Cybersecurity field gains ground

By DEBORAH CIRCHELLI
EDUCATION WRITER
DAYTONA BEACH — Navy SEAL Team 6 members had more on their minds than killing Osama bin Laden when they raided his Pakistan compound in 2011.

They also wanted to be sure to grab computers, flash drives, disks and other equipment to help determine plans by al-Qaida.

The manhunt of bin Laden, recently portrayed in the movie “Zero Dark Thirty,” is just one example Daytona State College Associate Professor Phillip Craiger cited for the importance of digital forensics experts.

Daytona State College is the lead institution of a consortium of 10 colleges in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas seeking to train a new generation of experts.

The project, which will develop online materials to train students, is funded by a National Science Foundation grant totaling $1 million over a four-year period.

Cyberforensics is a way of gathering, processing, interpreting and using digital evidence related to cybercrimes.

Craiger said such experts are required more and more for criminal prosecution cases. The goal of the grant is to develop courses that are consistent among each consortium school.

Craiger, who teaches in the School of Engineering Technology at DSC’s Advanced Technology College and is one of the principal investigators on a grant, said many attacks on computer systems are automated, adding that “right now, every computer network in the world is under attack.”

Most recently news reports stated that Twitter discovered hackers may have stolen user names, email addresses and encrypted passwords belonging to 200,000 of its users.

“The real bad guys, you never see them coming and most likely never leave tracks,” he said. “These are the guys you have to be concerned with.”

As part of the grant, a new classroom course started this semester at Daytona.

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The U.S. Department of Labor Statistics shows employment for information security analysts, web developers and computer network architects is expected to grow 15 percent from 2012 to 2020, faster than the average of all occupations.

There are more jobs available today than there are people who can do the work, said Mark Pollock, Daytona State’s director of technology and associate professor, who is a principal investigator for the grant along with Craiger.

Police, who have seen an increase in computer crimes over the years, want to get far ahead of the criminal mind through training.

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No longer are IT personnel the only ones who can help with computer crime and child pornography.

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While law enforcement and technology are getting smarter, so is the criminal’s mind.

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The U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team in 2013 responded to more than 180,000 incident reports and released 148 cyber security advisories and informational products to public and private sector partners, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

The Department of Homeland Security prevented $6.9 million in potential losses through cyber security investigations that semester.

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