

# James C. Davis

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<https://davisjam.github.io/>

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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My research focuses on **software quality**. I use qualitative and quantitative methods to identify socio-technical defects and shortcomings. I identify and resolve problems using systems and security principles. For example:

- **Troublesome tools:** I have given a strong empirical foundation to the study of regular expressions (FSE'18, FSE'19, ASE'19a, ASE'19b).
- **Emerging paradigms:** I have studied the systems and security issues that arise in event-driven programming as embodied in the Node.js framework (EuroSys'17, USENIX Security'18). I have also examined security issues in the use of the query language GraphQL (ICSOC'19, FSE'20).
- **Distributed systems:** I hold several patents on testing distributed storage systems, and have researched performance issues in stream processing engines (USENIX ATC'19).

## EDUCATION

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**Ph.D Computer Science** 2015-2020 (expected)

*Virginia Tech*

Advisor: Dr. Dongyoon Lee

Dissertation: *On the Impact and Defeat of Regular Expression Denial of Service*

**B.S. Computer Science, B.S. Mathematics** 2008-2012

*Clarkson University*

Research mentor: Dr. Takashi Nishikawa

Honors Thesis: *Relating Synchronizability to the Topological Properties of Networks Using a Linear Classifier*

## EMPLOYMENT

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**Assistant Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering** Fall 2020-present

*Purdue University*

**Graduate Research Assistant** 2016-2020

*Virginia Tech*

- **Practice-motivated systems design:** Re-designing regex engines based on practitioners' perspectives.
- **Security in emerging paradigms:** Denial of service in event-driven frameworks and GraphQL.

**Intern, Microsoft Research (RiSE group: Cloud Security)** Summer 2019

*Microsoft Research, Redmond, WA*

Project sponsor: Dr. Patrice Godefroid

- Techniques and tools for web API security testing.

**Intern, IBM Research (Storage)** Summer 2018

*IBM Research, Almaden, CA*

Project sponsor: Dr. Deepavali Bhagwat

- Provenance collection system for machine learning applications (VLDB'20).

**Software Engineer, IBM (GPFS)** 2012-2015, Summer 2016, Summer 2017

*IBM, Poughkeepsie, NY*

- Developed distributed applications and tooling for cluster management and file system testing.
- Worked with and trained test teams in the US, the UK, Mexico, Germany, India, and China.
- Created five patents on techniques for file system testing.

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

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Rupprecht, **Davis**, Arnold, Gur, Bhagwat. “Improving Reproducibility of Data Science Pipelines through Transparent Provenance Capture”. Proceedings of the 46th International Conference on Very Large Data Bases (**VLDB’20 Industry track**).

Cha, Wittern, Baudart, **Davis**, Mandel, Laredo. “A Principled Approach to GraphQL Query Cost Analysis”. Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE’20**). *ACM Distinguished Paper Award*.

**Davis**, Moyer, Kazerouni, and Lee. “Testing Regex Generalizability And Its Implications: A Large-Scale Many-Language Measurement Study”. Proceedings of the 34th IEEE/ACM International Conference on Automated Software Engineering (**ASE’19**).

Michael, Donohue, **Davis**, Lee, and Servant. “Regexes are Hard: Decision-making, Difficulties, and Risks in Programming Regular Expressions”. Proceedings of the 34th IEEE/ACM International Conference on Automated Software Engineering (**ASE’19**). *ACM Distinguished Paper Award*.

**Davis**, Michael, Coghlan, Servant, and Lee. “Are Regular Expressions a Lingua Franca? An Empirical Study on the Re-use and Portability of Regular Expressions”. Proceedings of the 27th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE’19**).

Wittern, Cha, **Davis**, Baudart, Mandel. “An Empirical Study of GraphQL Schemas”. Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Service-Oriented Computing (**ICSOC’19**).

Fu, Ghaffar, **Davis**, and Lee. “EdgeWise: A Better Stream Processing Engine for the Edge”. 2019 USENIX Annual Technical Conference (**USENIX ATC’19**).

**Davis**, Coghlan, Servant, and Lee. “The Impact of Regular Expression Denial of Service (REDOS) in Practice: an Empirical Study at the Ecosystem Scale”. Proceedings of the 26th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE’18**). *ACM Distinguished Paper Award*.

**Davis**, Williamson, and Lee. “A Sense of Time for JavaScript and Node.js: First-Class Timeouts as a Cure for Event Handler Poisoning”. Proceedings of the 27th USENIX Security Symposium (**USENIX Security’18**).

**Davis**, Thekumparampil, and Lee. “Node.fz: Fuzzing the Server-Side Event-Driven Architecture”. Proceedings of the Twelfth European Conference on Computer Systems (**EuroSys’17**).

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

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Ozkan, Davis, **Davis**, James, Murzi, Knight. “Expectations and Experiences of Short-Term Study Abroad Leadership Teams”. Journal of International Engineering Education (**JIEE**).

## SHORT PAPERS

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**Davis**. “On the Impact and Defeat of Regex DoS”. **ACM SRC – Grand Finals. Second place, graduate student division**.

Rupprecht, **Davis**, Arnold, Lubbock, Tyson, and Bhagwat. “Ursprung: Provenance for Large-Scale Analytics Environments”. Proceedings of the 2019 International Conference on Management of Data (**SIGMOD’19 Demo**).

**Davis**, Kildow, and Lee. “The Case of the Poisoned Event Handler: Weaknesses in the Node.js Event-Driven Architecture”. Proceedings of the 10th European Workshop on Systems Security (**EuroSec’17**).

## PATENTS

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W. Davis, **J. Davis**. “Injection of Simulated Hardware Failure(s) in a File System for Establishing File System Tolerance-to-Storage-Failure(s)”. IBM, U.S. patent application 20200264961. U.S. patent pending.

W. Davis, **J. Davis**. “Verification of the integrity of data files stored in copy-on-write (CoW) based file system snapshots”. IBM, U.S. patent application 20200242075. U.S. patent pending.

**J. Davis**, W. Davis. “File metadata verification in a distributed file system”. IBM, U.S. patent 10,678,755B2, granted Jun. 9, 2020..

W. Davis, **J. Davis**. “Testing of lock managers in computing environments”. IBM, U.S. patent 10,061,777 B1, granted Aug. 28, 2018.

**J. Davis**, W. Davis, F. Knop. “Detection of file corruption in a distributed file system”. IBM, U.S. patent 10,025,788, granted Jul. 17, 2018.

## TEACHING

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**Instructor, ECE 368 Data Structures** Fall 2020  
*Purdue University*

**Co-advisor, VIP: Open-Source TensorFlow Software** Fall 2020  
*Purdue University*

**Instructor, Data Structures and Algorithms** Fall 2019  
*Virginia Tech*

**Instructor, Introduction to Programming in Python** Spring 2019  
*Virginia Tech*

**Track Leader, Rising Sophomore Abroad Program** Spring 2018, Spring 2019  
*Virginia Tech*

## STUDENTS

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### *Undergraduates*

Albert Sun (BS, Purdue University)	2020-present
Jitesh Motati (BS, Purdue University)	2020-present
Tuhin Sarkar (BS, Purdue University)	2020-present
Jenna Ryan (BS, Clarkson University)	2018-present
Jonathan Alexander (BS, Virginia Tech)	2018-2019
Christy Coghlan (BS, Virginia Tech)	2018
Celine Stewart (BS, Virginia Tech)	2017-2019

## INVITED TALKS

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**Regexes Awry: Characterizing and Defeating Regex-based Denial of Service** 2020  
*Clarkson University CS department colloquium*

**Regexes are Hard: Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives** 2019  
*NC State CS department colloquium*

**The Dangers of Copy/Pasting Code** 2019  
*Episode of the Podcast “The Secure Developer”: <https://tinyurl.com/DavisResearchPodcast>*

**Regexes in the Wild** 2019

<b>Academic Perspectives on Node.js</b> <i>Node.js Collaborator Summit, Vancouver</i>	2018
<b>International Engineering</b> <i>Rising Sophomore Abroad Program, Virginia Tech</i>	Annual, 2015-2019

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## OTHER NOTABLE ACTIVITY

<b>Disclosed DoS vectors in Python core and Node.js core</b> <i>Python: CVE-2018-1060, CVE-2018-1061; Node.js: CVE-2018-7158</i>	
<b>Guide: “Don’t Block the Event Loop (or the Worker Pool)”</b> <i><a href="https://nodejs.org/en/docs/guides/dont-block-the-event-loop/">https://nodejs.org/en/docs/guides/dont-block-the-event-loop/</a></i>	
<b>VT Intramural Racquetball Champion (Singles, Doubles)</b>	Spring, Fall

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## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Outstanding Graduate Student Service Award, CS@VT	2020
Second place, Grand Finals of the ACM Graduate Student Research Competition	2020
First place, Graduate Student Research Competition, ESEC/FSE 2019	2019
ACM Distinguished Paper Award, ASE 2019	2019
ACM Distinguished Paper Award, ESEC/FSE 2018	2018
Microsoft Security Researcher Acknowledgments (Regex DoS)	2018
Graduate Fellow, VT Academy for Global Engineering	2019-2020
IBM Significant Contributor Award (Node.js)	2018
IBM Poughkeepsie’s New hire of the month	2014
Frederica Clarkson Award	2012
Clarkson University’s Outstanding Senior (x2): Mathematics, Computer science	2012
Clarkson University Phalanx Commendable Leadership	2011

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## EXTERNAL SERVICE

Reviewer, ACM Transactions on Software Engineering (TSE)	2020-present
Member, ICSE Demonstrations Track	ICSE 2021
Member, ESEC/FSE Artifact Evaluation Committee	ESEC/FSE 2020
Member, CGO Artifact Evaluation Committee	CGO 2019
Sub-reviewer: ASPLOS’18, EuroSys’18, MASCOTS’18, HPCA’19, CGO’19, ISMM’19	2016-2019
Regional Judge, ACM ICPC	Fall 2015

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## INTERNAL SERVICE

Committee member, Purdue ECE Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	2020-present
President, VT CS Graduate Student Council	2018-2019
Organizer, VT Systems Reading Group	Spring 2017-2020

## SELECTED OPEN-SOURCE PROJECTS

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<b>safe-regex</b>	Check if your regex is super-linear. 4.7M dependents.
<b>regexp-tree</b>	Analysis tools for regular expressions.
<b>marked</b>	Regex-based Markdown parser (I consult on ReDoS). 354K dependents.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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Member, Association for Computing Machinery