



Associate professors Patrick Warren, left, and Darren Linvill created Clemson University's Media Forensics Hub, which fights against online disinformation.

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

CU Media Forensics Hub receives \$3.8M grant to study, fight online disinformation

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CLEMSON — A \$3.8 million grant will provide a boost to Clemson University's Media Forensics Hub at the Watt Family Innovation Center in its fight against online disinformation.

Researchers at the Hub study disinformation and inauthenticity online and create tools to educate people and stop the spread of disinformation.

Clemson University is matching the grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, making the total investment \$7.6 million over the next four years.

This funding will allow the Hub to hire four more faculty in different disciplines — psychology, communication, marketing and computer science — that will more than double the size of the research team.

The grant will also fund technology infrastructure, along with graduate assistants and postdoctoral researchers.

"I am very proud of the work that the Media Forensics Hub is doing to fight disinformation and online deception, and I am grateful to the Knight Foundation for their incredible support," university president Jim Clements

said. "The mission of the Hub is to help inform and protect the public from disinformation, and this fits perfectly with Clemson's land grant mission to serve the people of South Carolina and the nation. I am excited to see the Hub grow and make an even bigger impact in this in the future."

ABOUT THE HUB

The team began in 2017 as a partnership between associate professor of communication Darren Linvill and associate professor of economics Patrick Warren, who uncovered and exposed more than 3 million tweets by Russian trolls.

Media Forensics Hub was launched in May 2020 with the support of the Watt Family Innovation Center and sponsorship from the South Carolina Research Authority.

Since then, the Hub has created the "Spot the Troll" quiz, where users can test their own ability to spot online trolls and inauthentic social media accounts. They are also part of a collaboration with several other universities to help fight online scams that target older adults. That project recently received \$5 million

in funding from the National Science Foundation.

"This funding is going to allow us to significantly expand our capacity, to move our work into new disciplines, to build greater expertise here at Clemson and in this field as we teach the next generation of scholars and practitioners studying disinformation," Linvill said.

Warren and Linvill believe the team's work will make Clemson one of the top institutions in the world for research on disinformation and inauthenticity online.

"I think the world is still getting used to functioning in a digital space. Bad actors are taking advantage of people who aren't digital natives, who didn't grow up using computers," Linvill said. "They are taking advantage of the fact that social media platforms are still learning how to deal with disinformation. These platforms are still writing the policies on how to fight it and build the mechanisms and tools with which to fight it. This is important right now because it's still so new. This is the new reality that we live in, and we have to prepare society to live in that reality."