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CAREER EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS
Go to washingtonpost.com/jobs to see more event dates and times

September 27
MOAA Career Fair
Washington, D.C.
moaa.org/careerfair

October 12
Security Clearance Career Expo
Linthicum Heights, Md.
securityclearanceexpo.com

October 13
Security Clearance Career Expo
Arlington, Va.
securityclearanceexpo.com

To submit event information or feedback about the section, email sundayjobs@washpost.com

WATCH FOR JOB SCAMS
Check | Payment Processing | Collections

These scams will often include instructions to collect and deposit funds from the fraudulent company's "clients" and then transfer money back into a third party bank account.

Tips for Avoiding Job Scams

Be cautious of companies or agencies that refuse to provide verifiable references.

For a list of other typical scams visit washingtonpost.com/jobscams

TO PLACE YOUR PRINT OR ONLINE EMPLOYMENT AD

Go to washingtonpost.com/recruit or call 202-334-4100 (toll free 1-800-765-3675)

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Improving educational outcomes with online testing innovations

AIR®
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Making Research Relevant

AIR at a glance

1946
Year AIR founded

1,650
Staff

$300 MILLION
Annual revenue

31
U.S. and international office locations

Larry Albright faced a professional crossroads in 1999. With a PhD in computer science, Albright had been teaching computer science at the university level for 15 years, but he had gotten to the point where he wanted to put his significant skills and knowledge into creative practice. Nearly all of the software engineering jobs he'd checked out seemed to involve working on weapons systems for military contractors, which didn't interest him at all.

One Sunday, he opened up *The Washington Post's* Jobs section and an ad leapt out at him, as the job it described would benefit not only from his extensive technical expertise but also from his many years in the classroom, and he made a decision he has never regretted. He joined the staff of the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where he now spends his days improving the way educational assessments are delivered, reported and used to help each child learn.

Educational testing and reporting is just one aspect of AIR's work, and it is an area in which they have quickly become a recognized leader and innovator. Additional areas of expertise include education research and evaluation; international education and development; individual and organizational performance; health research and communications; usability design and testing; employment equity; and statistical and research methods. Originally founded in 1946 by John Flanagan to develop aptitude tests for WWII combat pilots, AIR is now based right across from the Georgetown waterfront and employs some 1,500 employees worldwide.

The Computer Science and Statistical Center, for which Albright is now chief software engineer, supports AIR's Assessment Program, whose stated mission is to help students learn, teachers teach and parents know what is happening at school, according to Selina Tolosa, who heads the 70-member team. "We provide a full range of testing services, including test development, online and paper-based services, and scoring

and reporting," she explained. "We use artificial intelligence to score questions and overall tests automatically, and we do it using a Web-based system," she continued. This offers a significant cost and logistical advantage, since it does not require any hardware in the schools except for the computers on which the students test.

It's not surprising that AIR has quickly become the recognized leader in online educational assessment. Some of the innovations Albright and his colleagues have developed relate to security; others have advanced the sophistication of computer-adaptive student testing. Their innovative, interactive item types can hone in on a student's true level of knowledge as they keep him or her interested, and the test is able to adjust to the student as he or she takes it, which further confirms skill levels. Other breakthroughs involve the incredibly detailed reporting that is delivered to the teacher and the parent, complete with a recommended course of action to round out that child's knowledge. Thanks to the system designed and built by Albright and his team at AIR, all of this information is reported back instantaneously, with more than 24 million transactions occurring during a school day, which translates to more than 800 transactions per second.

"The sophisticated algorithms that get created here give every student an optimal opportunity to show what he or she can do—along with the tools necessary to round out their knowledge," Tolosa said. "So the people who work here get an enormous sense that the way in which they've

chosen to apply their skills really matters."

Balaji Kodeswaran is another prime example of a fortuitous career decision; his has already led to a significant development for blind students. With a PhD from UMBC and an 11-year career in telecommunications systems, he was intrigued by the idea of using his expertise to impact scholastic success when he saw the AIR ad in *The Post's* on-line classifieds in 2009. Now principal software engineer for AIR, Kodeswaran is responsible for one of AIR's most exciting recent developments: the ability to deliver real-time Braille with tactile graphics.

AIR's growing reputation is leading to new projects—and new career opportunities—in the software group. The state of Oregon, the first client for whom AIR launched a statewide online assessment system, was also the first state in the country to implement online testing. Since launching Oregon's assessment system, AIR has begun handling statewide educational assessments for Hawaii, Delaware and Minnesota in addition to Oregon, and discussions with other states are underway.

To meet this growing demand, AIR is continuing to expand its workforce. "We are looking for smart and creative people who care

about the work they do," Tolosa said. "In addition to the inherent rewards of the job, the corporate culture is dynamic and very collaborative, and working in Georgetown next to the water is a pretty nice perk as well," she added.

AIR's Computer Science and Statistical Center currently has some 20 openings in software engineering, Web design, quality assurance and technical project management. if you have strong technical skills and this sounds like work that would appeal to you, visit the AIR Web site at **air.org** and click on "Career Opportunities." ❑