rapid7 is instrumental in making this research vision possible.”

Ou is closely working with Prof. Daniel Lende from the USF anthropology department and a co-principal investigator of the project. Ou noted, “cyber operation is essentially a human activity and I am extremely fortunate to have professor Lende on the team so we can adopt rigorous human study research methodologies. It also highlights the multidisciplinary nature of the USF-Rapid7 partnership.”

The U.S. National Science Foundation is an independent federal agency that supports science and engineering in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Its mission is to promote the progress of science, advance the national health, prosperity and welfare, and secure the national defense.

“The USF/Rapid7 project is unique in that it uses real-world cyber threat data as the basis to derive scenarios to drive cyber training research,” said Victor Piotrowski, Lead Program Director at National Science Foundation. “This type of experiential learning holds great promise to expedite the workforce development urgently needed to secure the nation's cyber infrastructure.”

“SOC teams serve as an organization’s offense and defense, and their effective training is a universal challenge,” Samani added. “By partnering with USF and sharing our threat data and expertise, we intend to help this initiative’s stakeholders and the greater cyber community make significant strides in this area.”

The cyber training research initiative is being undertaken by the Rapid7 Cyber Threat Intelligence Lab at USF. **Announced in February** of this year, the lab is a joint endeavor between Rapid7 and USF to drive a deeper understanding of the cybersecurity threat landscape through shared expertise, data, and technological capabilities.

Learn about additional Rapid7 research initiatives at <https://www.rapid7.com/research/>.

#### About Rapid7

Rapid7, Inc. (NASDAQ: RPD) is on a mission to create a safer digital world by making cybersecurity simpler and more accessible. We empower security professionals to manage a modern attack surface through our best-in-class technology, leading-edge research, and broad, strategic expertise. Rapid7’s comprehensive security solutions help more than 11,000 global customers unite cloud risk management and threat detection to reduce attack surfaces and eliminate threats with speed and precision. For more information, visit our **website**, check out our **blog**, or follow us on **LinkedIn** or **Twitter**.

## About the University of South Florida

The University of South Florida, a high-impact research university dedicated to student success and committed to community engagement, generates an annual economic impact of more than \$6 billion. With campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF serves approximately 50,000 students who represent nearly 150 different countries. For four consecutive years, U.S. News & World Report has ranked USF as one of the nation's top 50 public universities, including USF's highest ranking ever in 2023 (No. 42). In 2023, USF became the first public university in Florida in nearly 40 years to be invited to join the Association of American Universities, a prestigious group of the leading universities in the United States and Canada. Through hundreds of millions of dollars in research activity each year and as one of top universities in the world for securing new patents, USF is a leader in solving global problems and improving lives. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at [www.usf.edu](http://www.usf.edu).

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