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National Counterterrorism Innovation,
Technology, and Education (NCITE)

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The NCITEr Newsletter December 2023

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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DECEMBER 2023



Dear Reader,

I write to you as we complete our Year 4 semiannual report for the Department of Homeland Security Office of University Programs – the component of the Science and Technology Directorate that funds our Center and consortium.

I am struck by all that we've done so far in 2023 across our 29 active projects.

In the last six months, we held meetings with 150 government end users to share our findings and make sure the knowledge we generate gets to those who need it. We gave 44 academic talks, and we responded to 18 government and media requests for assistance. We had eight peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication, and our research was cited 64 times in the media. We funded the education of 53 students at our universities, and we reached 492 working professionals through NCITE workshops and seminars.

Our work is bearing fruit at a time when it's desperately needed. Americans' tolerance for ideological violence has steadily increased since 2017, according to

our research team from Chapman University. But we find ourselves in an even more tense and uncertain threat environment since Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7.

This means we enter this holiday season with a country divided, faith-based communities under threat, and a counterterrorism and prevention workforce on high alert.

To meet these challenges, our consortium must innovate. We must skate to where the puck is going.

To this end, my hope for you is that your end-of-year discussions with government stakeholders, your co-investigators, and your students will spark new insights – and perhaps the next project workplan for our [Year 5 Request for Proposals](#), which is open until Feb. 9.

I also hope this final 2023 NCITEr Newsletter will inspire you. Here, you will read about an NCITE board member's [impactful career defending science in the federal government](#). You will hear from one of our graduate students [who was inspired by this year's American Society of Criminology Conference](#). And you will learn about a [new patent we filed to improve suspicious activity reporting](#).

But most of all, I hope that you will see that you are part of a growing and important consortium dedicated to generating new – and vital – knowledge for an inspired workforce.

Happy Holidays,



GINA LIGON
NCITE Center Director



NCITE Opens Year 5 Request for Proposals



NCITE is accepting project proposals for its fifth research year. The proposal application window is open through **Friday, Feb. 9, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. ET**. Proposals should directly relate to NCITE's four research priorities:

1. The nature of counterterrorism and targeted violence operations
2. The nationwide suspicious activity reporting (SAR) initiative
3. Targeted violence and terrorism prevention (TVTP) program evaluation
4. Counterterrorism and targeted violence prevention workforce development

[LEARN MORE AND SUBMIT](#)

**How the Social Sciences Can Aid
National Security: A Q&A with Rik Legault**

Q&A:
Rik Legault
DHS Board Member



Richard “Rik” Legault, Ph.D., a member of NCITE’s External Advisory Board, was recently awarded the 2023 Meritorious Senior Professional Award. NCITE spoke with Legault about his career and his thoughts on the role of the social sciences in national security.

[READ THE INTERVIEW](#)

NCITE Files Patent on Suspicious Activity Reporting Chatbot



On Oct. 6, NCITE filed a patent for its suspicious activity chatbot technology, developed by researchers Erin Kearns, Ph.D. and Joel Elson, Ph.D. With patent approval, NCITE would be able to license and tailor the technology to agencies and businesses in the public and private sectors. Tin Nguyen, Ph.D., is an NCITE senior research associate and NCITE's technology transition lead. "The goal now is not just to have a business plan, but to develop a sustainable business that results in the technology being used for the public good," he said.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE PATENT](#)

NCITE hosted the following events this past quarter:

NCITE PRESENTS:
**Understanding Trauma
in Counterterrorism Work**

When: 2:30-3:15 p.m. CDT | Thursday, Oct. 19
Register for livestream at unmaha.edu/ncite

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

PANELISTS

Presented in partnership with
University of Minnesota and UNMHA

Panelists:

- Celia "CC" Durall, National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC)
- Matthew Coyne, Ph.D., SCIF Policy
- Neil Shortland, Ph.D., University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
- Dany Mulye, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Security Studies

NCITE PRESENTS:
**A Conversation with
the NYPD's Rebecca
Weiner**

GUEST

MODERATOR

Guests:

- Rebecca Weiner, New York City Police Department (NYPD)
- Samuel Higgins, University of Minnesota at Omaha



Understanding Trauma in Counterterrorism Work

- On Oct. 19, NCITE hosted an expert panel that explored the causes and impact of trauma on those in the counterterrorism mission community. Their discussion covered the risk of burnout, the importance of value-laden work, and organizational policies that can support the counterterrorism workforce. The panel featured Celia Durall, executive director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and three NCITE project leads: Daisy Muibu, Ph.D.; Matthew Crayne, Ph.D., of SUNY Albany; and Neil Shortland, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts Lowell.
- [Check out a recording and recap.](#)

Protecting Faith Communities with Sam Vinograd

- On Oct. 27, in response to the Israel-Hamas war, NCITE Director Gina Ligon spoke with Samantha Vinograd, assistant secretary for counterterrorism, threat prevention, and law enforcement policy at DHS, for a discussion on threats to faith-based communities. "My greatest hope is that we create a culture of prevention here in this country that can help mitigate these threats at the earliest possible stage," Vinograd said.
- [Check out a recording and recap.](#)
- [View an NCITE-curated list of resources for protecting faith communities.](#)

A Conversation with the NYPD's Rebecca Ulam Weiner

- On Nov. 1, NCITE senior research faculty and policy associate Seamus Hughes hosted a discussion with Rebecca Ulam Weiner, deputy commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism with the NYPD. Weiner drew on a 17-year career with the agency to discuss the spike in antisemitism and violent actors since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel.
- [Check out a recording and recap.](#)

Recap NCITE's Eventful Year 3 in Annual Report

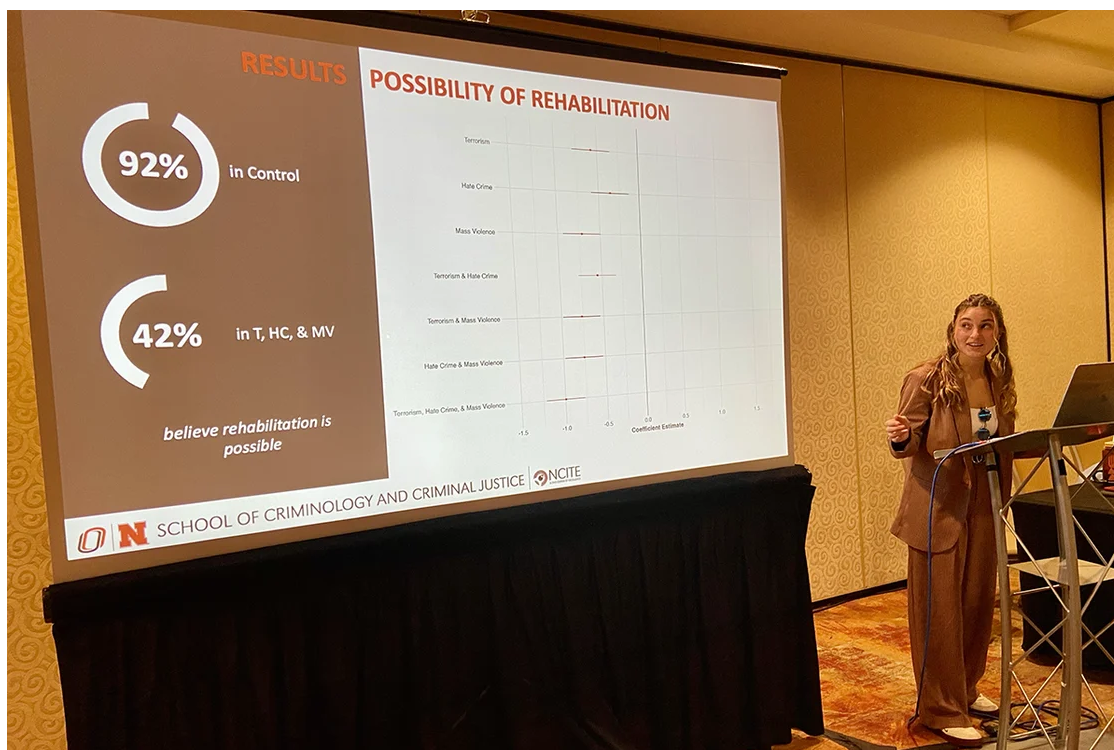


As we prepare to turn the page on the calendar, reminisce about NCITE's third year by clicking through [our annual report](#). NCITE's Year 3 was a year of firsts, including:

- Our first in-person annual conference in Omaha, which drew more than 200 guests from across the U.S. and abroad.
- Our first review with the Department of Homeland Security in Washington, D.C., where a panel of expert reviewers offered feedback on NCITE's projects and operations.
- Our first opportunity to show our government partners, colleagues in academia, and the world that we have grown into a mature, thriving Center of Excellence.

READ THE FULL REPORT

A Week of Learning and Celebration: NCITE Attends ASC



NCITE graduate student Callie Vitro reflects on her experience attending the American Society of Criminology conference this past November. NCITE celebrated the following:

- Erin Kearns, Ph.D., head of prevention research initiatives, was elected ASC chair of the Division of Terrorism and Bias Crimes (DTBC).
- Graduate student Isaac Moelter won first place in the DTBC's student paper award.

"I left with a newfound appreciation for my chosen discipline – as criminologists, our research has a real-world impact, and we can use it to push the U.S. criminal justice system forward," Vitro writes.

HEAR FROM CALLIE

June 26-27: Mark Your Calendars for ENVISION24



NCITE is hosting its next in-person conference in Omaha **June 26-27, 2024**. At the invite-only conference, we'll bring our consortium of expert researchers together with leaders in national security, academia, law enforcement, and more. Some conference presentations will be streamed online and available for public viewing.

We will also celebrate the move to our new office space with a **ribbon cutting on June 25**.

Invitations and details to come!

NCITE Researchers Receive NSF Funding





NCITE researchers Shane Connelly, Ph.D., from the University of Oklahoma, and Joe Young, Ph.D., from American University, are involved in research that won U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) awards for projects that aim to improve the translation of academic research into practice.

- Connelly is a co-PI on a team that won nearly \$6 million for a project that will create an academy to train people to translate research and offer funding for those interested in careers involving translational research.
- Young is a co-PI on a team that won nearly \$6 million in funding for a project that seeks to create a database of methods for translating knowledge and develop research translation training.

NCITE Center Updates



Farewell to Kayla Walters

Kayla Walters, Ph.D., NCITE senior research associate and scientific project management lead, will leave NCITE Jan. 3 to pursue new opportunities in the Washington, D.C., area. Since joining NCITE in 2021, Walters has been instrumental in managing the consortium's research portfolio, producing semiannual and annual reports to DHS, and organizing end-user working groups. We wish her the best!


Got News to Share? Tell Us!

Do you know an NCITE investigator who has done something amazing recently? We want to know! Please share news about awards, publications, and other accomplishments early and often. We welcome student news especially – thesis defenses, conference presentations, accepted journal articles, and more. Email them to ncite@unomaha.edu.

A Selection of NCITEr in the News

- **Pete Simi and Seamus Hughes** (Chapman University and University of Nebraska at Omaha, respectively), *CNN*
"A deluge of violent messages: How a surge in threats to public officials could disrupt American democracy"
 - **Steven Windisch** (Temple University), *WHYY*
"The Rise in Hate Crimes and Bigotry"
 - **Adan Vela** (University of Central Florida), *EurekaAlert!*
"UCF receives 3 minority serving institution awards to promote collaborations with NASA"
 - **Karyn Sporer** (University of Maine), *KETV*
"See something, say something": Terrorism researcher addresses mass shooting red flags"
 - **Gina Ligon and Seamus Hughes** (University of Nebraska at Omaha), *Omaha World-Herald*
"Midlands Voices: Personal threats against officials have no place in our democracy"
 - **Mario Scalora and Denise Bulling** (University of Nebraska – Lincoln), *Nebraska Today*
"Nebraska's Public Policy Center marking 25th anniversary"
 - **Gina Ligon** (University of Nebraska at Omaha) *Washington Post*
"Gambling on a 'pragmatic' Hamas was a deadly mistake, analysts say"
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GRANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT & DISCLAIMER

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