

Press Release

For Immediate Release
February 6, 2008

Washington D.C.
FBI National Press Office
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West Virginia University Named National Leader for FBI Biometrics Research *WVU-FBI Partner on Biometric Center of Excellence*

Morgantown, West Virginia—West Virginia University (WVU) is the Federal Bureau of Investigation's lead academic partner in biometrics research, under the terms of an agreement signed today on the WVU campus.

"West Virginia University has comprehensive, integrative research and education programs in biometrics and is known worldwide for its identification technology research," said Thomas E. Bush, III, Assistant Director of the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division. "The University is uniquely positioned to serve as the liaison to the academic research community for the FBI's Biometric Center of Excellence."

The agreement, signed by WVU President Mike Garrison and FBI Assistant Director Bush, leverages the University's academic research and knowledge in the biometric identification arena and identifies WVU as the academic arm of the FBI's Biometric Center of Excellence. WVU's role is to provide biometrics research support to the FBI and its law enforcement and national security partners and serve as the FBI liaison to the academic community of biometric researchers nationwide.

"WVU's expertise in biometrics positions us to distinctively perform with capabilities central to the FBI's mission, as well as to bring together academic networks in those areas," said Garrison. "We are very excited to be involved in a project that will not only impact national security efforts but will also have worldwide significance. The Center will provide WVU students with an academic opportunity that they will not find at any other institution in the United States."

Added Senator Robert C. Byrd, "A partnership between WVU and the FBI is a winning combination. The men and women in Clarksburg and Morgantown will be on the forefront of securing our nation while also working to advance biometric technology. I am proud to have supported this initiative from the very beginning, and will continue to do all I can to help further its advancement."

The FBI Science and Technology Branch is creating a Biometric Center of Excellence to coordinate biometric and identity management activities within the FBI and partner with other U.S. Government agencies. The FBI Biometric Center of Excellence will facilitate research, development, training and other activities related to biometric technologies and systems. Through the FBI Biometric Center of Excellence, the FBI will provide quality biometric services and technologies to fight terrorism and aid in investigative and intelligence efforts.

WVU's National Science Foundation (NSF) Center for Identification Technology Research (CITeR) is the internationally recognized biometric research asset that enabled the new partnership. CITeR faculty and students have a well established history of forming academic teams to address specific areas of research and of reaching out to other academic institutions to form multi-university collaborations based on the needs of sponsored research.

"We are proud of the enabling role that CITeR is playing in WVU's partnership with the FBI's new Biometric Center of Excellence," said Alex Schwarzkopf, a long-time centers expert and

director of NSF's Industry/University Cooperative Research Center (I/UCRC) program. "NSF fosters the creation and maintenance of I/UCRCs throughout the U.S. by providing a small amount of seed funding and management guidance. Led by West Virginia University, with the University of Arizona as a partner, CTeR is a model of I/UCRC goals. By leveraging industry, academe, and government resources, the center strengthens U.S. competitiveness by bringing the brightest minds from multiple universities to solve the tough security problems that we face."

Byrd Professor Lawrence Hornak, Co-director of CTeR stated, "The teaming process will be used as the mechanism to reach out to other universities to perform biometric research or to engage in technology transfer to mission critical systems for the FBI. This partnership will develop an understanding of the FBI's systems needs and cultivate and evolve an academic research portfolio to help address those needs."

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