

ASU launches new scholarship pipeline to AI-powered cybersecurity careers

The NSF-backed program prepares students for jobs that will protect critical digital systems

By Kelly deVos, ASU News
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Future cybersecurity threats may not look much like past ones.

Artificial intelligence is [changing how attackers find vulnerabilities](#), automate attacks and probe digital systems. At the same time, federal agencies, businesses and communities [are expanding their use of AI](#).

These factors create a new, urgent question: Who will secure our vulnerable infrastructure and computer security systems?

The United States already faces a [persistent shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals](#), with experts estimating about [500,000 unfilled roles](#). Now employers need a new kind of professional — one who understands how to use AI to defend digital systems and how adversaries can harness the same technology to attack them.

The [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#), part of the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#) at Arizona State University, will help train that workforce.

ASU is one of 14 universities selected to receive inaugural awards from the U.S. [National Science Foundation's CyberAICorps Scholarship for Service](#), or CyberAI SFS, program. The Fulton Schools' AI-Augmented Cybersecurity Scholars Program will provide students with scholarship support, advanced education and research opportunities at the intersection of AI and cybersecurity.

But there is another crucial component: a pathway to a job.

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CyberAI SFS is a scholarship-for-service program. Its goal is to prepare graduates for cybersecurity careers supporting U.S. government agencies and other eligible public-sector organizations. The scholarship is designed as a pipeline stretching from university classrooms and research labs to the places where some of the nation's most consequential cybersecurity work happens.

A pipeline with a proven track record

In the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, that pipeline isn't being built from scratch.

The new program builds on existing NSF Scholarship for Service efforts, led in the school by the ASU [Center for Cybersecurity and Trusted Foundations](#). Across two previous iterations of the program, ASU has placed 35 scholars in positions with federal agencies, national laboratories and other eligible organizations.

Graduates have landed at the [National Security Agency](#), the [FBI](#) and the U.S. [Department of Homeland Security](#), as well as the [Sandia](#), [Pacific Northwest](#) and [Lawrence Livermore](#) national laboratories. Other placements have included the [Federal Reserve](#) and the state of Arizona.

The program's impact has extended into research and education, too. The Fulton Schools' previous efforts produced 30 master's theses and one doctoral dissertation. They also helped develop [pwn.college](#), a hands-on cybersecurity education platform that grew into a nationally used resource.

CyberAI SFS takes that established model and updates it for a world where cybersecurity and artificial intelligence are becoming increasingly difficult to separate.

Building the next generation

Leading the ASU effort is [Gail-Joon Ahn](#), a Fulton Schools professor of computer science and engineering and global computer security pioneer.

Ahn has spent decades helping shape modern cybersecurity. His research has covered access control, identity and privacy, security analytics, threat intelligence, vulnerability management and other areas fundamental to protecting digital systems.

In 2026, Ahn was named a fellow of the [Association for Computing Machinery](#), an honor reserved for the top 1% of the international computing society's membership. He is also a fellow of the [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers](#).

The program in action

Meet [Ariadne Dimarogona](#), the computer science master's student in the CyberCorps: Scholarship for Service program who helped create an artificial intelligence tool that translates complex digital forensic evidence into clear, accessible language. She will soon step into a government cybersecurity role, bringing her courtroom-minded perspective with her.

But the new program puts another part of Ahn's career front and center: training people who can take cybersecurity expertise out of the lab and put it to work.

"AI is changing both how we defend systems and how those systems can be attacked," Ahn says. "We need cybersecurity professionals who understand that changing landscape from both sides. This program gives students the technical foundation and hands-on experience they need, then creates a direct pathway for them to put those skills to work in public service."

Applications for ASU's CyberAI SFS program are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. Because selections are generally made before the start of each semester, students interested in joining the program are encouraged to apply now.

For students ready to turn cybersecurity and AI expertise into public service, the program provides a direct path from the classroom to the cybersecurity workforce.

Interested in applying?

Students can learn more and apply for the CyberAICorps Scholarship for Service program at the ASU [Center for Cybersecurity and Trusted Foundations](#) or send questions to cyber@asu.edu.

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Main image



Gail-Joon Ahn, a professor of computer science and engineering in the School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence, part of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, will lead Arizona State University's AI-Augmented Cybersecurity Scholars Program. The program provides students with substantial scholarship support and research opportunities that can lead to high-impact careers supporting the cybersecurity missions of U.S. government agencies. Graphic by Erika Gronek/ASU