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## [Dr. Gursimran Walia wins NSF grant](#)

August 31, 2020

We are pleased to announce that Gursimran Walia, professor and chair of the Department of Computer Science, and his collaborators, have just received notification of a new \$600,000 award through the NSF *Improving Undergraduate STEM Education Program: Education and Human Resources (IUSE: EHR)*. This is a collaborative project that will be carried out with teams of researchers at Georgia Southern University (PI: Dr. Walia), the University of Alabama (PI: Dr. Jeffrey C. Carver), and Western Oregon University (PI: Dr. Lucas Cordova).

This project aims to serve the national interest by integrating an inquiry-based learning approach (a type of inductive learning), contained within Testing Tutor, to support the software testing pedagogy in a computer science curriculum. Software testing is a critical skill computer science students need to acquire to be successful practitioners.

Posted in [CEC News](#), [College of Engineering & Computing](#), [Community Engagement](#), [Computer Science](#), [Education Outreach](#), [Faculty Highlights](#)

## [Asst. Prof. Katz interviewed re: COVID-19 tracing apps](#)

August 31, 2020



by: [Jon Dowding](#) **Posted:** Aug 28, 2020 / 05:02 PM EDT / **Updated:** Aug 28, 2020 / 05:41 PM EDT

SAVANNAH, Ga. (WSAV) – Smartphone users have taken to social media to express their concerns over data being shared with COVID-19 tracing apps.

WSAV NOW spoke with Frank Katz, assistant professor of IT, about whether you should be concerned.

The main developers for these apps are state health departments. As of now, Georgia does not have a COVID-19 tracing app in either the Google Play store or Apple's App Store.

Katz says that so far, these types of apps have been working in many places around the world including Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea.

The programs on the market use Bluetooth to identify app users who have been in closest proximity to someone who may have contracted COVID-19.

Many of the apps function works by randomly assigning a user six-digit code if they download the app. Using bluetooth to identify other phones around them, the app collects the six-digit identification codes of other users around them over a two week timespan.

If a user changes their COVID-19 status in the app to positive, the app will notify users that they've come in contact with someone who tested positive.

The apps do not use location services data and ask the user first before it collects data from the device.

"One of the problems with bluetooth inherently is that it has a short range," said Katz. "It's not that accurate in terms of the distance."

Katz says the apps that are currently available do not present any major risks to the person who downloads it.

"You're actually more secure using this, if we ever get an app for the state of Georgia, than you would be buying something on your phone from Amazon or booking a hotel or a flight or something like that," he said.

He recommends people only download apps created by a credible state agency such as a state's health department.

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