



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

A Place Where Students, Staff and Faculty Can Grow

Samuel Pond, a missionary who lived among the Dakota people in the 1830s knew the Dakota as a strong community in which everyone cared for one another's families. This extended family system is called a Tiospaye. In a Tiospaye, you have many mothers and fathers, and the entire Tiospaye is responsible for teaching and caring for all of the children. In the Dakota community, family was everything.

In this extended family, Kendal Miller, a recent Sisseton Wahpeton Community College (SWCC) graduate says, "I learned that it's easier and better to accomplish something as a group as opposed to doing it as an individual."

Descendants of a Survivalist Culture

Today's residents in rural South Dakota are just as committed to caring for their families. To equip members of the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe and other residents of the Lake Traverse Region of South Dakota with modern survival skills, SWCC, a tribally chartered institution, was established. SWCC provides post-secondary courses leading to Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Graduates receive better job prospects and a foundation for baccalaureate degrees. And the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe has a skilled, supporting workforce to draw upon.

Planning Ahead

In 1999, SWCC recognized the need to build a workforce of IT professionals to fulfill the ongoing and future technology requirements of the college and community. In less than a year and with no budget and just a few staff, Arlie Phillips, a SWCC instructor, Scott Morgan, the Technology Director at SWCC, and Derrick Lawrence, the Network Administrator developed the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree in Computer Systems Technology (CST), and a comprehensive and integrated computing infrastructure with sufficient support staff.

The Cisco Networking Academy Program serves as the backbone of the curriculum for second-year CST students. "Having an industry-recognized certification program included in the college degree program gives students a competitive edge in the job market," says Arlie.

Both the college and students benefit from the IT internship built into the curriculum. Past CST students gained valuable workplace experience and helped the IT department re-wire the college, run over 2,000 feet of cable and install two computer labs.

It's All about Teamwork

At SWCC, networking students aren't the only ones working in teams. At SWCC the administrative and academic departments are working together to provide better, faster access and leading-edge training on new systems and software for all users - students, staff and faculty.





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By redefining working relationships between academic and administrative computing, the college has successfully maximized their limited technology workforce while also providing a better learning experience for their students.

“Students and faculty have a unique opportunity to work on the college’s technology infrastructure, and administrative computing professionals can teach in the classroom. This is a win-win for everyone – everyone receives practical training so we can brush up on skills and also acquire new skills,” says Arlie, the CST Instructor.

This collaboration between administrative and academic computing has also prevented overlap and the deployment of redundant systems and services. And, by providing hands-on training to students and teachers, the college has alleviated their own workforce shortage.

“Having the IT staff teach, faculty members work on the infrastructure, and students manning the help desks is a better use of our limited resources. It has allowed us to expand,” Scott adds.

Sharing jobs at the college is not easy, but everyone is committed to ongoing training and professional development. “We all realized early on that we were trying to accomplish the same goals – we were all in the same boat,” says Scott.

“Building the computer systems technology discipline and infrastructure at Sissteon Wahpeton Community College was not a one-man job,” Scott says. “It was a group effort and each person stepped up to the plate for the greater good. My job was to find out what people were good at, let them do it, and let them grow.”

A Bright Future for Graduates

Kendal Miller, one of the first Cisco Academy graduates and CST graduates at SWCC, sees a bright future ahead of him thanks to his education at SWCC. In ten years, his goal is to lead his own team of IT professionals. He’s currently working part-time as a network administrator at the college while studying for his CCNA™ (Cisco Certified Network Associate) exam and he’s enrolled in the computer science baccalaureate program at Oglala Lakota College. With strong teamwork skills, a solid education and workplace experience, Kendal and other CST graduates are sure to have successful careers in networking.

