SRS Research Proposal

Perceptions of Counterintelligence in Corporate and Academic Environments
(In collaboration with IXN Solutions)

Principal Investigators (PIs)

Shane McNeil

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- **Position/Title:** Director, Sentinel Research Society
- **Email/Phone:** james.boatfield@iwp.edu

Research Team Composition

Research Assistants (RAs)

Carla Renner

- **Position/Title**: Operations Manager, Sentinel Research Society
- **Primary Role:**
    - Coordinate intern assignments and track research progress
    - Integrate survey and interview data into shared systems
    - Support data organization, documentation, and briefings

Kiley Pittman

- **Position/Title:** Producer / Researcher, Sentinel Research Society
- **Primary Role:**
    - Serve as team liaison and process coordinator
    - Oversee version control, data tagging, and interview scheduling
    - Assist in drafting research updates for PIs and IXN

Time Commitment: 5–7 hours/week each

IWP Research Interns (5–7)

SENTINEL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Washington, DC

Names: [To be determined]
Academic Background: Undergraduate students in national security, international affairs, political science, or data science

Primary Responsibilities:

- Conduct open-source scans on CI awareness in target sectors
- Assist with free survey distribution and interview transcription
- Draft annotated bibliographies and support data analysis using open-source tools
- Contribute to visuals and briefing documents

Abstract

This collaborative project with IXN Solutions explores how counterintelligence (CI) is perceived in civilian sectors—specifically corporate and academic institutions—in response to escalating "whole-of-society" intelligence threats. As foreign espionage targets non-governmental data environments, understanding how these institutions view and implement CI measures is increasingly critical to national resilience.

Using open-source tools and cost-free platforms, this study will survey and interview a diverse range of professionals to assess awareness, attitudes, and institutional barriers to adopting CI practices. With leadership from two doctoral researchers and support from graduate and undergraduate assistants, the team will produce a detailed report for IXN, academic analysis for the *Sentinel Journal*, and policy recommendations to improve CI literacy in vulnerable sectors.

This approach demonstrates how rigorous, policy-relevant research can be conducted using only free and open-access tools—ensuring both academic quality and practical application in support of national security priorities.

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1. Introduction & Background

U.S. corporations and universities are on the frontlines of a quiet intelligence war. From the theft of sensitive medical research to covert funding of advanced technology programs, foreign actors—particularly China and Russia—have exploited the open nature of American innovation ecosystems. While government agencies have evolved to address these threats, non-governmental institutions remain behind the curve in understanding or implementing counterintelligence measures.

This research seeks to identify how stakeholders in academia and industry perceive CI: do they view it as essential security, bureaucratic overreach, or an irrelevant government tool? Informed by the practical needs of IXN Solutions, the project will use grassroots survey and interview

methods to gather critical insights. The results will inform policy and provide strategic recommendations for building a CI-conscious culture across sectors.

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2. Research Questions and Objectives

Primary Question:

- How do corporate and academic professionals perceive the relevance and applicability of counterintelligence in their environments?

Secondary Questions:

- What level of CI awareness exists among civilian-sector leaders?
- What cultural or institutional factors hinder adoption of CI measures?
- How do perceptions differ between academic and corporate settings?
- How do professionals evaluate their institution's ability to manage CI threats?

Objectives:

- Conduct low-cost, high-impact data collection through surveys and interviews
- Provide sector-specific insights to IXN on CI perception and adoption
- Publish research to inform broader CI policy debates in the national security field

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3. Theoretical Framework

The research is grounded in realist international relations theory (Morgenthau), which views national survival and power competition as constant forces—reframing CI as a necessity, not an option. Clausewitzian principles highlight the indirect battlespaces where modern conflict is waged—education, information, and innovation. Organizational behavior theories on change resistance will help explain why some institutions fail to internalize CI. Finally, the concept of soft power (Nye) and its subversion via espionage frames the strategic vulnerability of U.S. research and development ecosystems.

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4. Methodology

Mixed-Methods Approach (using free/open tools):

Quantitative:

- Survey of 500 corporate professionals and 500 academic stakeholders

- Hosted via the **free version of SurveyMonkey**, with up to 10 questions per survey
- Demographic and categorical variables (sector, role, institution type)
- Questions will use Likert scales and yes/no to assess awareness and perceived barriers

Qualitative:

- Semi-structured interviews with 50 total participants:
    - 20 corporate leaders
    - 20 university administrators/faculty
    - 10 CI experts (retired professionals or consultants)
- Interview recordings transcribed manually or via **open-source transcription tools** (e.g., **oTranscribe** or **Whisper.cpp**)

Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative:** Analyzed using **LibreOffice Calc**, **Google Sheets**, or **JASP** (open-source statistical software)
- **Qualitative:** Thematic coding by hand or with **Taguette**, an open-source qualitative analysis tool

Ethical Considerations:

- Anonymity ensured using encrypted storage (e.g., ProtonDrive, Google Drive with limited access)
- Informed consent forms collected via Google Forms or physical signature
- Interview recordings stored securely and destroyed after transcription

5. Project Roles and Workflow

Team Member	Role	Weekly Commitment	Deliverables
Shane McNeil (PI)	Strategic lead, policy framing	2–4 hrs	Final report, policy brief, journal submission
James Boatfield (PI)	Methodology co-lead, interview guide	2–4 hrs	Interview design, theoretical framing, analytic feedback
Carla Renner (RA)	Intern coordinator, database lead	5–7 hrs	Weekly updates, document organization, data oversight
Kiley Pittman (RA)	Process manager, schedule tracker	5–7 hrs	Survey logistics, visual data support, transcription QA
Interns (5–7)	OSINT, support roles	5–7 hrs each	Survey assistance, interview support, annotated briefs

6. Timeline

Phase	Task	Team Lead	Estimated Dates
Phase 1	Literature review & research design	PIs + GSRAs	June–July 2025
Phase 2	Survey & interview preparation	GSRAs + Interns	August–September 2025
Phase 3	Data collection	GSRAs + Interns	October 2025–February 2026
Phase 4	Analysis and writing	PIs + GSRAs	March–May 2026
Phase 5	Final revisions and publication	PIs	June–August 2026

7. Expected Findings and Deliverables

Anticipated Findings:

- Gaps in awareness and misunderstanding of CI in civilian sectors
- Specific cultural and institutional barriers to CI adoption
- Significant divergence between corporate and academic perceptions

Deliverables:

- **IXN Report:** Formal presentation of findings with recommendations
- **Sentinel Journal Submission:** Scholarly write-up of key themes and implications
- **Policy Briefs:** For universities, corporations, and federal agencies
- **Supplemental:** Infographic or public briefing slide deck (open-access format)

8. Preliminary Bibliography

- U.S. DOJ. *China Initiative Case Summaries*, 2018–2022
- Hoover Institution. *Chinese Influence & American Interests*, 2018
- Joseph Nye. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 2004
- Morgenthau, Hans. *Politics Among Nations*, 2005
- Greer, John M. *Counterintelligence for the 21st Century*, IC Press, 2020
- Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive. *Foreign Spies Stealing U.S. Economic Secrets in Cyberspace*, 201