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For Immediate Release

NNSA MC&A Academy Intern Joins the Savannah River Site

AIKEN, S.C. – (August 12, 2024) A student intern recently joined the Savannah River Site (SRS) for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)-sponsored Material Control and Accountability (MC&A) Academy through the Minority Serving Institution Internship Program (MSIIP).

NNSA Office of Security Operations and Programmatic Planning recently established the first MC&A Academy—an internship program in partnership with NNSA MSIIP and complex-wide internship programs—to develop a talent pipeline and recruitment tool in support of the Department of Energy (DOE) and NNSA missions.



George Mason University student Andy Gomez, second from right, was recently selected as the Savannah River Nuclear Solutions intern for the Material Control and Accountability Academy offered by the National Nuclear Security Administration. Also pictured, from left: Devyn Hardwick, Sandia National Laboratories; Sam Wilkins, Nevada National Security Site; and Y-12 National Security Complex Eli Lowe, Sahithi Alla, and Zaid Abdeen.

Andy Gomez, a rising senior at George Mason University, was assigned special projects for NNSA MC&A and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the Site's managing and operating contractor. His projects will include a new technology development effort evaluating the performance of a

Nondestructive Assay (NDA) detector. Gomez will also help SRNS NDA Experts model and qualify the NDA detector to measure Special Nuclear Materials holdup.

“I will be working with Dr. Alex Brand to design and optimize high efficiency particulate air filter composition,” explained Gomez. “This design is necessary for accurate inventory and positive assurance of nuclear material to protect against theft and loss.”



NNSA MC&A Academy intern Andy Gomez with robot dog “Spot” during a tour of Sandia National Laboratory.

In addition, Gomez will tour multiple SRS facilities like those that house an underwater spent nuclear fuel disassembly basin and assist in the fuel categorization and assessment efforts.

“The NNSA MC&A Academy is an excellent opportunity for both interns and partnering DOE facilities,” said Brian Whitlow, SRNS MC&A Manager. “Very few interns have the opportunity to receive a government clearance and work in Safeguards and Security.”

The NNSA MC&A Academy includes a multi-week training program ran by NNSA Defense Nuclear Security at the DOE National Training Center— which offers courses, training, and tours of Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories. The academy held meetings with U.S. Ambassadors, Counterintelligence representatives, Federal program leaders, nuclear power specialists, and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

According to J.R. Ludwick, NNSA MC&A Academy sponsor, the program is a wonderful opportunity for both Gomez and the NNSA.

“Like other programs across the NNSA complex, many of us are reaching the end of our careers and to have a pipeline of young, intelligent and talented personnel to backfill these positions is invaluable,” said Ludwick. “Through some strong leadership at NA-70, Mr. Gomez was able to benefit from an expedited clearance which is a game changer relative to the work we can assign him.”

After completing the NA-70 training program, each of the 17 program interns are assigned a specific DOE facility to continue their internship experience.

“Gomez will also have the opportunity to work with some of the best Contractor and NNSA MC&A practitioners on very complex issues while developing a skillset that will set him up well for future success supporting DOE/NNSA missions,” continued Ludwick.

Jeff Griffin, SRS Senior Vice President of Plutonium Disposition Operations and Programs, said, “This collaborative opportunity will provide a pool of recent college graduates interested in supporting DOE-

NNSA missions. We are excited to offer this internship experience for continuous improvement, staffing development, and to improve the cost-effectiveness of our facilities.”

Gomez emphasized the positive impact this experience would have on his future career choice, “I am so grateful for this unique, first-of-its-kind opportunity and would recommend this academy to students who are eager to work on projects that have a direct impact on national security.”

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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