University of Maine System
Board of Trustees

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

NAME OF ITEM: Cyber Security Program Training and Simulation Range Platform, SimSpace

CAMPUS PRESENTER(S): Jenifer Cushman, President; Aili Robinson, Chief Business Officer; Brenda McAleer, Associate VP of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College of Professional Studies; Henry Felch, Professor of Computer Information Systems and CyberSecurity

INITIATED BY: Roger J. Katz, Chair

BOARD INFORMATION: **BOARD ACTION: X**

BOARD POLICY:
Financial Affairs, Section 701 – Operating and Capital Budgets

UNIFIED ACCREDITATION CONNECTION:

UMA is a leader in Cyber Security training and teaches students from across the system.

UMS STRATEGIC PLAN CONNECTION:

Commitment 1: Advance Academic Innovation
Action 1.2.1: Expand Programs based on workforce needs
Action 1.3.3: Expand technology-enhanced learning and high-impact practices

BACKGROUND:

a. **Summary of the request**

The University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine at Augusta requests authorization to spend $340,000 annually for three years for a total of $1,020,000 with the option to renew for up to three (3) additional one (1) year terms on a cyber security training platform. The total maximum cost for the platform is estimated to be **$2,145,442.**

b. **Overall requested budget and funding source(s):**

Simulation and training resources are imperative to teaching cyber security, data science, computer science, and information science, and is therefore budgeted in the institution's E&G budget.

There are potential revenue opportunities, especially with the Capital Center coming online this fall.

c. Is the project included or reflected in the Master Plan, Long Term capital plan or 1-year capital plan most recently approved by Trustees? If not, please explain why.

This software is not included in the Master or Capital plans as it is a software, not real property.

d. Detailed explanation of rationale for project and metrics for success of the project (ROI or other)

Over the past six years, our cybersecurity program has successfully leveraged a hyper-realistic cyber range from Cyberbit. This platform has been deeply embedded into our academic curriculum and has played a critical role in our research initiatives, providing immersive, hands-on training environments and realistic threat simulations.

As our program has matured and our requirements have evolved—particularly the need to model and import customer networks for both training and research—we initiated a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process. This process was designed to evaluate the continued suitability of our current provider, Cyberbit, as well as explore alternative vendors that could better align with our current and future needs, both technically and financially.

SimSpace represents a strategic upgrade to our cyber range infrastructure. The platform offers advanced capabilities aligned with both our instructional and research goals and does so at a significantly lower cost than our current solution. The selection of SimSpace supports our program's continued growth, ensures state-of-the-art training for our students, and reflects strong fiscal responsibility.

e. Explanation of the scope and substance of the project as needed to supplement (a) through (d) above. Note: scope includes an explanation of community impact, how the project ties to the University's mission, etc.

The implementation of a next-generation cyber range, in partnership with SimSpace, represents a transformative investment in the University of Maine at Augusta's (UMA) cybersecurity education, research, and community engagement. The cyber range is a virtual, simulated environment where students, faculty, and professional trainees can engage in hands-on cybersecurity exercises, such as incident response, threat hunting, penetration testing, and network defense against real-world cyber threats.

This upgrade supports both academic and applied training environments, allowing the university to fully integrate advanced cybersecurity simulations into existing and new coursework. The upgrade will provide support for faculty research that models real organizational networks and the ability to provide custom training environments for partners in public and private sectors. The upgrade would enhance workforce development programs that serve statewide needs.

With the selection of SimSpace, UMA will have a highly adaptable and scalable cyber range that supports the following objectives:
o   Academic Integration by further embedding hands on training into the curriculum across multiple cybersecurity and IT courses and providing students with access to industry-grade tools and environments. The cyber range will continue to support capstone projects, certifications, and hands-on skill validation.
o   Research and Innovation by enabling faculty-led research projects, including cybersecurity simulations and network defense modeling. By allowing for importing and simulating real-world

customer network topologies, the solution supports data collection and analysis for academic publications and grant-funded initiatives.

o   Public and Private Sector Training by creating customizable training scenarios for municipal governments, school systems, critical infrastructure sectors, and small businesses across Maine. This solution provides a realistic training environment for law enforcement, first responders, and IT professionals and facilitates partnerships with Maine's business community to improve regional cyber resilience.

This cyber range will serve as a regional cybersecurity training hub for the state of Maine and beyond. It will directly support workforce development by providing Maine's future cybersecurity professionals with practical, in-demand skills. The cyber range can be used for K-12 and community engagement by hosting cybersecurity awareness and training events, including exercises for high school students, educators, and community leaders. The cyber range can help build economic resilience by strengthening the cyber preparedness of Maine's small and mid-sized businesses, many of which are vulnerable to growing cyber threats as well as supporting cyber readiness for municipalities, healthcare organizations, and critical infrastructure providers

The UMA mission emphasizes accessibility, workforce alignment, and community engagement. This project directly supports those values by delivering career-relevant, applied learning to students in a high-demand field and supporting non-traditional and online learners through virtual and hybrid training formats. This project will extend resources and expertise to Maine's communities, consistent with UMA's public service commitment.

The University of Maine System (UMS) seeks to "advance Maine's economy and improve the lives of its people by preparing a workforce for the future." This cyber range project has the ability to foster inter-campus collaboration by providing a scalable cybersecurity training resource that could be utilized by other campuses. The project also enables research and development activities that contribute to Maine's innovation economy related to manufacturing and critical infrastructure. The solution promotes inclusive access to cutting-edge education across geographic and economic barriers

This project represents more than a technology upgrade—it is a strategic investment in UMA's academic excellence, the security and resilience of Maine's communities, and the long-term workforce development goals of the University of Maine System. By selecting SimSpace, UMA is expanding its leadership in cybersecurity education while enhancing its mission to serve the people of Maine.

f. Changes, if any, in net square footage or ongoing operating costs resulting from the project

None.

g. Alternatives that were considered to meet the need being addressed by this project

This project went through the RFP process, where several platforms were presented, reviewed, and tested. Ultimately, SimSpace was the winning proposal, outperforming our current platform in several categories, including price.

h. Project Timeline for: 1. Start 2. Occupancy and 3. Completion

The project will be implemented over the summer of 2025, for fall 2025 student use.

i. Timeline for any further consideration or action anticipated to be needed by the Board or its committees regarding this project if full authority is not being requested from the outset.

None.

j. Additional information that may be useful to consideration of the item.
Note: For items over $5M, indicate when the item was originally presented as an information item.

TEXT OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION:
That the Financial, Facilities, and Technology Committee, approves the following resolution to be forwarded for Board of Trustee Consent Agenda at the May 19, 2025 Board Meeting.

> That the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee, and authorizes The University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine at Augusta requests authorization to spend $340,000 annually for three years for a total of $1,020,000 with the option to renew for up to three (3) additional one (1) year terms on a cyber security training platform. The total maximum cost for the platform is estimated to be **$2,145,442.**