



U.S. Competition Helps Technology Students Build Confidence SkillsUSA Model of Practice

Nearly 10 years ago, Cisco® employees helped create an Internetworking contest for the SkillsUSA competition, which allows students to showcase their skills and build confidence, while providing a networking opportunity for students, teachers, and industry leaders in technology.

“Successful Model of Employer-Driven Youth Development Training”

SkillsUSA is a national nonprofit organization that helps high school and college students prepare for careers in trade, technical, and service occupations. SkillsUSA programs help establish industry standards for job skill training and promote community service. The U.S. Department of Labor describes SkillsUSA as a "successful model of employer-driven youth development training.”

The SkillsUSA competitions are designed to recognize the achievements of career and technical education students while encouraging them to strive for excellence in their chosen occupations. At the annual, national-level championships, more than 4600 students compete in 84 occupational and leadership skill areas.

About the Internetworking Competition

During the last nine years of the Internetworking competition, more than 25,000 contestants have competed at a local, regional, or state level in all 50 U.S. states. More than 500 of those competitors have qualified to attend the national contest in Kansas City, Missouri. To date, all of the contestants who have placed in the national Internetworking competition have participated in the Cisco Networking Academy®.

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Bob Schoenherr, national chairman of the Internetworking contest, says, “The SkillsUSA Networking Academy contestants know their Internetworking and enjoy being involved. It’s inspiring to see how hard they try to do their best for our technical committee. It’s a wonderful experience for both the contestants and the members that help run the contest.”

Working against the clock and each other, participants prove their expertise in Internetworking technology through three main areas of the competitions:

- The networking design challenge tests a contestant's ability to ensure the functionality, scalability, adaptability, and manageability of an Internetworking system.
- The written exam tests a student's knowledge of Internetworking concepts.
- The hands-on component tests the contestant’s ability to make cables, troubleshoot network systems, configure routers and switches, and deliver customer service in a technical assistance center environment.

The national Internetworking competitions are designed by industry leaders such as Cisco, Communication Workers of America, Fluke Corporation, Adtran Corporation, Panduit, Network Development Group, SBC, and Aries Technology, as well as teachers from across the United States.

2005 Silver Medalist: “My Involvement in SkillsUSA Helped Me Gain Confidence in My Abilities”

Kat Kolmo, 2005 SkillsUSA silver medal winner, says the training she received in the Networking Academy, along with the experience she gained through SkillsUSA, enabled her to interview confidently and perform successfully on the job. “My involvement in SkillsUSA helped me gain confidence in my abilities,” says Kat, who earned her associate of applied technology degree from Central Georgia Technical College and began working at Marriott International’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. Kat has also been hired as the lead technician for several retail chains in the D.C. area, and is a regular volunteer with the Georgia State SkillsUSA Internetworking competition, where she serves as the technical chair.



Kat Kolmo (center) at the 2005 competition

2006 Gold Medalist: Network Engineer for a Company He Co-Owns

Since 2002, to recognize gold medal winners and their advisors, Cisco and Cisco Gold Certified Partner SIGMANet have hosted a site visit at Cisco’s headquarters in San Jose, CA. Cisco engineers and Networking Academy management coordinate a day of learning that includes a formal presentation in the Executive Briefing Center (EBC), state-of-the-art lab tours, and a networking lunch.

“It was truly fascinating to see the scale of operations at Cisco and the kind of engineering issues the company deals with on a day-to-day basis,” says Lucas Tomicki, a 2006 SkillsUSA gold medal winner who participated in a recent site visit. “I was very impressed from a technical perspective.”

Lucas came to the United States from Poland while in high school and completed the Networking Academy in less than six months. He now works as a network engineer for JS Computek, a computer company in Columbia, Missouri, which he also co-owns. In addition to his technical skills, Lucas has a strong interest in business and investments. “In the next five years I plan to run my own hedge fund and hopefully retire by the age of 30,” says Lucas.



Lucas Tomicki (center) at the 2006 competition

To learn more about SkillsUSA, visit <http://skillsusa.org>



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