

Sunway University sets up lab on cybersecurity

EDUCATION

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Chew (sixth right), Lau (left), Wilkinson (fourth left) and Lee (fifth left) with guests at the launch of the Cyber Security Intelligence Lab.

GLOBALLY, it has been predicted that cybercrime will cost the world US\$6 trillion (RM25.2 trillion) by 2021, doubling up from US\$3 trillion (RM12.6 trillion) in 2015, according to an annual cybercrime report by Herjavec Group, a leading global information security advisory firm.

The world, therefore, needs the cybersecurity infrastructure and the best talents to protect them from potential threats. Unfortunately, in a 2018-2019 report, a shocking 53% of global survey respondents said they were facing a shortage of cybersecurity skills.

Moving forward into IR 4.0, Sunway University looks to narrow the cybersecurity skills gap by training new talents in the field of cybersecurity.

The enormous growth of e-commerce and digital data available online, accuracy in processing and protection of data are imperative.

With an investment of RM3mil for its CSI Lab, Sunway University aims to teach and train students in cybersecurity.

“The initiative to set up the CSI lab at Sunway University is answering to the needs of the increasing threats we all hear about every day, especially those in our country and the region.

“With the Lab and the training, our students will be prepared for the challenges and needs in the Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 era,” said Sunway Education Group CEO Elizabeth Lee at the launch of the Cyber Security Intelligence (CSI) Lab at Sunway University, which is one of the nation’s Premier Digital Technology Universities.

The CSI Lab, which consists of a data centre dedicated for research, network and server infrastructure, also runs an industry-grade cybersecurity platform and services.

Students at the Department of Computing and Information Systems in the School of Science and Technology will have the opportunity to experience state-of-the-art intelligent security analytics that provides threat detection and response solutions offered by RSA Security from the United States.

The RSA NetWitness Platform is an evolved SIEM – the centrepiece of an intelligent Security Operations Centre (SOC) – a threat detection and response solution that allows security teams to rapidly detect and respond to any threat, anywhere.

It serves as a single, unified platform for all security data; features an advanced analyst workbench for triggering alerts and incidents; and uses machine learning to orchestrate and automate security operations programmes end-to-end.

The Lab, currently the first SOC Lab powered by RSA Security Netwitness platform in a university in Malaysia, is part of Sunway University’s effort to provide real-world experience to students, particularly those enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Computer Networking and Security) programme.

The university provides the learning experience where students get to witness real incidents and scenarios of cybersecurity threats.

Students have the opportunity to learn best practices and utilise advanced platforms, and tools to counter these threats. New modules will be designed and added to existing computing programmes at the university to ensure graduates are equipped with the right skill-sets as well as mind-sets towards a safer inter-connected environment.

“There is a real shortage of specialists who understand cybersecurity issues and know how to deal with the threats.

“That’s why training, research and this kind of facility that we are establishing here is so important.

“It is vital that we get intelligence on cybersecurity threats and how to deal with them.

“Now AI and even quantum computing provide gigantic leaps forward in computing power that malicious individuals could exploit in the future.

“We’ve got to start thinking of cybersecurity in the post quantum computing age,” said Sunway University vice-chancellor Prof Graeme Wilkinson.

There is a need, he added, to make sure Malaysia is on top of the research on this and know what is going on.

“We need to train our people, educate them and ensure they are aware of the technological frontiers in cybersecurity,” he said.

Sunway Group president Datuk Chew Chee Kin said that last year, the Malaysia Computer Emergency Response Team (MyCERT) reported more than 10,000 cyber-security attacks on corporations and individuals across Malaysia. “This is a 35% increase compared to 2017.

“The CSI Lab will allow university students to be trained with the experience and understanding of the challenges ahead.

“We will be able to prepare a team of young cybersecurity professional to join the industry and begin their journey in countering this global challenge,” he said.

Department of Computing and Information Systems associate dean and head Assoc Prof Dr Lau Sian Lun said: “With the CSI Lab on campus, we look forward to preparing the young generation for this very exciting and challenging industry.” “Before today’s launch, students were already excited with such a facility on campus, with postings on social media.

“This is a good motivation, for textbook knowledge alone is not enough.

“It is the real-life experience that gives students that extra push,” he said.