



Yifan Zhang

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Website: 1phan.com

Location: San Diego, CA [Cybersecurity Center @ SDSU](#)

I am recruiting motivated PhD students in systems security and AI security.

Research Directions

My research focuses on security and privacy across modern computing *ecosystems*, with an emphasis on identifying new attack vectors and building defenses through measurement and binary analysis:

- **Software Supply Chain Security & Privacy**
- **Mobile & IoT Systems Security**
- **Cybercrime**

How We Work

We combine reverse engineering with static & dynamic program analysis and leverage formal verification where applicable to detect, measure, and mitigate novel security & privacy vulnerabilities.

What I Look For in a PhD Student

- **Deep curiosity** about real systems and willingness to dissect complex software stacks.
- **Strong systems skills:** confident with Linux, scripting, and debugging; comfortable reading specs and source.
- **Program analysis & tooling mindset:** experience/interest in reverse engineering; static/dynamic analysis (e.g., program slicing, taint/flow analysis, fuzzing), or *formal methods*.
- **Solid coding ability;** able to build research prototypes and measurement pipelines.
- **Team fit:** collaborative, respectful, and proactive; excited to publish in top security venues.

About SDSU

San Diego State University (SDSU) is a major public research university in Southern California and home to a vibrant, diverse academic community. As an institution with growing research activity and graduate programs, SDSU supports impactful, interdisciplinary work across engineering, sciences, and beyond. The campus benefits from strong connections to regional industry and public-sector partners, offering rich opportunities for real-world, high-impact security research.

About San Diego

San Diego offers year-round mild weather, beautiful coastline, and a dynamic innovation ecosystem spanning software, telecommunications, biotech/life sciences, defense, and clean-tech. The region's blend of industry, research institutions, and quality of life makes it a compelling place to conduct systems and security research and to live during graduate study.

Interested in Joining?

If you are excited about systems and security (or AI security) and believe you may be a good fit, please prepare:

- A brief statement describing your research interests and any relevant past projects.
- A CV or résumé with links to code or artifacts.
- A link to any open-source contributions or technical write-ups you are proud of.

Email subject template:

[SDSU Security PhD] Your Name --- [Brief Research Interest]