Announcement: $1.5M Unrestricted Funding for Cyber Research

The Stanford Cyber Initiative produces policy-relevant research on the interactions between cyber technologies, governments, and societies. Cyber technologies encompass networked digital technologies – notably, the internet – and extend to embedded digital structures and devices that facilitate, enhance and scale human endeavors. The Cyber Initiative's interdisciplinary research, combining the social sciences with computer science and engineering, yields a superior policy framework with which to address immediate cyber threats and challenges, enhance the social gains from technical innovation, and head off longer-term emergent flaws.

The Cyber Initiative is pleased to announce a new round of funding for research projects from the University community that address 3 focus areas:

1. **Designing policy to promote computer security.**

   Domestic and international policy affects the development of new technologies, how they are used, and how they are regulated. We are interested in proposals to study the design of policies -- domestic or international; civilian or military -- that promote computer security, while keeping in mind the needs of all affected parties.

2. **Securing the financial system.**

   The economic impact of cyber breaches and the resiliency of our financial systems are ongoing concerns. Companies are facing challenges of managing cyber risks through insurance or otherwise. In addition, emerging cyber technologies like blockchain have the potential to massively disrupt money-transfer systems, contracting, and asset accounting. We are interested in research proposals that examine the security of financial systems, and develop new financial technologies that can enhance its security and reliability.

3. **Preserving shared norms and democracy online.**

   The utility and functionality of the internet depend on the development and acceptance of shared norms, priorities, and rules. Global stakeholders differ in their definitions and understanding of these principles of governance, which leads to legal, economic, and political tensions. The roles of governments and companies in protecting information integrity, promoting democratic deliberation, and guaranteeing sovereignty over democratic processes are also changing rapidly. Recent challenges such as the theft of private electronic information to affect election outcomes, the spread of propaganda disguised as journalism, attacks on the security and integrity of election infrastructure, and the ability of non-state actors to pose serious cyber disruptions of democratic processes, underscore the need for greater attention to policy development and implementation to enhance democratic institutions. We are interested in research proposals that address the
intersection of the role of cyber technologies, political actors, and government policies in the preservation of shared norms and democracy online.

We seek to support multidisciplinary ideas and projects within the Stanford community. Proposers are encouraged to form teams with members from different disciplines. We also seek to support the collection and production of data sets that would be valuable across focus areas. For a description of previously funded proposals, please visit http://fsi.stanford.edu/cyber/sciprojects

We will be holding two events:

- **Tuesday May 29th, 12pm** in the William J Perry Conference Room (2nd floor, central wing) in **Encina Hall**
- **Thursday May 24th, 5pm**, in Shriram 366 (Science & Engineering Quad, 3rd floor)

at which interested parties can discuss research topics with Initiative leadership and meet potential collaborators. Please RSVP to aberke@stanford.edu to attend either event, or for further discussion about how your proposal idea might fit into one of the above focus areas.

**Proposal Types**

We encourage both large and small proposals. For larger proposals, teams that can demonstrate additional substantial pledges of matching or parallel funding and also signal a commitment to developing institutional capacity at Stanford will receive priority.

Large proposals must demonstrate a commitment to producing research and policy-focused writing, building institutional capacity (e.g., by hiring researchers or fellows with relevant expertise), raising additional funding from sources other than the Cyber Initiative, and developing and teaching courses related to the proposal topic.

Smaller grants are in the form of seedling funding (approximately $50,000) intended to jumpstart new ideas and early research.

We plan to distribute up to $1,500,000 in funding across two tiers:

- Up to 3 projects of between $250,000-400,000 each
- Up to 8 projects of between $50,000-80,000 each

**Proposal Review and Funding Process:**

The Stanford Cyber Initiative invites proposals submitted at any time, with a final deadline of **6/30/2018 (June 30, 2018)**. Funding will be distributed as unrestricted funding; proposals will be reviewed and teams will be notified by
8/15/2018, and funding of successful proposals will commence 10/1/2018. Project renewal (capped at a maximum of two renewals) is contingent on research progress and renewal requests, which are communicated in a yearly progress report.

Review of all proposals will be completed by 8/15/2017 (August 15, 2017) by our executive committee in consultation with the Stanford Cyber Initiative advisory committee and additional subject expert reviewers as appropriate. Proposals will be evaluated along several dimensions, as outlined below, though not all of the criteria below must be met for a successful grant award.

- **Research focus:** Does the project focus on critical issues within one of the defined focus areas outlined above?
- **Multidisciplinarity:** Does the project involve multidisciplinary teams (with participants from more than one department, institute, or school) or describe plans to form such collaborations?
- **Practical policy applications:** Will the project lead to results that will contribute to policy formulation and implementation? Does the proposed project generate new data about current conditions or landscapes, and investigate novel solutions and future concerns regarding cyber policy?
- **Institutional capacity building:** Will the project increase the capacity of Stanford’s faculty and research infrastructure for investigating issues within the selected focus area?
- **Scholarly merit:** Will the project advance our knowledge about existing and emerging cyber technologies and their effects on the selected focus area? Does the project draw on existing expertise at Stanford, and support Stanford’s reputation as a center of scholarly excellence?
- **Scope and budget:** Can the project be successfully implemented within the proposed budget and time frame? How will the project leverage its impact, including by receiving supplementary funding?
- **Teaching:** Does the research proposed also produce teaching opportunities on campus?

**Proposal Format**

Proposals should include:

- Names and titles of project team members, including students
- A 150-200 word abstract suitable to be published on the Cyber Initiative website
- A narrative that addresses how the project addresses one or more of the Initiative’s focus areas and includes goals for the project, plans for meeting those goals, research objectives, potential results, and methods
- A description of any special computing resources required for the project, as well as any issues related to confidentiality or privacy
- A timeline for the project
• A budget outline including expected expenses
• A description of how researchers will communicate and disseminate results and how researchers will engage external policy audiences (e.g., through briefings and testimony) and media, and whether the proposal includes funding to host conferences and symposia or to publish in respected journals
• If researchers are requesting support for similar work or already have support from other sources, on campus or off, a listing of those proposals, amounts, and funding sources must be included in the proposal.

Proposals are limited to five pages of text including any figures. Applicants are encouraged to be as concise in their exposition as possible.

**Principal Investigators**

The Principal Investigators (PIs) must be Stanford University (including School of Medicine) faculty members or directors of relevant institutes or organizations. Projects that require collaboration with an investigator or collaborators outside Stanford will be considered. Where proposals involve external parties, it is incumbent on the recipient to ensure that collaborators follow and are bound by Stanford’s research policies and applicable laws. PIs of funded projects will be required to prepare annual interim progress reports on research results, policy engagement, and financial expenditures. Subsequent year funding is contingent upon the submission of the interim progress report. PIs will also be required to deliver a presentation or seminar for the Cyber Initiative seminar series and to submit a final report and presentation at the end of the project.

Project PIs and students and postdocs are expected to participate in technical review sessions, workshops in related areas, and other activities that report on the research being performed, and can request funding to support the dissemination of their research by, for example, holding a conference or symposium.

**Submission Requirements and Links**

Proposals should be prepared with all materials combined in a single PDF and submitted to stanford-cyber@stanford.edu. For more details about the program and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit the Cyber Initiative’s website at cyber.stanford.edu.

If you have a proposal idea and would like to discuss how well it fits within this solicitation’s goals, or if you would like advice or assistance with assembling a cross-disciplinary collaboration, please contact Allison Berke (aberke@stanford.edu).