Message from the 24th USENIX Security Symposium Program Chair

Welcome to the 24th USENIX Security Symposium in Washington, D.C.!

I hope you enjoy the technical program, hallway track, and fun evening events in the next three days. USENIX Security has been a premier venue for security and privacy research and I look forward to seeing the lasting impact that the papers of this year will make in years to come.

After agreeing to chair USENIX Security '15 Program Committee (PC), I sought feedback on different approaches to reviewing by reaching out to former chairs of USENIX Security and to chairs of the IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy, ACM CCS, NSDI, ACM SIGCOMM, ACM CHI, and UbiComp. I also read chair reports from ASPLOS and ICSE. While no process will ever be perfect, I hope future conferences will be able to benefit from what we learned at USENIX Security this year.

Selection of Program Committee: I was very lucky to have a fantastic set of rock stars from our field who volunteered to serve on the program committee this year. I analyzed the topics of USENIX Security 2014 submissions and grouped them into seven areas and allocated the number of PC members to invite based on the number of expected submissions per area. To diversify the PC, I had a target of at least 20% PC members from each of four categories: outside the US, not from academia, not male, and new to the USENIX Security PC. To cope with the growth of submissions, I divided the PC into those required to attend the PC meeting ("attending") and those who were not ("remote") and provisioned the PC such that the review load was kept fewer than 20 submissions per member. 36 volunteers served as attending PC members and 39 served as remote PC members.

First round of reviews (Feb. 26–Apr. 2, 2015): We received 426 submissions, a 22% increase over the past year! 19 papers were desk rejected due to a violation of submission requirements and the rest were assigned to at least two reviewers per submission. The program committee spent one week on online discussion once reviews had been collected. As in past years, we decided to finalize decisions in the first round for a subset of papers that had confident reviews and did not appear to have a chance of acceptance. While in prior years we have used a similar process to decide the outcomes of many submissions at the end of the first round, the decision to issue early notifications and provide early access to reviews is new this year. 228 papers (54%) were rejected in the first round of decisions.

Second round of reviews (Apr. 3–May 6, 2015): Most papers received at least two more reviews in the second round. After the reviewing deadline, the program committee spent an additional two weeks discussing these papers using an online forum. Each paper was assigned to a discussion lead whose responsibility was to summarize reviews and drive a consensus among the reviewers between "suggest accept," "suggest reject," and "discuss." 22 papers received a "suggest accept" recommendation; 94 "suggest reject"; and 82 "discuss."

Un-blinding papers (May 6, 2015): Outcomes and discussion points were finalized for each paper and the deputy chair and I decided on the list of 88 papers to discuss at the PC meeting based on the recommendations. At that point the author names were made visible to reviewers. The un-blinding was helpful during the meeting to clarify conflicts and to help prevent authors from being punished for failing to cite their own work or from reviewers who might have a bias based on a false assumption regarding the authors' identity.

PC meeting (May 7–8, 2015, at Microsoft Research in Redmond, WA): 35 PC members attended the PC meeting and several remote PC members called into it. The PC began with a discussion of top five ranked papers and bottom five ranked papers to calibrate. To speed up a discussion, we allocated four minutes for a paper that was suggested to accept by the reviewers and eight minutes for the rest. The PC discussed 76 papers on the first day and 12 papers on the second day. After going through the list of 88 papers, the PC spent two extra hours discussing tabled papers and 14 papers that were voted to be resurrected. After the final decisions were made, we had accepted 67 papers, 16% of the submissions: all 22 papers tagged as "suggest accept," 44 papers tagged as "discuss." and 1 paper tagged as "suggest reject."

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The program committee members spent countless hours not only reviewing papers but also discussing papers with each other online and in person. For instance, one controversial submission received seven reviews (including those from two external experts) and 44 comments online. On top of that, the PC spent an hour after dinner on the first day of the PC meeting to come to a consensus.

The technical program would not have been possible without contributions from the 75 program committee members and over 100 external reviewers who provided thoughtful reviews and recommendations and had to put up with nagging emails and reminders from me especially around the review deadlines. I would also like to thank Thorsten Holz for serving as the deputy chair; Angelos Keromytis for chairing the invited talks committee; Sarah Meiklejohn and Adam Doupé for serving as the poster session chairs; Tadayoshi Kohno for serving as the WiPs chair and mentoring a new chair like me; student volunteers Anna Simpson, Peter Ney, Adam Lerner, and Philipp Koppe, for scribing at the PC meeting and checking reviews; Eddie Kohler for adding new features into the already awesome HotCRP system that made paper triaging easier; Kevin Fu for creating funny session titles; Microsoft for sponsoring the PC meeting; Stuart Schechter for hosting an ice cream social and a post-PC meeting party; the USENIX staff, especially Casey Henderson and Michele Nelson for all the support throughout the process; and the authors of 426 papers for submitting their research for consideration. Finally, I would like to thank the USENIX steering committee to allow me to have this incredible opportunity to work with so many wonderful people.

Thanks to you all.

Jaeyeon Jung, *Microsoft Research*
USENIX Security '15 Program Chair