



Morgantown, West Virginia

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Company to build biometrics business within Morgantown

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From an office overlooking downtown Morgantown, a small local software company hopes to become a big player in biometrics.

ViaMetrica, a division of TMC Technologies of Fairmont, opened in September, but only began moving staff to Morgantown within the past month, said Alan Viars, director of the ViaMetrica division. The company is in the startup stage of building commercial biometric software.

ViaMetrica's software would help financial companies, police departments and government agencies control who gets in and out of their facilities, Viars said. It could also help hospitals track health information and maintain privacy for patients.

Biometrics uses parts of a person's body, such as fingerprints or retina scans, as a way of identifying an individual, Viars said. ViaMetrica's software would use an identity card, then search a database of biometric information to make sure that the person with the identity card is the same person who is listed in the database.

Right now, ViaMetrica has three employees, but hopes to expand quickly, he said.

"We're just getting started," Viars said. "I'd say that within the next six months, there will be more meat to work on."

TMC set up ViaMetrica as a way to make commercial products using expertise already within the company, said John Dahlia, director of business development and communications. TMC has contracts with several government agencies in the biometrics area and said it could expand into creating software for other firms.

Morgantown was chosen because it is fast becoming a hub for biometric research and products, Dahlia said. WVU's biometrics program creates a ready base of qualified employees, and it is near several biometrics-related organizations, such as the FBI Criminal Justice Identification Services Division in Clarksburg.

"The fact that we wanted to be in Morgantown is no accident," Dahlia said.

Yash Shah, who started working for ViaMetrica six months ago, said the company offers the opportunity for a lot of advancement. Shah graduated with a master's degree in biometrics from WVU last spring.

Shah said his job at ViaMetrica will allow him to continue the type of research that he enjoys while producing new products for the marketplace. And with all of the focus on national security lately, biometrics is an expanding field.

"It provides an open door to do research and it provides great growth opportunities," he said. "I don't see anything but success in the future."

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