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**For more information, contact:**

Julie Hauser

The Hauser Group, Inc.

(314) 436-9090 (o)/314-629-3887 (c)

Ellen Krohne

Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois

(618) 692-9745

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS AND CYBERSECURITY PARTNERS ANNOUNCE  
FORMATION OF MIDWEST CYBER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

***Regional educational institutions teaming up to address lack of certifications needed for cybersecurity  
related positions at Scott AFB and other employers across the metro area***

**Edwardsville, Ill., October 27, 2015...**The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois today joined with partners from Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC), Webster University, The Aegis Strategies Foundation, and leaders from St. Clair County and Scott Air Force Base (AFB) to announce the launch of the Midwest Cyber Center of Excellence (MWCCOE). The new non-profit organization has been formed to address unprecedented needs in the cybersecurity labor market being projected by local military, financial, healthcare, government and law enforcement agencies.

In recent months, the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois led a working group at the request of Scott AFB leadership to evaluate the viability of a cybersecurity center of excellence in the Midwest. The St. Louis Regional Chamber contributed to the effort, authoring a research report analyzing the specific cybersecurity workforce needs.

“The report revealed that, while other centers of excellence exist on both coasts, there is nothing comparable in the Midwest, and the conditions here are not only favorable to such an endeavor, they demand it,” noted Mike Riley, president of the Leadership Council, a founding partner of the MWCCOE.

Among the other founding partners are the Cyberspace Research Institute of Webster University and Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC), both of which have a long history with Scott AFB and offer needed certifications and graduate degrees in cybersecurity. Additional plans are to align efforts with Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC) to integrate their National Security Agency certification into the offerings at the new center.

The Aegis Strategies Foundation is the charitable arm of Aegis Strategies, LLC, a local, veteran-owned defense consultancy located immediately outside Scott AFB at 735 Seibert Road. Aegis has stepped up as founding partner to fund the executive director and supporting staff, as well as to donate space to initially house the MWCCOE at its state-of-the-art training center and lab facility. Aegis will also design, host and manage a dedicated website which will launch at [www.mwccoe.org](http://www.mwccoe.org).

“Our company is dedicated to serving our customers in the Department of Defense and in the community,” said Jason Carter, president of Aegis Strategies and board member of the new cyber center. “It was only fitting, given Aegis’ growing cybersecurity expertise, that we partner with the Leadership Council, SWIC, and Webster University to start the MWCCOE. The collaboration between these groups to quickly act and organize is impressive, and we’re excited to house the center while contributing our time and financial resources to rapidly transform the initial vision into a reality that meets regional workforce needs.”

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## *New Midwest Cyber Center of Excellence Launched First Add*

The top priority of the MWCCOE is workforce development, first in relation to the growing cyber footprint at Scott Air Force Base, including the new Cyber Readiness Support Squadrons, but secondarily in relation to the many other cyber-intensive industries operating across the St. Louis region, such as finance, healthcare, government, etc. The Center also will work to raise public awareness of cyber security issues.

In its first phase, the MWCCOE will:

- Offer cybersecurity certification training to produce a workforce that meets current needs;
- Provide youth education to generate a future workforce through the implementation of a CyberPatriot Program in area high schools and grade schools; and
- Raise further awareness through potential partnerships with other local institutions.

The second phase of the MWCCOE will engage in cyber-oriented research and development and entrepreneurial activity.

Webster University's Cyberspace Research Institute will donate expertise and services in the form of advanced training in its M.S. degree in cybersecurity, other professional courses, a cybersecurity threat detection certificate, and will play a key role in getting the CyberPatriot Program off the ground. Trainees at the Center of Excellence will have access to virtual laboratories housed on Webster's St. Louis campus.

"Based on a review of trends in the cybersecurity industry and the St. Louis market, it's clear that there is a growing need for workforce development and other support. St. Louis already has many strengths in this area but competition is strong and demand is growing," said Thomas Johnson, associate vice president and chief of Strategic Initiatives for Webster University. "President Elizabeth Stroble, the leadership of CRI and I are thrilled to be a partner in this new initiative to help meet that demand."

Dr. Georgia Costello, President of SWIC, shares that enthusiasm. SWIC will provide access to computer labs and training space at our campuses to support the MWCCOE and will provide classes for needed certifications such as the CCNA Security, Security + and Network +. The community college will also assist with grant writing, marketing and Career Center Services.

"Greater St. Louis has a significant regional IT workforce. Boeing, MasterCard and other corporations, educational institutions and governmental agencies are heavily involved in cybersecurity," Costello said. "IT and cybersecurity education and training are key aspects of regional workforce development and we will work with the other partners in the Center of Excellence to build that workforce."

Future partner, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, is recognized as having one of the nations' elite programs in cyber security. SIUC'S Center for Academic Excellence for Information Assurance and Security Education has earned this prestigious certification by the U.S. National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security. Only two such designations exist in Illinois.

"Southern Illinois University looks forward to developing partnerships with the Midwest Cyber Center of Excellence to bring our expertise to the Scott Air Force Base labor market," stated Dr. Randy Dunn, president of the SIU System. "This is an excellent initiative for which we believe SIU Carbondale has national prominence to add value to the work of Webster and Southwestern Illinois College. Our students who graduate with an SIUC degree in Information Systems and Applied Technologies with a certificate in Information Assurance and Security are some of the most highly prized students and future employees in the cyber security arena."

*New Midwest Cyber Center of Excellence Launched  
Second and Final Add*

St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern also highlighted the significance of this new endeavor. “Establishing a Cyber Center of Excellence has the potential to support Scott AFB and other stakeholders, improve regional economic development efforts, and further advance Southwestern Illinois and Greater St. Louis,” said Kern. “It also could make a real difference as we continue to make the case that our location by Scott AFB is the best location for the new National Geospatial Agency.”

A search is now underway for an executive director to take the reins and oversee the operations at the Midwest Cyber Center of Excellence, with support from a board of directors initially comprised of representatives of the various founding partners. Interested applicants can find out more about the position at

[www.leadershipcouncilswil.com](http://www.leadershipcouncilswil.com).

For more information, visit [www.mwccoe.org](http://www.mwccoe.org) or call (618) 692-9745.

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