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April 28, 2005 Thursday 09:20 PM GMT

LENGTH: 691 words

HEADLINE: University of Detroit Mercy Forms Partnership With Henry Ford **Community College** and Oakland **Community College** to Promote Information Assurance Education;
Program will bring more high-tech jobs to our region

DATELINE: DETROIT April 28

BODY:

DETROIT, April 28 /PRNewswire/ -- Information assurance (IA) has gained greater importance in our post-9/11 e-commerce society. Today, the ability to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information is paramount, and IA education is essential to producing professionals with the skills needed to improve the nation's capabilities.

University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) is at the forefront of this effort, having received the federal government's Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education designation in 2004. UDM is now entering a partnership with Henry Ford **Community College** (HFCC) and Oakland **Community College** (OCC) to form the Midwest Coalition for Information Assurance, a venture that will promote Information Assurance Education. The partnership will be established with the signing of a formal agreement on Friday, April 29 from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the President's Dining Room in the Student Center on UDM's McNichols Campus.

A representative from the National Security Agency (NSA), along with Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, State Senator Gilda Jacobs, State Representative Andy Dillon, State Representative Paul Condino, State Representative Aldo Vagnozzi and other local dignitaries will be joining academic leaders from the three Coalition institutions at the event, which marks the first collaboration of its kind in **Michigan**.

UDM, as one of only 59 federally designated Centers of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education (CAE-IAE) in the nation, is the centerpiece of the Coalition's degree program, in which students can complete associate degrees at the partner institutions and continue their IA education with a bachelor's at UDM. The Coalition is sponsored by the NSA, and will both strengthen national security and establish a new industry in metro Detroit, by offering the IA industry a pool of qualified specialists in the field from which to hire.

Because of IA's critical importance in the protection of U.S. infrastructure, Coalition students have excellent job prospects. They are eligible to participate in the annual National Cyber Service Scholarship program, which fully supports their educational costs. They are also eligible for internship and employment opportunities in intelligence collection and analysis, cryptanalysis, foreign languages, and computer and information systems with the federal government and in the private sector after graduation.

"Although the program is designed to prepare students for employment in the field of Homeland Security, the courses have been aligned with a national set of 'best practices in information security' that are necessary for work in industry," said Ken Sigler, who is the program manager of the Information Technologies for Homeland Security program at Oakland **Community College**.

Jo-Ann Terry, Ph.D., vice president and dean of Career Education at HFCC, said, "We are pleased to be one of the founding members of the Coalition. This curricular track will be most beneficial to our students. We are excited about our collaboration with UDM and know that it will benefit our **community** and all students who participate."

Said UDM Computer and Information Systems Professor Dan Shoemaker, "IA as a discipline is still in its formative stages, yet it is one of the fastest growing areas in higher education. The mission of the Coalition is to develop content and curricula that conforms to the legitimate body of knowledge in IA. This is valuable to students and supports the protection of the critical infrastructure of the United States."

CAE-IAE institutions such as UDM must pass a rigorous review demonstrating their commitment to academic excellence in IA education. During the application process, an applicant's IA programs, facilities, faculty, and research are evaluated against stringent criteria. Designation as a CAE-IAE is valid for three academic years, after which the school must successfully reapply in order to retain its CAE-IAE designation.

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