



Returning Veteran Chooses ICT, New York

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School Impact Story: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

“Cisco Networking Academy prepares anyone to build a solid life in a high growth career, and for returning veterans like me, it provides extra opportunity to those that need it the most.”



Mathew Heffler served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Now he's back home, building a new life outside of the Army, and has found a pathway to success through Cisco® Networking Academy® courses.

Prior to serving, Matt was attending high school at BOCES in New York, and learned they offered Networking Academy courses to seniors. However, he spent what would have been his senior year as an enlisted soldier in the Army, and missed the opportunity.

When Matt returned home to New York, he enrolled in Cisco Networking Academy courses offered at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Matt knew he would benefit from the program at RPI, which combines traditional ICT/computer science curricula with the practical, hands-on Cisco courses.

“Network engineering is a field that requires a tremendous amount of discipline. There are some individuals that just skate by using readily available resources, but in the end they are just cheating themselves. In the service, you become immediately aware of this type of temptation. It is easy to just get by, but in the long run, you are not an efficient soldier/sailor/airman/marine. The same is true in the world of technology; you can just skate through it, but in the long run, you are not an efficient network engineer/DBA/programmer/etc. Since this understanding was instilled in me prior to starting my formal education, it was easy to make the most of the Cisco Networking Academy program at RPI.”

So far, Matt has earned these certifications: Cisco CCNA, Cisco CCNA Voice, Cisco CCNA Security, Cisco CCNP, and the written portion of Cisco CCIE. Matt hopes to attempt the lab portion of CCIE Routing & Switching later this year.

“I do not believe you can ever finish an ICT education. That is probably the best part of ICT, the ongoing learning opportunities.”

Matt has landed his first ICT job in Richardson, Texas. He builds networks in technical support labs, using Cisco equipment, to recreate and solve customer problems. When asked how his job compares to his experiences in the Army, he says: “I was a combat support services soldier. My combat experience was much different than that of an infantryman. Performing my duties in Iraq was like an 8-5 job, except it was in 125° Fahrenheit heat.”

Matt believes Networking Academy courses are helping returning veterans build their new lives.

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