

University of Cambridge and MIT CSAIL lead allied forces tackling rogue state developing Weapons of Mass Destruction, in life-like cyber competition

- Cyber Security competition Cambridge2Cambridge fosters collaboration and teamwork among students from top UK and US universities, in a contest aimed to inspire talented pupils into the industry

- Talented students from 24 UK and US Universities compete for cyber crown at 3-day ethical hacking event backed by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Cabinet Office, Leidos, NCC Group and the National Science Foundation (NSF)

- The competition is the brainchild of leading academics from two of the world's most prestigious universities, the University of Cambridge (UK) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (US)

University of Cambridge - Tuesday, July 25 2017: Top talent from UK and US universities have fired up their laptops to battle a dangerous rogue state developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the life-like cyber security competition, Cambridge2Cambridge (C2C).

The government and industry backed competition - which is the brainchild of two of the most prestigious universities in the world, the University of Cambridge, in the UK, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in the US - pits teams of the world's future cyber defenders against each other in a three-day battle.

One-hundred-and-ten future cyber defenders from 24 of the most prestigious universities in the US and the UK are taking part in the competition at the University of Cambridge. The mixed teams of UK and US students are battling for thousands of pounds of prize money, with a total of £20,000 up for grabs over the course of the challenge.

Pupils have formed international cyber hunting teams to mount an offensive cyber-attack to subdue a facility where a fictitious rogue state is developing and caching WMDs. The cyber-attack is necessary, as the weapons are hidden in facilities deep underground, with "bunker-bombs" proving ineffective and poor weather conditions preventing allied ground troops from mounting an offensive.

The competition, held within the historic grounds of Trinity College, at the University of Cambridge, started on Monday, July 24 and will end on Wednesday, July 26. The second ever C2C competition is backed by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Cabinet Office, and industry partners Leidos, NCC Group, Context, Palo Alto Networks, KPMG, ForAll Secure, Immersive Labs, Wiley and the National Science Foundation (NSF). It is designed to tackle the critical cyber security skills gap, which latest figures suggest will increase to a [1.8m](#) person shortfall globally by 2022.

Leading academics behind C2C also designed the competition to promote greater cyber security collaboration between the UK and USA, and give students the platform to explore creative ways to combat global cyber-attacks, as well as honing and acquiring critical skills.

It also gives budding cyber enthusiasts the opportunity to test and improve their skills in a real-life simulation, meet like-minded individuals, and learn more about careers in the sector by introducing them to key players in the industry and government.

Professor Frank Stajano, Head of the Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research at the University of Cambridge and co-founder of Cambridge2Cambridge, comments:

“In the second annual Cambridge2Cambridge challenge we have looked to expand on the success of the inaugural C2C, by welcoming students from top universities from across the UK and the USA. It’s truly remarkable to witness the breadth of talent in Universities throughout these two countries.”

“C2C gives these bright young people the opportunity to implement the skills and theory they have been taught at university in a realistic environment, while learning new ones in the process. We have over a hundred smart kids here in Cambridge today but I hope their achievements inspire hundreds of thousands of secondary school students to take up this challenging and intellectually stimulating path when they go to university. We are growing a new generation of skilled cyber security experts who will protect the digital society of tomorrow.”

Dr Howard Shrobe, Principal Research Scientist at MIT’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Lab (CSAIL) and co-founder of Cambridge2Cambridge, comments:

“The relevance of cyber security has never been greater. Recent attacks on corporations and governments alike have focused our attention towards a need for a strong pool of talent to bolster our defences. Cambridge2Cambridge was born out of a need to spur innovative ideas, bringing together the brainpower from MIT and the University of Cambridge, so it only seems natural to involve more leading universities in the second year of C2C, and continue to inspire the world’s leading minds to tackle an ever-growing issue. Only by giving these talented students the tools needed to enter the industry, will we be able to tackle the growing threat from cyber criminals and terrorists.”

Chris Ensor, NCSC Deputy Director of Cyber Skills and Growth said:

“Cyber Security is one of the most important professions for any digitally enabled country and I am proud that the UK is a world leader in this field.

“We need the brightest and the best talent to stay ahead of rapidly evolving global cyber threats and I am hugely impressed by the skills and enthusiasm of the young people taking part in this competition. I am particularly pleased to see more women taking part this year. The participants I’ve seen here have a bright future in the cyber security field and will be at the forefront of keeping our nation safe and secure.”

Ollie Whitehouse, CTO at NCC Group

“As cyber attacks become an increasing concern for businesses and consumers alike, the need to equip a new generation of talented minds with security skills has never been greater. By offering their expertise, getting involved in events and speaking to young people, security professionals can encourage a passion for security and bring innovative new ideas to the industry.

“Initiatives such as the Cambridge2Cambridge competition are a great way to inspire young people and demonstrate how exciting, creative and rewarding a career in cyber security can be. We’re very pleased to be so closely involved in this and are looking forward to seeing what the talented students in the competition will achieve.”

Bill Krampf, Leidos Senior Vice President for U.K. and Europe, Leidos:

“Recruitment and developing the capabilities of our workforce is a key enabler to defend our nations and clients”, said Bill Krampf, Leidos Senior Vice President for U.K. and Europe. “We live in a world where new skills have to be honed to defend against adversaries. Only with continued partnerships with universities can we truly help shape the skills that are coming into the future workforce.”

--Ends--

About Cambridge2Cambridge

The Cambridge2Cambridge (C2C) cyber challenge is jointly organised by the University of Cambridge and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) Cambridge, US. In the 2017 competition C2C entered its second year, and teams were mixed to include cyber defenders from the best universities from across the UK and US, who came together to learn best practices in cyber security and demonstrate their ability to become future cyber defenders. The three-day event took place between the 24th and 26th of July, at the University of Cambridge, and was observed by experts from across the cyber security industry. It is backed by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Cabinet Office, and Industry sponsors Leidos, NCC Group, Context, Palo Alto Networks, KPMG, For All Secure, Immersive Labs and Wiley. The competition is run on CyberNEXS, a cyber range from Leidos used to train the US military.