

# Cybersecurity Research Helps New Hampshire Small Businesses Combat Security Breaches

Wednesday, November 16, 2016



TODD WASKELIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF AT&T SECURITY SOLUTIONS, GIVES A PRESENTATION ON HOW TO ADDRESS CYBER THREATS AT THE PAUL COLLEGE CYBERSECURITY SYMPOSIUM.

Kholekile Gwebu and Jing Wang, associate professors of decision sciences in the [Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics](#), noticed something interesting when they were studying best practices for companies dealing with cybersecurity issues.

“Cybersecurity is often neglected,” says Gwebu. “New Hampshire is full of small businesses, so we saw a gap there.”

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Gwebu and Wang are connecting their research to help businesses better plan for information security risks. They are learning about the cybersecurity practices and needs of small businesses and offering resources to help businesses meet those needs.

## Cybersecurity symposium

Using a grant from Paul College, Gwebu and Wang offered a free symposium for small business owners on Nov. 4 at the University of New Hampshire's Durham campus. The symposium was designed to raise awareness about cybersecurity risks to small businesses and provide best practices for companies to mitigate these risks.

Since the duo's research aims to understand what issues small businesses run into when dealing with cybersecurity, they partnered with two centers in Paul College that focus on small businesses in the region — the [New Hampshire Small Business Development Center](#) and the [Center for Family Business](#) — who matched them with local small businesses interested in learning more about cybersecurity.

“We have always known that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face unique challenges when dealing with cybersecurity. Conversations with SMEs at the symposium allowed us to better understand their challenges and derive cybersecurity solutions that are specifically geared toward them,” said Wang.

“The symposium offered good information to help us come up with our risk management

The Center for Family Business connection brought Michelle DuPont, owner of the Lake Opechee Inn and Spa in Laconia, and her business operations manager, Annie Boissoneau, to the event.

“We are more vulnerable to security

plan.”

risks than a large corporation,” said Boissoneau. “The symposium offered good information to help us come up with our risk management plan.”

“It’s pointing us in the right direction and giving us resources we can come back to,” said DuPont.

Patrick Brown, owner of Ames Farm Inn in Gilford, said what he learned at the symposium made him feel better about what he can do to mitigate cyber attacks.

“I liked that one of the speakers showed the process of the advanced threat attacker, because we were able to see that it’s a series of small events rather than one big one out of nowhere,” Brown said. “That makes me feel like I could do something to protect my business.”

## Raising awareness of state resources and regulations

“New Hampshire has been at the forefront of the development of strict data security breach notification laws and penalties,” said Gwebu. “We wanted to raise awareness among small businesses in the state about New Hampshire’s resources and regulations.”

That’s why one of the three symposium speakers was Denis Goulet, chief information officer at the New Hampshire Department of Information Technology. In addition to Goulet, Diana Kelley, executive security advisor for IBM Security, and Todd Waskelis, vice president of AT&T Security Solutions, gave talks at the symposium.

“We wanted high impact speakers, and we were extremely fortunate to have three distinguished cybersecurity leaders come and speak,” said Gwebu.

Gwebu and Wang's students

were invited to attend the symposium, and students in two information systems classes created research posters about common information security topics and presented them to attendees. The students also created a website with videos and resources for symposium-goers.



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“It was rewarding seeing our students using the knowledge they had gained in the classroom to make a meaningful difference in our local business community,” said Wang.

The first year of the symposium was a success, with 30 businesses and nearly 100 students attending. Gwebu and Wang hope to make it an annual event.

“We have a great opportunity through Paul College to have an impact on small businesses in the state, and we want to take advantage of that,” Gwebu said.

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