



12 February 2020

Dear USF community,

I wish to share some important and exciting news regarding the leadership of Cyber Florida, a statewide center hosted at USF that advances cutting-edge research, education and community engagement in one of the most relevant disciplines of our time.

Since its inception nearly seven years ago, Cyber Florida has flourished under the direction of Sri Sridharan, an accomplished technology leader who has a keen understanding of the synergies between higher education and industry.

Sri has recently informed me of his decision to retire, effective June 30. Sri leaves big shoes to fill, and I'm pleased to announce that he has helped us identify a stellar leader to build on the strong foundation of Cyber Florida.

Effective Feb. 17, retired U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Mike McConnell, former director of the National Security Agency and a nationally regarded cybersecurity expert, will assume the role of executive director of Cyber Florida. Mike is already deeply familiar with Cyber Florida's mission and goals, having served as chair of Cyber Florida's Board of Advisors since 2015.

Our goal at USF is always to recruit the best talent – whether the brightest students, world-class faculty or top leaders of their fields – to elevate the stature of our university. Mike is one of the leading voices in cybersecurity nationally, and I have no doubt that his vast experience and relationships with key policymakers will be a tremendous asset to Cyber Florida's continued progress, which will benefit future generations of Floridians.

Mike's career spans over 50 years, focused on international and foreign intelligence issues, including 29 years as a U.S. Navy intelligence officer. In 2007, he became the second U.S. Director of National Intelligence, serving under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. From 1992 to 1996, he served as NSA director and he has received the nation's highest award for service in the U.S. intelligence community from both Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. He has also been vice chairman of Booz Allen Hamilton, a management and information technology consulting firm.

In his new role, Mike will divide his time between Tampa and Washington, D.C. In the nation's capital, Mike will leverage his relationships with the national security, homeland security, law enforcement, intelligence and business communities to identify strategic opportunities for them to work more closely with Cyber Florida. In order to help manage the day-to-day operations of Cyber Florida, we will also move quickly to hire an associate director, who will also serve as a tenured faculty member at USF.

Mike holds a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in economics from Furman University. He is a graduate of the National Defense University and the National Defense Intelligence College, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and has been awarded four honorary doctoral degrees - including one from USF.

He will seek to build on the remarkable success the Center has achieved under Sri's leadership, including:

- The creation of an interdisciplinary graduate program in cybersecurity that encompassed strengths from five USF colleges – an endeavor that led to USF becoming one of the first universities to be designated a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance/Cybersecurity by NSA/DHS;
- The formation of a State University System Cybersecurity Advisory Council, which helped our sister institutions across the state collectively create 45 programs/certificates in cybersecurity;
- The funding of 67 statewide research projects through Cyber Florida's seed award program;
- The development of hundreds of cybersecurity events across the state, including Cyber Florida's annual conference, which has grown from fewer than 100 attendees in its first year to now more than 1,400 participants coming from all over the country;
- The development of a CyberHub that includes a cutting-edge cyber range that is used for simulations, research, trainings and demonstrations;
- And much more.

Please join me in thanking Sri for all he has done for Cyber Florida and congratulating Vice Admiral McConnell.

Steve Currall  
President and Professor  
University of South Florida