

University of Fairfax Unveils Ground-breaking InfoSec Evaluation Research

Washington Evaluators attend presentation offered by University of Fairfax PhD candidate which presents unique information security-focused research utilizing cutting edge evaluation research methods.

Vienna, VA - March 1, 2006 -- The University of Fairfax—the only U.S. graduate institution specializing solely in Information Assurance—recently presented research by one of its doctoral candidates at the *Washington Evaluators Brown Bag Lunch* held at *Dow Lohnes and Albertson*, a leading D.C. law firm.

Dr. Norma Fleischman, President of Washington Evaluators, when introducing the event stated, “The University of Fairfax is a pioneering institution which brings evaluation research and field research methods to address cutting edge issues in information security policy and methods.”

During this event, entitled *Evaluation Research and Cybercrime: Strange Bedfellows*, the University’s President, Dr. Victor N. Berlin, and Gary L. Tarbet, PhD candidate in Information Assurance Policy, presented members of the IT and evaluation research communities with a prime example of the latest research from the University’s doctoral program. Judging by the substantial turnout, the title of this event produced the desired effect: stimulating conversation and fostering the exchange of ideas among InfoSec and Evaluation professionals.

Victor N. Berlin, Ph.D., President of the University of Fairfax, led the discussion by describing the University’s non-traditional approach to doctoral learning, which employs field-based practical research to address issues and evaluate trends in information security. As Dr. Berlin explained, “The University of Fairfax seeks to develop a cadre of information assurance/security professionals who can utilize field research methods to actually test and assess best practices in the Information Security arenas of the public and private sectors.” His presentation highlighted the University’s doctoral students and faculty’s examination of issues surrounding the implementation of federal information security policies and methods in civilian, DOD, and intelligence agencies.

At the University of Fairfax, dissertation advisors guide Ph.D. students as they engage in the study of actual conditions—past and current—in the InfoSec domain. Using exploratory research as well as hypothesis testing, these Ph.D. students acquire the research skills they will be expected to use in a variety of job settings. The students are also introduced to conducting quasi-experimentation and retrospective qualitative case studies—methods that a savvy InfoSec researcher must master.

Mr. Tarbet, a Ph.D. candidate and faculty member at the University of Fairfax who also serves as Senior Associate at System 1, Inc., a government consulting firm, presented his multi-case study on the impact of organizational culture and leadership on the implementation of Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) requirements. His research examines five Department of Energy Office of Science

Laboratories. “Studying the organizational culture in federal agencies can explain variations and fluctuations in FISMA grades as well as the actual level of security in these agencies,” said Tarbet. His study shows that the effective handling of information security challenges has attitudinal, managerial, and human behavior dimensions.

The success of this event was clear from the level of dialogue that ensued after the thought-provoking presentations. In fact, the participants were so intrigued by Mr. Tarbet’s work that they have asked him to return to present his final research findings at the conclusion of his study.

The University of Fairfax plans to hold similar community outreach events in the future. For a copy of Mr. Tarbet’s PowerPoint presentation, please email Jo-Anne King, Vice President of Enrollment Management at the University of Fairfax, at jking125@ufairfax.net.

About The University of Fairfax

The University of Fairfax, a private, non-profit graduate university located in the national capital region, is the only U.S. graduate institution focused solely on Information Assurance. The University was established to address accelerating shortages in qualified information security personnel and provides high quality, online graduate degree programs at the master’s and doctorate levels for adult professionals. Project-driven curricula are delivered through web-based technology enabling the University to serve a national student body. The faculty is comprised of senior practitioners in information assurance drawn from federal agencies, federal contractors and private-sector employers. To secure your future, and to learn more about the University of Fairfax, its programs and services, please visit www.UniversityofFairfax.net or contact Jo-Anne King at (703) 790-3203 or email jking125@ufairfax.net.

About Washington Evaluators

Washington Evaluators (WE) is a professional society devoted to fostering state-of-the-art knowledge and information sharing about evaluation. Founded over 20 years ago in the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area, WE is comprised of members from a diverse mix of Federal, State, and local government agencies, universities and educational settings, corporate businesses and independent consulting firms, and nonprofit associations. Its members' skills and experiences encompass varied content areas and methodologies, ranging from qualitative to quantitative. WE activities span policy and program planning evaluation, evaluation designs, survey research and statistical analysis, among other areas of evaluation in the public and private sectors. WE is a local affiliate of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). In addition to contributing to professional journals, publications, and professional meetings, WE members serve on AEA committees and journal editorial boards.