Phishing scam targets U. of I. community with fake email

By Craig Chamberlain
News Editor

Be suspicious. Be very suspicious. Especially if it looks official – a bank, credit card company, university human resources – and they’re asking for your personal information.

The sender may not be official all at once, but rather someone fishing, or “phishing” – attempting to lure you into giving up information that may be used to access your personal accounts.

That’s the message from one campus official and a team of researchers since the advent of phishing. It’s often directed at the U. of I. campus, similar to other phishing attacks at other Big Ten schools.

In early July, some individuals received a message allegedly from “UIUC Human Resources,” which directed them to what looked like an official Authentication Login page, with an additional field for their PIN.

It was apparently an attempt “to gather enough information to access university resources and personal information,” such as payroll direct deposit information, according to Joe Barnes, the interim chief privacy and security officer for Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services, writing in a July 7 massmail to the campus.

Whether any information was compromised is still under investigation, Barnes said. The Office of Privacy and Information Assurance notified the original recipients of the message – estimated to be less than 1 percent of individuals on the Urbana campus – and is monitoring affected accounts for suspicious changes. OPIA and CITES also are working on changes to better protect the university, its faculty and staff members, and students from future attacks, he said.

“Fighting the battle against phishing is a balance between technology and user awareness,” Barnes said. “From a technology standpoint, we are constantly working to improve systems to reduce the theft of both personal and university information. From an individual’s standpoint, they should feel empowered to question emails that do not seem legitimate. If they fall victim to a phishing message, they should not be afraid to say so. Not providing information to IT professionals trying to assist you can delay or prevent aid, which in the end may lead to bigger problems.”

When receiving official-looking email, Barnes advised.

Never respond directly to an email asking for your password or to update account information, no matter how official it may look. The U. of I., as a policy, will never ask for information that way.

Check the link to make sure it’s taking you to an official site. The safest practice is to open a browser and type in the address, rather than clicking on the link.

Only enter your U. of I. username and password on sites that have “illinois.edu” or “uiuc.edu” at the beginning of the address in the address bar.

Also check for “https” at the beginning of the address, a requirement for any website asking for sensitive information.

Additional information on how to spot phishing attempts and examples of recent campus-directed phishing attempts can be found online (see above). Barns said campus users who receive what they believe might be a phishing message can do any combination of the following: delete the message, forward it to their local IT staff members and/or forward it to report-span@illinois.edu for further evaluation.

They also can contact the CITES Help Desk by emailing consult@illinois.edu or calling 217-333-7000.

Treating TB Jennifer Landolfi, a veterinary pathologist in the Zoological Pathology Program, led a study of elephant immune responses to infection with the same bacterium that causes TB in humans. Researchers develop new tools to detect and monitor tuberculosis in Asian elephants, shown at left.

If confirmed in future studies, the findings suggest a faster and more reliable way to diagnose TB in captive elephants, Landolfi said. The same kinds of tests are already used in humans.

“That is something that we want to move towards with elephants,” she said. Most of the elephants don’t show as a lot of signs of disease, and even when they do appear to be sick, it’s very non-specific.”

This makes it difficult to diagnose and determine if treatment is working, she said. Having a new way to monitor the elephants’ immune response would improve both tasks, she said.

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Easter addresses what U. of I. needs in its next leader

By Mike Hulenhal
Assistant Editor

Easter said there are so many competing outside interests for a president’s time that there is little time to address day-to-day campus issues.

“The university is much more than Champaign-Urbana,” he said.

Easter said the president’s position should be broadly defined, as it concerns the university’s interactions issues for two Fortune 500 companies. He suggested that the new university president also should be “someone with substantial experience in the corporate world.”

As for the new president’s leadership style, Easter suggested someone who is a good listener, who believes in the concept of shared governance and has an interest in “learning lots of stuff.” He said “indirect leadership” may be more important than a leader who is too hands-on.

“By the same time someone becomes president, they shouldn’t be looking for applause from the audience,” he said. “The pre-2015, he said, has to do things to influence the culture. It’s the way you act that sends that message.”

Applegate, the executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, also attended the committee meeting, offering his insight in identifying the characteristics needed of the next U. of I. president.

He said the future of the state is inextricably linked to higher education, and the U. of I. president can be an “advocate and catalyst” for change to help make the case for continued high-level investment.

“The U. of I. president is a key figure in the relationship with the IHBE,” he said. Without that connection, “there’s no coherency, strong voice as a system. There is so much capacity in Illinois to make progress, but we need someone who gets it. We can work together to make the case to the leadership in this state.”

Applegate said higher education is the key to turning the state’s economic prospects around.

But for now, Illinois is far from achieving the goals of the Public Agenda for Education and Success, which has a goal of 60 percent of students with a bachelor’s degree by 2015. He said, said now it’s 42 percent – and it’s predicted that two-thirds of future jobs in the state will require a college education.

“The talent gap in Illinois is starting to shrink dramatically,” he said.

Applegate said state education issues include affordability and the widening gap limiting minority access, better preparation of secondary school students, the demands of the global economy and the need for better training adults who start college training finish it.

He said state universities, and the U. of I. in particular, must develop better strategies to commercially capitalize on research.

InsideIllinois

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Witmer named News Bureau director

The U. of I. News Bureau has a new director.

Steve Witmer, a former Central Illinois journalist and media relations professional, joined the News Bureau June 23.

Witmer served as a reporter and editor for the Peoria Journal Star newspaper for 19 years. They retired June 27.

Witmer earned his bachelor’s degree at the University of Wisconsin and a master’s degree in journalism from the University of Illinois.

Witmer replaces 23-year director Jeff Unger and associate director Mare Payne, who was with the News Bureau for 30 years. They retired June 27.

Witmer said he is proud to serve the U. of I. and is excited to lead such a well-respected, accomplished and effective university news organization.

He said his biggest challenge is in getting the U. of I. message out to a wider audience.

“Witmer is confident and is a good choice,” he said.

Witmer said he wants to help the News Bureau serve the U. of I. community more effectively.

His newspaper knowledge and his experience in the corporate world is the right mix for leading the News Bureau staff – all of whom are graduates of the Urbana campus, which has a goal of 60 percent of its in-state students are imperatives.

“As for the new president’s leadership style, Easter suggested someone who is a good listener, who believes in the concept of shared governance and has an interest in “learning lots of stuff.” He said “indirect leadership” may be more important than a leader who is too hands-on.

April 30, 2014

InsideIllinois

Inside Illinois is an employee publication of the University of Illinois-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois. It is published on the first and third Thursday of each month by the News Bureau of the campus Office of Public Affairs, administered by the associate chancellor for public affairs.

Distribution is by campus mail. News is solicited from all areas of the campus to inform and to foster a sense of community. Articles are reviewed one week prior to the issue date, but earlier reservations are encouraged. For rates and ad dimensions, contact the editor or visit Inside Illinois on the Web.

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Scientists gear up to fight deadly snake fungal disease

The National Center for Supercomputing Applications has selected nine U. of I. researchers to receive NCSA Fellowships. These fellowships will provide long-term support that will enable them to pursue collaborative projects with the researchers and computer technology experts at NCSA. Fellows will use NCSA’s supercomputing resources and the center’s resources to pursue research that will advance science and engineering. Fellows also will work with NCSA’s distributing partners to share their research results with researchers around the world. The 2014-2015 NCSA fellows.

Scott Althaus, a professor of political science and of communication, “Building a New Data-Driven Global News Agrega- tor for Data Science Research.” A relatively new approach to research on captured metadata is to develop a way to provide full-text access to data science researchers without violating copyright or requiring database distributors to donate access and control over their investments. Known as “non- consumptive research,” this new paradigm allows researchers to run algorithms on collected metadata to explore data, allowing them to see or copy those holdings. This project will prototype a non-consump- tive research platform for text mining the copyrighted full-text holdings without al- lowing the researchers to possess titles or download full texts. This project will be a significant step toward realizing this approach.

Gabrielle Allen, NSCA associate direc- tor, directs the NSF-funded I/UCR Campus- 40 Research Software Engineering (C40 RE) effort. Allen will work with NCSA to create new research and educational resources for the C40 RE campus community.

The Center for Nanocomputing Research has developed a fast- er and more accurate way to test for infections with Ophidiomyces ophiolici, a fungus that is killing snakes in the Midwest and eastern Unit- ed States. The test also allows scientists to monitor the progression of the infection in living snakes. The researchers reported on the test at the Mycological Society of America Annual Meeting.

“We need to prove that they don’t have to anesthetize an animal to collect a bi- sample,” said Michael Dreslik, an assistant professor in the Veterinary Biosciences and Comparative Pathobiology department. “Now we can identify the infections earlier, we can intervene earlier and we can save more snakes.”

The new test uses quantitative poly- merase chain reaction (qPCR), which amplifies fungal DNA to identify the species present and measure the extent of infection.

Researchers first took notice of Ophidiomyces ophiolici, a fungus that has killed millions of North American bats, novel snakes found in Illinois and has been found to infect tim- ber rattlesnakes, mud snakes, rat snakes, garter snakes, milk snakes, water snakes and racers. In the past, researchers had to anesthetize an animal to collect a biopsy sample or, worse yet, euthanize snakes to test for the infection, said U. of I. comparative biosciences professor Mat- thew Allender.

“We can intervene earlier and we can save more snakes,” Allender said. “We can know how many [fungus] infections are out there.”

Allender said that the fungus implicated in white-nose syndrome, another fungal disease that has killed millions of bats, also have tested positive for the fungus. There are only 100 to 150 massasaugas left in Illinois, he said, and about 15 percent of those are infected with the disease.

Allender also is an affiliate of the Illinois Natural History Survey’s Pathobiology Research Institute at the U. of I. He and his INHS colleague, mycologist Andrew Narayana Aluru, have been working to test for the fungus in snakes to white-nose syndrome, another fungal disease that has killed millions of North American bats. Miller and graduate student Michael Dreslik recently pub- lished a study of Pseudogymnoascus destructans, the fungus implicated in white- nose syndrome, and started repeating the analy- sis on Ophidiomyces.

“Our qPCR is more than 1,000 times more sensitive than conventional PCR,” Allen- der said. “It occurs in the soil, seems to grow on a wide variety of substances, and can infect many species.”

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New York, Ohio and Wisconsin also have tested positive for the fungus. The fungus possesses many of the same enzymes that kill bats, he said, thus the fungus could be deadly to a variety of wildlife. Other colleagues at INHS, herpetolo- gists Michael Dreslik and Chris Phillips, have been studying eastern massasauga rattlesnakes in the wild for 15 years, and are working closely with Allender to characterize the cusp of a sea change in the relationship between the audience and the performers; enabling the performers to engage more effectively through personal digi- tal devices and technologies such as augmented reality, Web and phone apps, and social media. LATT will serve as an idea vetting house, an R&D laboratory, and a beta rollout service for art- istic and informational apps for the art and entertainment, installation, education and information industries.

Daniel Work, a professor of civil and environmental engineering, “Improving the Efficiency of Taxi Systems Through Real-time Seek Time Prediction.” The goal of this project is to design an efficient software package, the Computational Desktop, that will provide a customizable human-HPC interface to conduct computational projects in a manner requiring minimal user inter- vention, encouraging the reuse of plug-in modules for which the software is used.

The Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant Program, offered through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, provided resources, and the MetroChoreo State Arts Board and the Illinois Arts Council provided grants to support the project.

Tara Groggern, a senior research sci- entist at the School of Chemical Sciences, and a research professor in the department of chemistry and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, “An Open Environment for Automation of Molecular Dynamics Simulations of Mem- brane-Active Host Defense Peptides.” Mo- lecular dynamics methods change the way chemists and biologists approach the computa- tional material design problems. The complexity of connecting the microscopic phenomena with atomistic processes makes conducting computational biophysics simulations on high-performance comput- ing (HPC) resources labor-intensive. This forces researchers to spend valuable time on conducting the simulations, rather than focusing on the science problem. The goal of this project is to develop the architecture design for an extendible software package, the Computational Desktop, that will provide a customizable human-HPC interface to conduct computational projects in a manner requiring minimal user inter- vention, encouraging the reuse of plug-in modules for which the software is used.

The researchers also are hoping to find new disinfectants that will kill the fungus so that researchers who are studying snakes in the wild will not spread it to new locales on their equipment or shoes. There are only 100 to 150 massasaugas left in Illinois, he said, and about 15 percent of those are infected with the disease.

Allender also is an affiliate of the Illinois Natural History Survey’s Pathobiology Research Institute at the U. of I. He and his INHS colleague, mycologist Andrew Narayana Aluru, have been working to test for the fungus in snakes to white-nose syndrome, another fungal disease that has killed millions of North American bats. Miller and graduate student Michael Dreslik recently pub- lished a study of Pseudogymnoascus destructans, the fungus implicated in white- nose syndrome, and started repeating the analy- sis on Ophidiomyces.

The fungus possesses many of the same enzymes that kill bats, he said, thus the fungus could be deadly to a variety of wildlife.
The only thing missing from Julie Turnock’s Gregory Hall office is a big tub of hot buttered popcorn. With classic movie posters filling every open wall space, Turnock, a professor in the College of Media’s cinema studies department, has made the office the perfect reflection of her academic specialty—studying the silver screen.

“None of these posters are valuable, but they are all original,” she said. “I looked for things that were big, colorful and not so expensive. I haven’t seen all of the movies, but I’ve seen most of them.”

Most of the full-size (and larger) posters are of movies that achieved only marginal popularity, though many still have recognizable actors’ names, like the one with Robert Mitchum and Ava Gardner in their only film together, “My Forbidden Past.”

Turnock’s office collection began shortly after her arrival at the U. of I. four years ago. After spending a year in a temporary space, she claimed a high-ceilinged office on the third floor that features a large wood-framed window providing plenty of natural light.

“I liked it because it has all of this wonderful wall space,” she said.

The office also contains more than a fair amount of books—academic-themed and some just for entertainment—all stacked upon numerous shelves affixed to one of the walls. But it’s the posters, with their era-inspired graphics and audacious promotional statements like “the suspense of a lifetime,” that draw one’s attention.

“I’m pretty happy with how it’s turned out,” she said, adding the posters are great conversation pieces for students and other office visitors.

The “good stuff” in her poster collection, which includes a rare 1967 “Point Blank” (starring Lee Marvin) poster, is kept at home. She picks up most of the posters through an online auction service and occasionally finds herself browsing its movie poster collection for new ideas or that elusive “Lolita” poster she thinks would nicely round out her home collection.

“At this point, the walls of my home are pretty full,” she said. “I do most of my writing at home, but it’s nice to have a space on campus that’s mine and makes me and my visitors feel comfortable.”

Turnock does not consider herself a serious movie-poster collector—at least not the kind who regularly would throw down thousands of dollars for a rare piece.

“Most of these I won at auction for just a dollar or two,” she said. “I don’t need a pristine version—I picked them because I liked how they looked. The striking image trumped the fame of the movie.”

While it’s not her specialty, Turnock said there are scholars who include movie posters in their research of movie publicity and marketing. Turnock’s academic specialty is film special effects, especially from the 1970s, a topic she delves into in a book planned for release in February titled “Plastic Reality.”

Despite her interest in movie special effects, which obviously includes the large science fiction genre, none of her office posters are of Star Wars or any other fantasy theme.

“It’s not that I wouldn’t like to have them,” she said, “but science fiction movie posters are among the most collectible and, therefore, the most expensive.”

Larger than life
With original classic movie posters filling every open wall space of her office, Julie Turnock, a professor in the College of Media’s cinema studies department, has made the office the perfect reflection of her academic specialty—studying the silver screen. “Most of these I won at auction for just a dollar or two,” she said.
Physical Sciences Editor
By Liz Ahlberg

ShrinkyDinks close the gap for nanowires

How do you put a puzzle together when the pieces are too tiny to pick up? Shrink the distance between them.

Engineers at the U. of I. are using Shrinky Dinks, plastic that shrinks under high heat, to close the gap between nanowires in an array to make them useful for high-performance electronics applications. The group published its technique in the journal Nano Letters.

Nanowires are extremely fast, efficient semiconductors, but to be useful for electronics applications, they need to be packed together in dense arrays. Researchers have struggled to find a way to put large numbers of nanowires together so that they are aligned in the same direction and only one layer thick.

“Chemists have already done a brilliant job in making nanowires exhibit very high performance. We just don’t have a way to put them into a material that we can handle,” said study leader Sung-Woo Nam, a professor of materials science and engineering.

Dense arrays. Illinois researchers are using plastic that shrinks when heated to pack nanowires together for electronics applications.

The shrinking method has demonstrated how even wires more than 30 degrees off-kilter can be brought into perfect alignment with their neighbors after shrinking.

Nam’s group showed how wires are aligned in the same direction we can still have some interesting formations, according to Nam. The researchers also can control how densely the wires pack together but do not buckle. Clamping in different places could direct the arrays into interesting formations, according to Nam. “I’m interested in this concept of synthesizing new materials that can have a huge impact on the stored solar energy,” Nam said. “You can create new functions. For example, exfoliated nanowires have shown that film made of packed nanowires has properties that differ quite a bit from a crystal thin film.”

One application the group is now exploring is a thin-film solar cell, made of densely packed nanowires, that could harvest energy from light much more efficiently than traditional thin-film solar cells.

New institute funds three interdisciplinary research projects

The Institute for Sustainability, Energy and Environment has awarded more than $940,000 for major interdisciplinary research projects at the U. of I.

Two projects—an innovative water disinfection system and an approach to agriculture that involves woody plants as an alternative to conventional stoves—will each receive more than $400,000 from the institute over the next three years. The third project, the development of stoves that use stored solar energy, will receive $140,000 over two years.

“Interdisciplinary research is a major part of our initiative to bring major challenges that we face today from the energy and environmental arena to a new level,” said campus sustainability director DeLucia.

“The Institute, approved by the U. of I. Board of Trustees in December 2013, was created to foster cross-campus, interdisciplinary research into global sustainability, energy and environmental problems. By selecting these projects, iSEE is fulfilling the promise for one of its three major missions; the other two are campus sustainability, and education and outreach. DeLucia said the institute will make another request for proposals in the next academic year.

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A new research farm, with several 1-acre plots, will be established to study the transition from conventional agriculture to a restored native ecosystem. Researchers also will compare the environmental, social and economic impact of perennial and annual farming.

Although improvements to our agricultural systems—such as cover crops, precision management and regenerative strategies—are being studied, “transformative solutions are needed to overcome critical challenges to the sustainability of food production,” Lovell wrote. Those challenges include a lack of resilience in normal crops, the loss of soil quantity and quality, the prevalence of inorganic chemicals in freshwater, degrading biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, “all of which are exacerbated by global climate change and growing domestic and global population needs in need of a reliable food supply.”

“Smart disinfection systems with real-time sensors are critical in immediately detecting pathogens and removing contamination threats,” Mariñas said. “Our proposed holistic approach will finally enable truly sustainable solutions to the safe water challenge plaguing 780 million people, resulting in 1.8 million deaths and many millions more cases of chronic malnutrition each year worldwide.”

“Multifunctional Woody Polyculture for Sustainable Food Production” fits into the iSEE research theme of Secure and Sustainable Agriculture. Led by Sarah Taylor Lovell, a professor of crop sciences, the goal of the project is to evaluate layers of tree and hedge crops with perennial yields—instead of annual herbaceous crops—as an option to “meet growing demands for healthy foods while advancing the sustainability of food production systems in the United States and abroad.”

ON THE WEB sustainability.illinois.edu/
A report on honors, awards, appointments and other outstanding achievements of faculty and staff members

ENGINEERING

Alejandro Dominguez-Garcia, a professor of electrical and computer engineering, is among 83 of the nation’s brightest young engineers selected to take part in the National Academy of Engineering’s 20th annual U.S. Frontiers of Engineering symposium Sept. 11-13 in Irvine, California. Participants will discuss the latest developments in next-generation robotics, frontiers in materials for batteries, the impacts of shale gas and oil on the economy, environment and energy sustainability, and technologies for the heart.

Robert Pilawa-Podgurski, a professor of electrical and computer engineering, received the Richard M. Bass Outstanding Young Power Electronics Engineer Award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ Power Electronics Society. The award recognizes his innovative work on power converters that are efficient, yet small and inexpensive.

Three faculty members of the Coordination Science Lab have been awarded IBM Corporation Faculty Awards for their contributions in their field of research.

Deming Chen, a professor of electrical and computer engineering, was awarded $40,000 for his contributions to the areas of high-performance computing, synthesis, architecture and design space exploration.

Steven Lumetta, a professor of electrical and computer engineering and an affiliate professor of computer science, received $35,000 for his research contributions in the areas of high-performance networking and computing, hierarchical systems and parallel runtime software.

LAS

Sharon Hammes-Schiffer, the Swanlund Professor of Chemistry, and So Hirata, the Blue Waters Professor and Alumni Research Scholar in Chemistry, have been elected members of the International Academy of Quantum Molecular Science. Hammes-Schiffer’s research focuses on chemical reactions in solution, in proteins and at electrochemical interfaces, particularly the transfer of charged particles driving many chemical and biological processes. Hirata’s research focuses on the development of new many-body theories describing concerted motions of electrons in atoms and molecules in the gas and condensed phases and in crystalline solids.

They join U. of I. chemistry professor Nancy Makri and physics professor David Ceperley as members of IAQMS, making four on our campus, more than any other university.

Prashant K. Jain, a professor of chemistry and in the Materials Research Laboratory, is one of seven recipients of the Beckman Young Investigator Award from the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation. This highly competitive award of $750,000 over four years is “intended to provide research support to the most promising young faculty members in the early stages of academic careers in the chemical and life sciences, particularly to foster the invention of methods, instruments and materials that will open up new avenues of research in science.” Jain received the award for his work on nanoscale imaging of catalysts in action.

A “laboratory” can be defined across various fields of academic study. No doubt, this photo is not of a typical chemistry or zoology lab, but instead depicts a physical fitness lab for boys during the 1950s. Nine boys hang upside down from exercise apparatus as part of physical fitness tests administered by Thomas K. Cureton, a professor of physical education and the director of the Physical Fitness Research Laboratory. Cureton’s research interests included physical fitness, swimming, the cardiovascular-respiratory system and nutrition.

The papers of Cureton, a world-renowned fitness advocate, are held by the University Archives and cover aquatics and physical fitness clinics held for the Y.M.C.A., the armed forces, testing of Olympic and other athletes, and the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The University Archives strives to collect and preserve collections from all facets of the university’s research programs.

ON THE WEB

Photo series: illinois.edu/blog/view/1561
University Archives: archives.library.illinois.edu
By Shantia Forrest

Students who were refusal-skills-trained (n=212) were less likely to relapse and were more likely to be using again at follow-up, than those who were not trained (n=214).

The findings of Smith and Tabb are consistent with previous research that showed successful outcomes for African-American or white peers that did not receive the training.

“By contrast, about 51 percent of the white teens who received the training were still abstinent three to six months after treatment,” Smith said. “When compared to adolescents who did not receive the training, substance abuse was consistently high across all participants’ peer groups, regardless of race, the researchers found.

However, youth who were alcohol- or drug-dependent prior to treatment were more likely to be using again at follow-up, even if they had undergone the refusal skills training.

“Based on this study, it seems that there is no compelling evidence to support refusal skills training as a required component of treatment for African-American youth,” Tabb said. “African-American adolescents that did not engage in the training did not have significantly worse outcomes than their African-American or white peers that did.”

“Make what difference, though, was participants’ own treatment exposure – the longer they were in treatment, the more services they received, the more likely they were to be abstinent at follow-up,” Smith said. “Based on this study, it seems that there is no compelling evidence to support refusal skills training as a required component of treatment for minority youth.”

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The return of LeBron James to the Cleveland Cavaliers may have riveted the sports world and social media, but the phenomenon of “going home,” whether to a geographic location or a former job, is not unique to professional athletes.

According to two studies co-written by a U. of I. expert in organizational behavior and human resources management, organizations of all types are beginning to recognize and embrace the value of recruiting and welcoming back former employees.

From infantry soldiers to chief executives, accountants and professional basketball players, many organizations proactively recruit and rehire former employees as a way to offset high turnover costs and rehire former employees as a way to offset high turnover costs and hedge against the uncertain way to offset high turnover costs and hedge against the uncertain

"In addition to understanding the key components of the organizational culture and understanding the social norms expected in it." Harris and his co-authors would not commit to specific predictions about James’ return to Cleveland, noting that their statistical findings would be best applied to large groups rather than individual cases.

"Although LeBron's original decision to voluntarily leave Cleveland was much decided, the fact that it was clearly of his own volition might work to Cleveland's favor," Swider said. "But our model doesn't exactly account for the extreme vitriol displayed by Cleveland fans or even the owner, which makes this case particularly interesting. Although many Heat fans probably wish LeBron's tenure in Miami was longer, the brevity of his stay on South Beach should have Cavalier fans smiling."

The working paper, tentatively titled "Employees on the Rebound: Toward a Framework for Boomerang Employee Performance," was co-written by Richard Gardner of Brigham Young University and Joseph Liu of the Georgia Institute of Technology. •

Research: Business should embrace 'boomerang employees'

By Phil Ciciora

Business and Law Editor

In a recent working paper, however, Harris and another set of co-researchers studied that issue by using a sample of boomerang employees in the National Basketball Association.

The research found that reemployment performance was significantly predicted by the harmony of the original tenure, and their success during the time spent away from the focal organization and conditions of the return.

"Our latest research suggests that organizations should realize that not all boomerangs are created equal," Harris said. "When evaluating potential boomerang hires, organizations should first, and most obviously, consider their previous performance histories at the focal organization and at their most recent employer."

"Second, organizations should be mindful that employees who originally left on good terms and of their own volition might be better suited for a return than those who left more acrimoniously. And finally, employees who are not gone for very long might possess more of the desirable attributes of boomerang employees, such as accurately recalling the organizational culture and understanding the social norms expected in it."

Harris and his co-authors

Although LeBron's original decision to voluntarily leave Cleveland was much decided, the fact that it was clearly of his own volition might work to Cleveland's favor, Swider said. "But our model doesn't exactly account for the extreme vitriol displayed by Cleveland fans or even the owner, which makes this case particularly interesting. Although many Heat fans probably wish LeBron's tenure in Miami was longer, the brevity of his stay on South Beach should have Cavalier fans smiling."

The working paper, tentatively titled "Employees on the Rebound: Toward a Framework for Boomerang Employee Performance," was co-written by Richard Gardner of Brigham Young University and Joseph Liu of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

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Research: Business should embrace 'boomerang employees'

By Phil Ciciora

Business and Law Editor

In a recent working paper, however, Harris and another set of co-researchers studied that issue by using a sample of boomerang employees in the National Basketball Association.

The research found that reemployment performance was significantly predicted by the harmony of the original tenure, and their success during the time spent away from the focal organization and conditions of the return.

"Our latest research suggests that organizations should realize that not all boomerangs are created equal," Harris said. "When evaluating potential boomerang hires, organizations should first, and most obviously, consider their previous performance histories at the focal organization and at their most recent employer."

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