

2020 FISSEA Cybersecurity Awareness and Training Innovator Award

Shehzad Mirza from Global Cyber Alliance (GCA)

We are pleased to announce this year's winner of the Cybersecurity Awareness and Training Innovator Award – it goes to Shehzad Mirza from Global Cyber Alliance (GCA). There, he is the Director of Operations and was nominated by GCA President and Chief Executive Officer, Philip R. Reiting

Each year at the annual conference, FISSEA recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions in inspiring the strategic planning, building, and management of innovative cybersecurity awareness and training programs. Nominees may be involved in any aspect of cybersecurity awareness and training, including, but not limited to, cyber instructional curriculum developers, cybersecurity instructors, cybersecurity program managers, workforce development managers, and practitioners who further awareness and training activities or programs.

Nominees came from the public or private sectors for individuals who have made significant contributions benefiting the public sector.

Dr. Loyce Best Pailen, Sr. Director for the Center for Security Studies University of Maryland Global Campus, led the nominating committee consisting of FISSEA Board members Susan Hansche, Clarence Williams, Kelly Wright, and Kelly Arnold.

Shehzad Mirza, Director of Operations at the Global Cyber Alliance (GCA), has been the organization's lead on DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance), and through his training programs, has increased awareness and implementation of DMARC across the public and private sectors in the U.S. and globally.

Specifically, Shehzad launched a "90 Days to DMARC" adoption campaign in late 2017 to support the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's [Binding Operational Directive \(BOD\) 18-01](#), requiring federal civilian agencies to implement DMARC; he developed an online DMARC Setup Guide to walk users through implementation; and he has conducted DMARC bootcamps, a series of weekly webinars designed for technical professionals to understand and implement DMARC.

Shehzad's activities have benefitted the public sector by helping U.S. federal civilian agencies implement DMARC correctly in support of BOD 18-01. His trainings have also been accessed by U.S. state and local governments through collaboration with the Multi-State ISAC.

As detailed above, the numbers speak for themselves in terms of the impact Shehzad has had through his DMARC training efforts. All of the DMARC campaign and awareness materials are [freely available online](#). Continuous education and awareness of DMARC occurs via regular webinars, blogs, social media, and distribution through partners.

This has led to significant financial benefits across a diverse array of industries and governments. [GCA's Economic Benefits of DMARC](#) paper determined that based on prevention of business email compromise (BEC) alone the 1,046 domains that had at the time deployed DMARC at a policy level of "reject" or "quarantine," after using GCA's Setup Guide, would see an annual savings of \$19M - \$66M.

"The DMARC standard is crucial for organizational security-- protecting one's employees, customers, and brand. But not enough organizations use the standard, leading to tremendous losses every year due to fraud. The work Shehzad has done to accelerate awareness and implementation of DMARC is significantly important for the entire cybersecurity ecosystem. Shehzad has fought tirelessly to build a training program that drives participants to dive in, get their hands dirty, and make the changes necessary to be successful with a technologically nuanced process.

Many cybersecurity initiatives only generate action while people are in the room. But the outcome of Shehzad's training program not only drove immediate awareness, it continued to drive implementations over time from the participants throughout the following weeks and months. This is how we change an industry and protect everyone using the internet."

For the 2019 bootcamp, several leading DMARC vendors participated in portions of the webinars, while Shehzad maintained lead status and ownership of the training. For the 2020 bootcamp series, Shehzad is the sole trainer. With regard to the DMARC Setup Guide, Shehzad was supported by others at GCA including its development team – Shehzad was the product owner.

His ability to convey complex material to a broad audience makes him especially successful in reaching his audience.

Nominator
Philip R. Reitnger
GCA Pres. & CEO