

DHS selects University of Minnesota to lead Center of Excellence for Food Security

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today the selection of the University of Minnesota as the lead for the DHS Center of Excellence (COE) for Food Security. The COE's research and education efforts will support the DHS Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate's Chemical and Biological Division—focusing on enhancing security to protect against the intentional, natural or inadvertent introduction of hazardous chemical or biological contaminants into the food system.

The grant—approximately \$3.3 million per year over a period of up to six years—will extend S&T support through 2015. The University of Minnesota has been the lead institution for the COE's predecessor, the DHS National Center for Food Protection and Defense, since 2004.

The five major research areas are: 1) interventions and countermeasures, such as new methods for detecting chemical and biological agents; 2) event modeling for consequence, risk, and vulnerability assessment; 3) systems strategies for enhancing the preparedness, responsiveness, recoverability, and resiliency of the food system; 4) agent behavior in food systems; and 5) education.

Proposals from five university-led teams were received and evaluated by DHS through a three-step process that involved external peer review, internal subject matter expert review and site visits. Reviewers considered a range of factors, including the quality and relevance of the research programs, management plans, education programs, involvement of minority-serving institutions, and transition and application plans.

There are currently 12 Centers of Excellence managed by the Office of University Programs in DHS' Science & Technology Directorate.