



SUCCESS STORY

C I S C O A C K N O W L E D G E S S U C C E S S A N D A C C O M P L I S H M E N T S

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Learning to Succeed in the Internet Economy

Nineteen-year-old Kasetta 'Kasey' Coleman grew up in Philadelphia's inner city where teen pregnancy, drugs, and minimum wage jobs were the norm. Kasey, however, wanted a different life. She wanted a college education and a career that would provide her with a good paying job and an opportunity to make a contribution to the community in which she was raised.

Growing up with her parents and three siblings, her dream was to become a cardiologist so that she could heal and help people. Kasey attended Girls High School, considered to be the best public high school in Philadelphia, where she knew she would be prepared for colleges and universities of higher education. She excelled at Girls High School, taking AP courses in nearly every subject, playing the viola, studying dance, and volunteering for a number of community programs. All the while, her sights were set on medical school. In the spring of her senior year, however, Kasey's options were broadened with the opening of the Cisco Networking Academy at Girls High School.

One of the first 20 students to enroll in the Cisco Networking Academy at Girls High School, Kasey completed two courses of the CCNA curriculum. Networking Academy classes required a commitment above and beyond standard course work with classes held from 7:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m., before the start of the school day. But, it was well worth the effort for Kasey.

"The Networking Academy gave me a new and different learning experience," says Kasey. "First, it encouraged independent thinking. The focus is on learning rather than cramming and regurgitating information. Second, I was actually learning how the Internet works through a refreshing approach to teaching that combined videos, Internet access, and Cisco resources," continues Kasey. Kasey's involvement with in the Networking Academy program culminated with her participation on the Cisco team that configured and installed Internet access for the Republican National Convention (RCN) in the summer of 2000.

"My experiences with the Networking Academy and the RCN opened my eyes to how engineering and computer technology can impact people's lives. I thought the world of networking was cool and that in the long run it would be helpful to my academic career," recalls Kasey.

In the fall of 2000, Kasey enrolled as a freshman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "I wouldn't have considered going to an engineering school were it not for the Networking Academy," says Kasey. She notes that, "Men have dominated engineering and science for so long that stereotypes have evolved that exclude women. So, women lack the support of half of the population when it comes to a career in engineering and technology. Women need good role models in this field and the Networking Academy helped me understand that as a



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woman, I could succeed in an engineering environment.”

While Kasey had considered majoring in computer science, during her sophomore year she declared a major in chemical engineering with a minor in biotechnology and a concentration in Japanese. Her interests lie at the intersection of computer science and nano and biotechnology in areas such as bioinformatics, silicon biology and drug delivery. In addition to academic study, Kasey is a researcher at Langer Labs where she works on bioengineering projects that involve the development of fluorescent markers for cancer detection and microchip drug delivery. President of a dance company and treasurer of the Black Students' Union, Kasey is also a member of the Society of Women engineers, National Society of Black Engineers, Black Woman's Alliance, and the Red Cross Disaster Action Team.

As part of MIT's Women's Initiative, she visits high schools throughout the country meeting with high school students – especially girls – to encourage them to enter science and engineering fields. As Kasey provides a role model for other young women, she credits her own role model with her success and achievement. “My mother is my role model. Responsible, dedicated, committed, a great friend, and a great parent.”