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Role of homeland security courses defended

Critics say schools just seek funding; others say new threats raise need

12:00 AM CST on Friday, November 25, 2005

By **BRUCE NICHOLS** and **HOLLY K. HACKER** / The Dallas Morning

News

To fight global terrorism, America needs thinkers as well as doers, policy-makers as well as first-responders, and universities must create the programs to educate them, says Dave McIntyre, a national security expert working to meet the need.

Right now we rely on on-the-job training for leadership of homeland security efforts, Dr. McIntyre said. "The whole thinking discipline needs to be created."

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Dr. McIntyre is director of the Integrative Center for Homeland Security at Texas A&M University, a new program aimed at teaching future leaders how to identify threats, set priorities and organize resources.

In the wake of 9-11, federal funding for homeland security research and education has grown from a little over \$1 billion in 2002 to more than \$4 billion this year, with \$70 million going directly to universities. And schools all over the country are developing homeland security programs.

But some critics say schools are merely repackaging old programs to dip into the new stream of government money.

"This is clearly a money-making operation," said Steven Lab, director of criminal justice at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Dr. Lab questioned the need for a whole new discipline, suggesting that existing programs in international relations and national security policy can meet the need. He's concerned about programs that offer only a course in terrorism here and a class in emergency planning there.

"I'm not sure what anybody's getting out of this," he said.

But Stanley Supinski, director of a 160-member, Colorado-based Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium, argues that the need is real – and so are most of the programs.

"We are doing business in a different way than we did before, and we need to educate people in how to do that," he said.

It's not the first time a new challenge has arisen requiring a new scholarly response, Dr. McIntyre said.

He cited the emergence of national security as an academic specialty in the 1950s and '60s, in response to the Cold War.

The issue received no attention in the 9-11 commission report on the terrorist attacks of 2001. And other than talk of more education for intelligence analysts and FBI agents, it's gone unmentioned in homeland security discussions since, Dr. McIntyre said.

The latest post-9-11 progress report, issued this month by the commission's Public Discourse Project, concerned foreign policy, public diplomacy and nonproliferation.

"The people in leadership now don't have this kind of education," Dr. McIntyre said. "Maybe they don't recognize we're missing it."

Range of programs

New homeland security education programs vary in scope from a few courses to a master's degree. There are programs at established institutions as well as an array of Internet offerings of questionable pedigree.

The Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., offered the first master's degree in 2003, and the field has exploded since then, said Dr. Supinski. His group would like to set standards to impose quality control, he said.

The Integrative Center at A&M, created for research and education purposes in 2002, began offering a graduate certificate in homeland security this fall through the Bush School of Government and Public Service. Although it's offered only online, future plans include a

campus-based master's degree and perhaps a Ph.D., assuming student demand grows, officials said.

Programs offering an array of specialties and varying mixes of teaching and research have sprouted across the state. Several offer certificates or classes in homeland security within established disciplines.

One example: The computer department at the University of Texas at San Antonio offers a bachelor's degree in cybersecurity. The degree prepares students to protect computer networks for private companies or government agencies such as the CIA, said Glenn Dietrich, chairman of UTSA's Department of Information Systems and Technology Management.

Two-year institutions are focusing mainly on first-responders. Tarrant County College, for example, plans to offer an emergency management certificate next year, said Ted Phillips, chairman of the college's Public Safety Institute.

The training will help with natural disasters as well as terrorist attacks, he said.

In early stages

The new programs are emerging amid an older Texas presence in related fields. The University of North Texas, for example, has had an emergency management program since the early 1980s.

For 75 years, the Texas Engineering Extension Service has trained first-responders from all over the world at its industrial firefighting

school at A&M. That program now includes a mock-up "disaster city."

The scholarly programs "are all kind of at the beginning," said Charles Hermann, who heads international affairs study at the Bush School and hired Dr. McIntyre to run the homeland security center. Professors and good textbooks are in short supply, Dr. Hermann said.

Dr. McIntyre runs a small shop and is a jack of all trades: leading research, teaching classes, directing graduate students, even recording radio spots aimed at the public entitled "Just a Minute ... For Homeland Security." They're airing only in College Station so far.

With 14 enrolled in A&M's first homeland security certificate class this fall, he also does seminars and works with professors and noncertificate students from across the campus. Over the past two years, about 100 students have taken homeland security courses, Dr. McIntyre said.

Homeland security is "actually a new sub-discipline that's developing in a hundred different fields," said Elizabeth Bristow, 25, of Richardson.

She's a doctoral candidate in civil engineering doing for-credit research with Dr. McIntyre to get a "more world-centric view."

The federal money provided so far for university-level homeland security education is limited, Dr. McIntyre said, though there's some support for individual students.

Ms. Bristow, who is also one of Dr. McIntyre's students, is one of

about 300 supported by Department of Homeland Security fellowships, which are given out at a rate of 100 a year.

Dr. McIntyre argues there should be a "GI Bill" for homeland security students, piggybacking on the 50-year-old program giving soldiers college funding in exchange for military service. In homeland security, students would get educated first, then serve, he said.

Aggressive measures are needed, Dr. McIntyre said. "We are starting from scratch."

Houston Bureau chief Bruce Nichols reported from College Station and staff writer Holly Hacker from Dallas.

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