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The NCITEr Newsletter: July 2021

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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THE NCITE^R



National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center | A U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence

JULY 2021

Dear NCITE Community,

What a difference a year makes! The passage of time did not magically resolve the challenges of 2020, when we launched amid a global pandemic, major social unrest, and a contentious presidential election. But the arrival of vaccines helped pave the way for reopening. NCITE moved into new office space in April. Seeing each other daily in person has helped us build collaboration and capacity, especially as we welcome the first of seven new faculty who are joining our terrorism and targeted violence research ranks right here at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

We closed out our first research year with ENVISION21, a daylong conference. Held on June 29, this virtual event enabled us to gather our DHS board, researchers, students, and others for focused, meaningful discussion on the pressing work to be done in combating domestic terrorism and other threats.

We heard from John Cohen, DHS's top counterterrorism official who was also named recently to head up DHS Intelligence and Analysis. We presented "NCITEr" information on how to improve our research impact through better performance metrics, more grant funding, communication, and transition. We went to breakout sessions, which were organized around our four research themes and focused on the needs of our DHS partners. We pledged to work together in this still-new consortium to become the nation's premier academic research center for terrorism and targeted violence.

Thank you, participants. We consider our time together to be valuable and impactful.

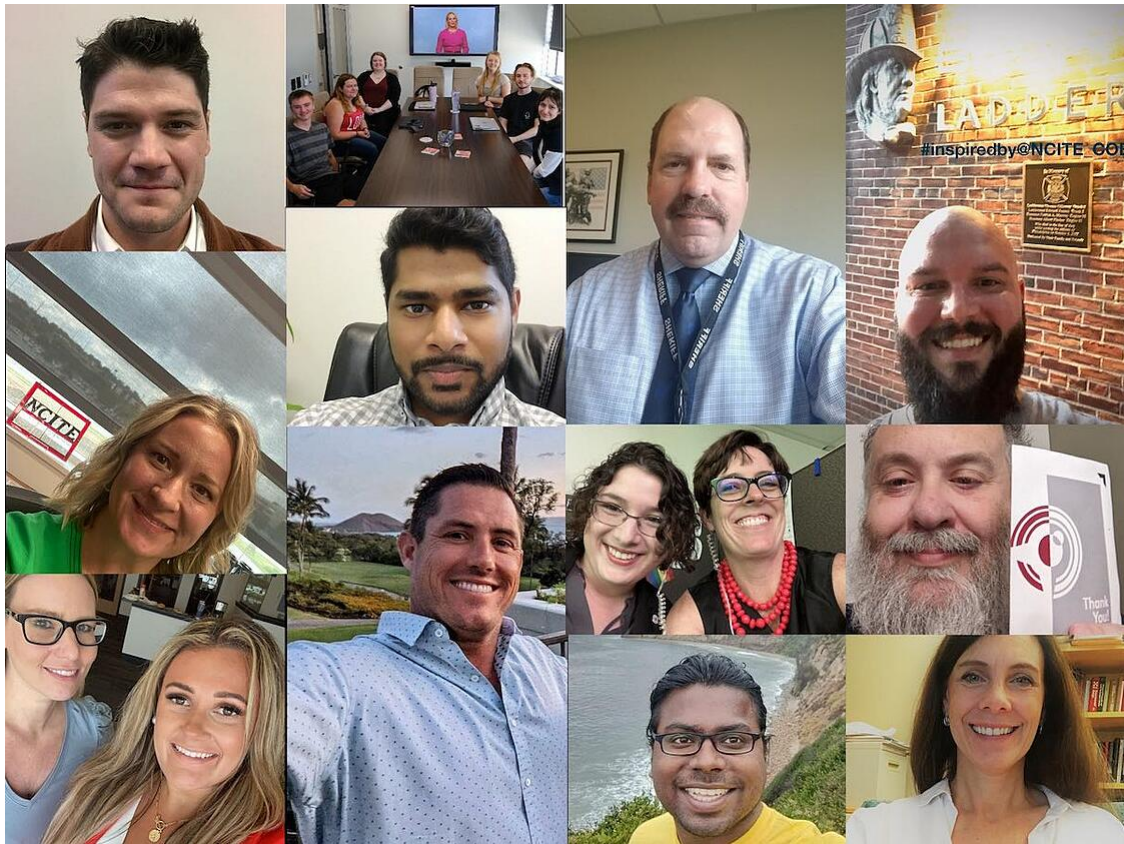
Our country faces tremendous challenges on multiple fronts. Those challenges drive us to work even harder, better, and more collaboratively. I look forward to seeing how we can grow our ability to serve the public good. I envision a productive research year!

GINA LIGON
NCITE Center Director



ENVISION21 RECAP

NCITE's first annual meeting was held on June 29, streamed live from [Sonburst Communication](#) in Omaha. Sonburst did an excellent job at the controls. Thanks to those who attended and sent in selfies! It was nice to have you "with" us.



JOHN COHEN

ENVISION21 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

JOHN COHEN**Individuals, radicalized by extremist narratives online, are a pressing threat**

By Lauren O'Malley, UNO MBA student

John Cohen, Homeland Security's coordinator for counterterrorism and assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention, was NCITE's keynote speaker. With more than three decades of experience in law enforcement, counterintelligence, and homeland security, and previous experience working for President Obama, his remarks were both informative and inspiring. Cohen now serves as senior official performing the duties of undersecretary for DHS Intelligence and Analysis.

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BREAKOUT SESSIONS**Reverse pitch approach gave DHS senior leaders the floor; researchers listened**

ENVISION21 featured a unique opportunity for DHS senior leaders to inform researchers and attendees with problems they currently face. This format, called the "reverse pitch," emphasizes identifying the problem itself rather than formulating a solution. Without first identifying the nature of the problem to be solved, it can be difficult to ensure the proposed solution is addressing the right need to yield positive results. That is why the "reverse pitch" format is so effective. This year, there were four breakout sessions that aligned with NCITE's research themes:

- **Challenges of Confronting Domestic Terrorism** featuring senior leaders from DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis Counterterrorism Mission Center
- **Next-Gen Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Research & Implementation** featuring leaders of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the DHS National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Program
- **Future of Terrorism Prevention** featuring a research advisor from the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3)
- **Building the DHS Workforce of the Future** featuring a senior leader from DHS Intelligence and Analysis

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Dana Saft

DHS OUP Program Manager for NCITE



Lindsay Odvody

NCITE Business Operations Director



Erin Grace

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Doug Derrick

NCITE Director of Innovation and Transition

NCITEr INFORMATION

The speakers, below, offered pointers on how researchers can enhance research impact. This following is a summary:

Performance metrics:

- Work with DHS end-users to identify areas of research need.
- Determine how proposed research contributes to operations while protecting the homeland.
- Establish the baseline to determine the research benefit. For example, this is how to quantify impact: Does proposed research improve signal detection or cost savings? Would it reduce risk and increase security? Is there a value to the information or training? Does it improve performance of someone at DHS?
- Transition research to “actionable insights” that people can use.
- Deliverables “don’t just sit on the shelf.”

Funding capacity:

- Consider the BOA or basic ordering agreement between federal agencies and formal institutions like NCITE for prescribed tasks.
- Any federal agency can add funding to our BOA through an inter-agency agreement for tasks prescribed by agencies that fall under NCITE’s counterterrorism research mission.
- Benefit: fast, flexible way for government stakeholders to reach expertise of NCITE consortium members for help with counterterrorism problems.
- Benefit: Researchers get additional opportunities to craft projects tailored to DHS needs.

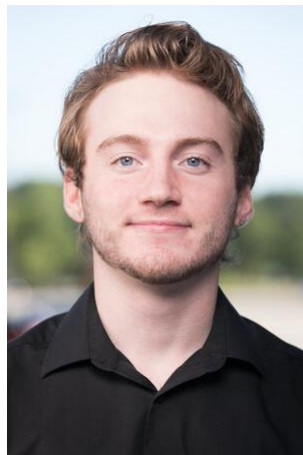
Communicating your work:

- Translate your work so someone like your smart cousin who operates outside the government or university can understand.
- Know who your audience is and know what your story is. Your work is important, impactful and relevant.
- Use clear, concise, plain language. Think visually. Identify as an NCITE researcher. Include links, tag NCITE.
- Quoted or cited in a news outlet? Let us know – we will make sure DHS sees it.

Transitioning your research to market:

- Have documented and demonstrated performance and engagement with DHS components.
- Find people who champion and are excited about the research.
- It's not enough to have research and share it in halls of academia for NCITE. Make sure it hits the mark.
- The University of Nebraska has a good transition office that we can tap or follow your university's lead. If you have something worth disclosing as a new invention or need further help developing research to transition, contact us.

GET TO KNOW



BYRON MOORE

UNO senior

NCITE communications team creator of NCITE logo

Essay: Working for NCITE during Covid-19 – and while overseas

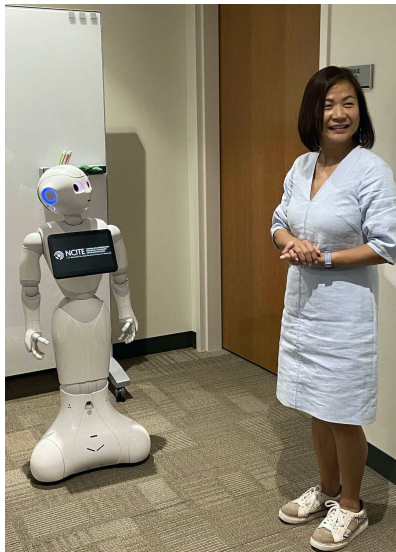
I was in Greece January of 2020 when the first troubling signs started.

Just fresh into a semester abroad program, I was helping UNO professors Gina Ligon and Doug Derrick finalize a grant application to become the next DHS center of excellence. I had designed an early version of the NCITE logo and other graphics. A five-hour day trip separated me from my Greek place of residence when the U.S. government raised all travel warnings to their maximum level, resulting in the program's cancellation. I had to go home.

However wise of a decision it was, I was devastated, and returned to Omaha in March.

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INSIDE NCITE



BECOME A BRIGHT LIGHT FOR NCITE

NCITE is hiring for two operations positions: Education Programs and Events Manager and DHS Engagements Project Manager.

Learn more and apply today!

LEARN MORE!

NEW CHANCELLOR VISITS NCITE: JO LI

UNO Chancellor Jo Li got to see NCITE research space and meet researchers and students. Bonus? Pepper the Robot offered a warm (for a robot!) greeting.

Li took the helm at the nearly 16,000-student UNO on July 1 and made a point of swinging by NCITE at the College of Business Administration at Mammel Hall on July 23. She sported her running shoes "so I can get around campus quickly," as she has said.

Li is former dean of the College of Business at Florida International University. A first-gen college student, Li has bachelor's and doctoral degrees in finance from Florida International.



GRANT AWARD

Reintegrating families of foreign terrorist fighters

New NCITE researcher Austin Doctor secures nearly \$352,000

Austin Doctor, assistant professor of political science who joined NCITE this summer, won a DHS grant to study how best to repatriate and reintegrate the spouses and children of foreign fighters.

Doctor will lead a team that includes Devorah Margolin and Haroro Ingram, both researchers at NCITE partner, the George Washington University Program on Extremism, as well as Omar Mohammed, a historian from Mosul, and Tanya Mehra, a senior research fellow at the International Centre for Counterterrorism – The Hague.

The two-year grant will fund a deep dive into research on best practices of serving the humanitarian and security needs around spouses and children of foreign fighters currently detained overseas. And it will pay for field work in Iraq, the Netherlands, and Nebraska.

A grant kickoff meeting with DHS was held on July 28, and Doctor got to sign the new NCITE board celebrating milestones in difficult challenges.

Interesting people? Upcoming events?

Send ideas for our next NCITEr edition to NCITE's egrace@unomaha.edu.



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