

The NSIN/FDA/SUS Initiative in Florida: An Overview

The **National Security Innovation Network (NSIN)** is a program of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USDRE) that collaborates with major universities and the venture community to develop solutions that drive innovation. NSIN accomplishes this through multiple activities including:

- a) engaging senior design students in a semester-long course that provides DoD leaders with the opportunity to collaborate with talented student teams and develop innovative solutions to their most pressing national security problems;
- b) providing fellowships for project teams that pay full-time innovators to continue work on DoD challenges;
- c) placing problems into university hackathons to generate solutions and identify talent for recruitment; and
- d) supporting solutions and ventures that address DoD challenges to create new commercial businesses.

The Florida Defense Alliance (FDA), is an organization within Enterprise Florida, Inc. It is a non-profit partnership between the Governor, state officials, the Congressional delegation, state legislators, base commanders and staff, community leaders, and business executives. FDA's mission is to increase military value, enhance military base capabilities, and promote multi-service synergies for Florida's bases, while supporting and enhancing the quality of life of Florida's military families.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the **Florida State University System (SUS)**, NSIN and FDA is being proposed for signature by the Chancellor of the SUS. This MOU will make this a system-wide initiative. NSIN will provide a University Program Director (UPD), who will report to FAMU-FSU College of Engineering, with up to 30 percent of their effort allocated to working with and proximate to the Chancellor's Office for system-wide coordination and success. This will be the first NSIN UPD ever assigned to a HBCU institution and state university system. The FDA's role in the MOU is to facilitate access to military leaders, engage the Department of Economic Opportunity and the Florida Chamber of Commerce to align talent pipeline initiatives, and to promote this program throughout the defense community, with local and state leaders, as well as uniformed service leaders.

The benefits of this NSIN/FDA/SUS Initiative include:

- a) Creating a unique partnership between the SUS and DoD via FDA that prepares our students for 21st-century work, promotes Florida's industrial base, and opens opportunities for growing innovation and applied research.
- b) Connecting SUS stakeholders – students, faculty, applied researchers, mentors, defense liaisons – to DoD installations, leaders and organizations.
- c) Exposing graduate and undergraduate students in SUS institutions to real problems of interest to DoD organizations, particularly those in Florida. Students and faculty work with relevant DoD organizations whose connections potentially lead to student internships, student hires, and research opportunities for faculty.
- d) Providing a vehicle to grow entrepreneurship, innovation, and the talent pipeline in support of national defense and Federal agencies. For example, students may have the opportunity to obtain sponsorship for security clearances, allowing them to be employment-ready upon graduation into industry and the government workforce.
- e) Enabling acceleration with the venture communities by engaging new problem-solvers in collision events with DoD customers that generate novel concepts and solutions. This includes building a state network of problem-solving ecosystems that leverages Florida's commercial innovation hubs for DoD customers.