



## Job Corps and Cisco Team Up to Provide Valuable Skills to Young Adults

### U.S. Department of Labor's Job Corps Model of Practice

Job Corps is a comprehensive, residential education and training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. Since 1964, Job Corps has provided integrated academic, vocational, and social skills training to more than two million disadvantaged youths between the ages of 16 and 24, enabling them to pursue additional education or secure high-paying jobs. Job Corps currently serves nearly 70,000 students a year at 118 centers throughout the United States.

Through a successful partnership with the Cisco® Networking Academy®, Job Corps centers across the United States are helping youth gain the skills necessary to establish successful and promising careers in technology. The Networking Academy provides interactive IT curricula and hands-on experience to support the development of networking skills, while Job Corps provides career counseling and transition support for up to 12 months after students graduate from the program to ensure a successful transition into the workforce.

Networking Academy students at Job Corps also benefit from partnerships with local businesses and nonprofit institutions that offer valuable workplace learning opportunities to help students develop their skills and find jobs locally.

### Making a Difference in the Community

#### Pittsburgh Job Corps Center – Pennsylvania

The Pittsburgh Job Corps Center, which opened its doors in 1972, currently serves approximately 850 young men and women. The center, which is operated by ResCare, provides career training, social skills counseling, and wellness services. Since 2001, the center has offered the Networking Academy to a diverse population of students seeking marketable workforce skills.

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**Karen Bobick, Pittsburgh Job Corps Center instructor**

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“We’re proud of the results of our students,” says Karen Bobick, academy instructor at the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center. “We strive to give them real-world experience while they’re in the program through internships, work-based learning, and part-time employment. Our goal is long-term results,” adds Karen. “Our students find good IT jobs, but more importantly, they keep them. Some of our students have been with their employers for years and are advancing in technical expertise and income.”

The academy at the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center plays an active role in the community. Working in conjunction with Wireless Neighborhoods, they have designed and installed computer networks for local nonprofit organizations. These experiences have helped the students build their resumes and secure jobs in the IT field.

Andre Thompson enrolled in Job Corps after dropping out of community college for financial reasons. He was assigned the lead role in coordinating several work-based learning projects through Job Corps, and helped design and install networks for community centers in the Pittsburgh area.

“I was able to develop my leadership and management skills while troubleshooting and delegating tasks among team members” says Andre. “It was a very valuable experience.”

Andre completed four semesters of the Networking Academy and passed his Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA®) Certification Exam on the first try. He currently works at National Software Testing Lab as a cell phone applications test engineer and plans to obtain his bachelor's degree in information technology.

### **Collbran Job Corps Center – Colorado**

When Ben Morris graduated from high school, he didn't have the financial resources or the desire to attend college, and was unsure of his plans for the future. His brother, a U.S. Navy recruiter, informed Ben that Job Corps offered a technical track in networking and encouraged him to sign up. Although Ben had never owned a computer and had very little networking experience, he signed up for the Networking Academy at the Collbran Job Corps Center in February 2006.

Ben quickly began to apply himself as a learner. "It was challenging at first to understand the coursework," says Ben. "I never liked to read and then suddenly my brain became a big sponge. I discovered that I liked to learn and get my hands into the technical stuff."

Ben completed IT Essentials I and II and the Cisco CCNA courses and then did something that no other student in Job Corps history had done; he went on to complete his Cisco instructor training and by October 2005, began simultaneously teaching courses while continuing his studies. Ben completed his instructor training for all the CCNA courses before completing the Networking Academy in February 2006.

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**"The Networking Academy moved Ben from an interest in IT to skills he can build upon."**

#### **Karen Currier, Collbran Job Corps Center instructor**

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When reflecting on the impact the Networking Academy has had on his life, Ben says, "It gave me a better understanding of who I am and what I like to learn. It also provided job skills and direction to design my own career plan." His academy instructor, Karen Currier, saw him as a self-motivated student. "The Networking Academy moved Ben from an interest in IT to skills he can build upon," says Karen. "He pushed himself to the limit to get as much as he could out of the program."

Ben currently works for Sitel in Colorado Springs, providing customer service at the help desk. He plans to continue his education at Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado Springs and ultimately would like to own his own business, an Internet and retail café.

Since the Networking Academy was introduced at the Job Corps center in Collbran, more than 70 students have completed one or more of the courses offered, and many of those who have graduated are working in the IT industry or continuing their education. "Our primary goal in offering the Networking Academy is to prepare students for better job placement," says Karen.

### **Sacramento Job Corps – California**

The Sacramento Job Corps Center began offering the Networking Academy in 2002. Its relationships with schools, businesses, and community and faith-based organizations throughout the Sacramento area have provided rich learning opportunities for students, who perform community service, participate in work-based learning, and are placed in jobs and postsecondary education and training.

The work-based learning program integrates job shadowing, site visits, mentoring, internships, and vocational skills training into a comprehensive approach to developing students' technical and soft skills through hands-on and experiential learning. For example, academy students installed a Cisco network in a local school system and helped a local organization build a wilderness rescue site.

A six-year partnership with the California Department of Motor Vehicles has placed Job Corps trainees in telephone help desk positions for the DMV's automated system, where they provide support for several different services including vehicle

registration. Academy students also interface with customers by providing technical assistance at self-help kiosk and computer terminals in the DMV lobbies.

Academy students were also involved in the expansion of the Sacramento Job Corps Center's network infrastructure. Last year, they helped install over 100 drops and 6000 feet of cable, reorganize wiring closets, and update documentation.

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**George Raymond, academy instructor at the Sacramento Job Corps Center**

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To learn more about Job Corps, visit: <http://jobcorps.dol.gov/>

For comprehensive list of Cisco Networking Academies at Job Corp Centers throughout the United States, please contact Carroll McGillin at [cmcgilli@cisco.com](mailto:cmcgilli@cisco.com).



**Americas Headquarters**  
Cisco Systems, Inc.  
170 West Tasman Drive  
San Jose, CA 95134-1706  
USA  
[www.cisco.com](http://www.cisco.com)  
Tel: 408 526-4000  
800 553-NETS (6387)  
Fax: 408 527-0883

**Asia Pacific Headquarters**  
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.  
168 Robinson Road  
#28-01 Capital Tower  
Singapore 068912  
[www.cisco.com](http://www.cisco.com)  
Tel: +65 6317 7777  
Fax: +65 6317 7799

**Europe Headquarters**  
Cisco Systems International BV  
Haarlerbergpark  
Haarlerbergweg 13-19  
1101 CH Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
[www-europe.cisco.com](http://www-europe.cisco.com)  
Tel: +31 0 800 020 0791  
Fax: +31 0 20 357 1100

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