



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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“Technology levels the playing field, it has no face, no color—it’s all about knowledge.”

Mae Diaby, CCNA
Math Teacher
Bok Technical High School



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Support for Cisco Networking Academy Program: Kentucky Leads the Way in Technology Training

When the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) announced—its partnership with Cisco to create a statewide Cisco Networking Academy Program, it didn’t anticipate the swell of response. Students have filled all available slots in fall classes throughout the state, and the KCTCS chancellor’s office has received more calls from interested high schools than they can answer.

“I’ve been in academia for 20 years and this is the fastest enrollment growth for one program I’ve ever seen,” says Vincent A. DiNoto, Jr., Director of Technology, Jefferson Community College. “We went from zero students last fall to nearly 1000 Cisco students in fall 2000.”

Background

Three urban centers containing half the state’s population form a triangle surrounded by small cities and rural areas in Kentucky. In 1997, the state’s 13 community colleges were combined with 15 technical colleges to form the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. While the colleges continue to be a pathway to higher degree programs, they now have a greater emphasis on helping people bridge gaps in their skills and education.

Increasingly, students with bachelor degrees and workplace experience are coming back to school to take classes to improve their employment opportunities. KCTCS caters to these students with certificate programs and partnerships with industry. The Cisco Networking Academy Program was an ideal fit in the new system, bringing a highly prized certificate program, teacher training, and high quality curriculum. The KCTCS chancellors, Dr. Keith Bird and Dr. Tony Newberry, encouraged the statewide IT department to take a system-wide approach to adopting the Cisco Network Academy Program. The Academy program is offered as part of the IT degree and as integrated certificates for college credit.

Challenge

When a clothing manufacturer closed their plants in central Kentucky and the region lost 1500 jobs, a new kind of company came in to replace them: Amazon.com. Those 1500 workers could not immediately transition from one work environment to the other. They needed a crash course in computers, software, and networking to fill the jobs in the new workplace. KCTCS, through Elizabethtown Technical College, partnered with Campbellsville University as a local Cisco Networking Academy to leverage certificate programs and contacts



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with local community colleges to help fill the gap.

“Every business and organization in the state needs someone with the skills the Academy delivers,” says Tony Nunn, Project Manager, Kentucky Community and Technical College System. “Our vision is to significantly raise the information technology skill level in Kentucky within the next two years.”

From the start of the new college system, the chancellors and the president recognized the importance of technology training and the value of certificate programs. Chancellor Dr. Keith Bird came to KCTCS from New Hampshire and brought the example of successful Cisco Academies. Dr. Michael McCall, President of KCTCS, made information technology training a top priority for the state educational institution. With Chancellor Dr. Tony Newberry, they gave the college IT departments the mandate and the financial support to establish a statewide program. Even with demand from students and a green light from college leadership, a quality program takes time and people to launch. Education institutions offering the Academy program must find and train instructors, set up labs, and market the program to students. The colleges turned to their own faculty members and offered them an opportunity to join a statewide community of instructors. The response from the faculty was extremely positive as they recognized the critical need for information technology training for the people of Kentucky. The faculty member’s experience and commitment to teaching made an excellent match to the Cisco curriculum.

Solution

The Cisco program and the ability of KCTCS to quickly ramp up and offer classes signifies a new relationship between the workplace and the classroom. Workers of all ages and experience need learning opportunities at critical times in their career, and community colleges have the flexibility and resources to meet their needs. When KCTCS looked for a way to establish an IT certificate program, the Networking academy had all the right ingredients: industry-recognized certification, quality assessment, instructor training, and student assessment.

KCTCS established 10 Regional Academies to support 100 Local Academies in high schools, colleges, area technology centers and other non-profit entities such as public housing authorities. Area technology centers are vocational schools serving secondary students, usually located next to a high school. The Murray Housing Authority offers classes onsite. Cisco curriculum enables area colleges to set up labs, train faculty, and start teaching curriculum in less than six months, a year ahead of schedule, according to Alan Hall, Cisco Regional Academy Instructor at Northern Kentucky Technical College.

By coordinating efforts from a central office, KCTCS can leverage resources to make the Academy available throughout the state, not just in the urban centers. Tony Nunn, Program Manager and Vince DiNoto, Statewide IT Director, provide a single point of contact for resolving issues and promoting the program. They report directly to the chancellors and meet with college presidents to gain their support for regional instructors. They also work closely with Cisco to implement the industry-recognized program as quickly as possible. When the state decided to launch 10 Regional Academies at once, they paid for the Cisco Academy Training Center instructors to come to Kentucky.

“We all went to Cisco training together,” says Hall. “We got to know each other



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at the training and, even though we are all over the state, we can support each other.” They communicate through email, chat rooms, and hold meetings over the statewide interactive television network.

Future Plans The Cisco Networking Academy Program in the state of Kentucky started with 256 students in spring of 2000 and has grown to 1000 for the fall 2000 semester. The state fast approaching its goal of 100 Local Academies and will offer credit to high school students who successfully pass their assessments. In spring 2001, the colleges will begin offering the Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) program as credit courses. KCTCS plans to use the partnership with Cisco as a model for the future.

“Cisco curriculum and the way it’s delivered is a model for where education is headed,” says Nunn. “Students have access to the curriculum any time through the Internet. The curriculum and training is more up-to-date. Controlled testing to internationally normed standards provides excellent feedback and assessment for students. If all of our courses could be that way it would terrific.”



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