How to apply:

- Program Info: https://cs.gmu.edu/prospective-students/phd-program/admissions/
- Application link: https://cec.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-admissions/application-requirements-and-deadlines
- deadline: **Oct. 15, 2023** (Spring 2024); **Dec. 1, 2023** (Fall 2024)

Basic requirements:
  - Bachelor or Master's degree in CS or CS-related majors
  - Self-motivated; strong interest in System Security
  - Solid programming skills (experience on contests such as ACM-ICPC/DEFCON-CTF is a plus)
  - Experience in Security/System research (publications in Security/System areas is a big plus)

Prospective students may send emails to **xiaokuan.zhang.cs@gmail.com** with:
  - (1) semester to apply (Spring or Fall 2024)
  - (2) CV
  - (3) research interest and past research experience
  - (4) brief summary of one of Xiaokuan's papers, and discuss pros/cons/extensions

Please put `[Prospective PhD Student]` in the email subject when sending emails.

About GMU-CS:

GMU is an R1 university, and the CS ranking is 32 (security: 26) according to csrankings.org; 63 according to US news. New hires in security at GMU include: Giuseppe Ateniese, who was the chair of CS department at Stevens; Evgenios Kornaropoulos, who just finished his postdoc at UC-Berkeley working with Dawn Song. Qiang Zeng and Lannan Luo from University of South Carolina are also joining in Fall 2022. Besides, there are a group of security researchers at GMU-CS, including Duminda Wijesekera, Dov Gordon, Foteini Baldimtsi, Eric Osterweil and Songqing Chen. Moreover, another well-known security researcher, Kun Sun, is at GMU-IST, and there is a new Cyber Security Engineering department with many new faculty members. Students will have the opportunity to work with them on state-of-the-art security problems. GMU is only miles away from Washington DC, and is also very close to Amazon's new headquarters, which offers plenty of intern and full-time opportunities.

All Areas [off | on]

AI [off | on]
- ▶ Artificial intelligence ☑
- ▶ Computer vision ☑
- ▶ Machine learning ☑
- ▶ Natural language processing ☑
- ▶ The Web & information retrieval ☑

Systems [off | on]
- ▶ Computer architecture ☑
- ▶ Computer networks ☑
- ▶ Computer security ☑

27	▶ Rutgers University 🇺🇸 📊	4.6	49
29	▶ Univ. of California - Riverside 🇺🇸 📊	4.5	49
30	▶ Northwestern University 🇺🇸 📊	4.3	46
30	▶ Pennsylvania State University 🇺🇸 📊	4.3	61
32	▶ George Mason University 🇺🇸 📊	3.9	57
32	▶ Harvard University 🇺🇸 📊	3.9	30
32	▶ Univ. of California - Santa Cruz 🇺🇸 📊	3.9	62
32	▶ Yale University 🇺🇸 📊	3.9	41
36	▶ Brown University 🇺🇸 📊	3.8	39
36	▶ Ohio State University 🇺🇸 📊	3.8	47

GMU is the largest public research university in Virginia, with an enrollment of over 38,000 students studying in over 200 degree programs. GMU is located in the city of Fairfax in Northern Virginia at the doorstep of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, with unmatched geographical access to a number of federal agencies and national laboratories. Northern Virginia is also home to one of the largest concentrations of high-tech firms in the nation, providing excellent opportunities for interaction with industry (e.g., Amazon is building its second headquarters in Northern Virginia). Fairfax is consistently rated as being among the best areas to live in the country, and the area is close to three of the top 30 airports in the USA with direct flights to many continents, such as Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

About Xiaokuan Zhang:

Xiaokuan Zhang is an Assistant Professor at the CS Department of George Mason University. He graduated from Ohio State University in Aug. 2021 under the supervision of Prof. Yinqian Zhang (yinqian.org). Before joining GMU, he was a postdoc researcher at Georgia Tech, working in the SSLab (gts3.org) with Prof. Taesoo Kim (taesoo.kim). His research interests mainly lie in System Security and Privacy, including side channels, mobile security, IoT security, XR security, blockchain security, etc.

Xiaokuan has published 10+ papers in well-known security conferences and journals, such as IEEE S&P, ACM CCS, USENIX Security and NDSS. He is also one of the three winners worldwide to receive the 2020 NortonLifeLock (formerly Symantec) Graduate Fellowship, which is one of the most competitive awards in computer security. Former winners of this award include Brendan D. Saltaformaggio, Christian Rossow, Prateek Saxena, Kevin Butler and David Brumley, which are well-known security researchers. His discoveries of iOS cross-app information leakage received three CVEs issued by Apple and our proposed countermeasures were integrated into

recent versions of iOS/MacOS. His papers were selected as the top 10 finalists of NYU Cyber Security Awareness Week (CSAW) applied research paper competition in 2016, 2018 and 2022.

Students working with Xiaokuan will have opportunities to collaborate with security researchers at GMU (e.g., Kun Sun, Giuseppe Ateniese), as well as from other universities, such as SJTU/SusTech/ShandongU/UESTC (China mainland), CUHK/CityU/HKUST (Hongkong, China), NTU (Singapore), CISPA (Germany), OSU/Duke/IU/Gatech (USA). Students can also be referred to intern at industrial research labs such as Microsoft Research.