

Igor Mamut
Personal Statement

Several years ago, my employer was engaged by the second-largest transit agency in the United States in order to assist with the development of next generation smart card technology. I was part of the team selected to lead the one of the project streams. The resulting experience led me to re-evaluate my career objectives and led to my decision to pursue a graduate education in public policy that would encompass cybersecurity and transportation security.

During the project, the task of my team was to evaluate strictly the business side of the transaction. Our team concentrated on assessing the client's financial ability to build the new technology, to create cross functional implementation teams, to transition staff, and to adapt a new business model. Upon our completion of the assignment, we reached the conclusion that the client was prepared to tackle the task at hand. While being praised by my management for successfully completing a complex task in a timely and diligent manner, I discovered an issue that has captivated me ever since.

After conducting multiple rounds of client interviews and in-depth analysis, my team met with our parallel IT Team that was conducting a broad cybersecurity review, including access management and vulnerability testing. I began closely collaboration with our IT team, as we took the initiative to advise the client of the possible cybersecurity risks to not only vital infrastructure and critical system of Transit Authority, but also to the smart cards users that would have to divulge sensitive private information, such as credit card numbers, in order to obtain the transit cards. This issue was of critical importance because the Transit Authority system requires close to 100 percent availability and cannot be taken out of service under any circumstances. In fact, as I found out later, this is case for all critical elements of our nation's transportation system, including air traffic control, energy distribution systems, nuclear power grids, and military defense installations.

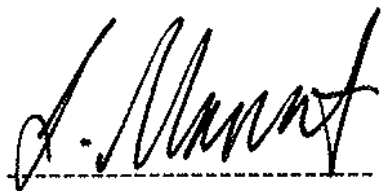
Through this experience, I realized that I had an enduring interest in critical cybersecurity issues facing our nation's infrastructure, especially in the transportation sector, but was ill-equipped to handle such complex projects and issues.

This realization led to my growing interest in pursuing graduate education and helped me to define one of my career goals: to immediately improve my knowledge Transportation & Security Infrastructure and public policy that governs that transformation, and ultimately to have the intellectual and technical skill set necessary to become a professional and a thought leader in the industry. In order to rectify these shortcomings in the future, I decided that it was the right time to pursue a Masters Degree at University of Illinois, with concentration on Urban Planning and Policy.

While it is certain that University of Illinois will help me gain knowledge relevant policy, getting first-hand experience with leading experts would be vital in my development. Therefore, a scholarship and a partnership with Lint Center can help me develop further on my path to addressing critical cybersecurity threats that our vital to our nation's transportation security.

Therefore, becoming a recipient of the Lint Foundation Scholarship and developing a mentor partnership with the Lint Center for National Security Studies will greatly assist me in gaining much-needed policy exposure to national security issues. Through the mentoring program, I will be able to close the critical gap between theory and practice as it relates to vital national security problems facing our nation.

I hereby give my authorization, permission and consent to the Lint Center, for National Security Studies, Inc. to use, disclose, release and/or publish my name, photo and any or all other information which I have provided. Additionally, I give specific release of my Essay for publishing on the website of the Lint Center, for National Security Studies, Inc.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Almont", is written over a horizontal dashed line. The signature is cursive and fluid.