Teaching information assurance (IA) requires a tricky balance between technical subjects and management skills. We academics sometimes flounder in curriculum design because of the fundamental dearth of sound statistically-based information about security issues. We have problems gathering data for IA because

* As far as we can tell, many or perhaps most computer intrusions and computer crimes go undetected (estimates range from 9 out of 10 crimes to 2 out of 3 intrusions).

* Many detected intrusions or crimes are unreported (perhaps as many as 95% according to some studies).

* There is no central database keeping track of computer crimes or security breaches.

* Almost all computer-security surveys suffer from methodological inadequacies (they rely on voluntary responses, have no independent verification of the accuracy of answers, and don’t include internal validation measures to catch careless or silly answers).

We are left with the hope that forging consensus on best practices is one of the approaches that can improve IA.

Under these circumstances, you’ll understand how important it is for academics to get information directly from practitioners when designing courses. Prof. John Beachboard, PhD, of Idaho State University is doing precisely that. In a recent call for participation sent through a security-educators’ list, he explained that “Business-oriented MIS and CIS programs have tended to emphasize requirements analysis and business application development over the development of technical skills and knowledge associated with development and operation of IT infrastructures. Many business schools are now adding courses (e.g., in data communications and systems architecture) intended to fill this gap.” He has developed a survey designed “to gain practitioner input regarding the fundamental technical concepts that all aspiring IS/IT professionals should be taught in an undergraduate systems architecture course.”

His survey is at <http://cobhomepages.cob.isu.edu/beach/survey/1.asp> and it took me only a few minutes to complete.

Prof. Beachboard will send results of his analysis to any participants who would like to be informed of the findings.

I hope that readers will be willing to take the time to help Prof. Beachboard and the field as a whole by participating in this research.

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A Master’s degree in the management of information assurance in 18 months of online study from Norwich University – see
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