



## Virginia Student and Graduate Profile

Charles Stenbridge's early interest in technology was a clear indication of things to come. "I have been fascinated with computers and networks since I was a toddler," says Charles. "It started with electrical circuits and eventually progressed to computers and telephony by the time I was in elementary school," he recalls. Charles' attraction to computer networking emerged when in second grade he noticed that the Apple II computers could all share the same network. Five years later, in seventh grade, Charles built his own PC using a "bare-bones" kit his father ordered for him that included the case, motherboard, and processor. Charles ordered the memory, hard drive, floppy, and CD-ROM and then built the computer from the ground up.

Charles enrolled in Cisco® Networking Academy® as a sophomore at James River High School in Midlothian, Virginia and, within the next two years, not only earned his Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) certification but also began his own PC repair and network installation service. By the time he graduated from college, Charles had leveraged his three years of experience as an information technology (IT) business owner to land a corporate IT job where he soon earned a promotion.

Charles first heard of the Networking Academy from Linda Lester, his freshman computer instructor at James River High School. Charles notes, "Cisco seemed to be the major network vendor to know, so when there was an opportunity for me to learn it, I jumped at it." Linda, who taught some of the Networking Academy classes, allowed Charles to enroll as a sophomore even though the school restricted the curriculum to juniors and seniors.

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He continued his technical education at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). "The Cisco courses gave me a huge leap ahead of nearly every other student enrolled in the Information Systems program," Charles explains. "I had already learned the basics behind the technologies, which allowed me to work on the content of various projects through my college career instead of having to first catch up to the principles. The courses gave me the background necessary to open doors to other information systems disciplines such as programming, hardware prototyping, and database design."

Although Charles had been running his small network installation and PC repair business for three years, in his junior year of college he decided he needed more corporate experience. Charles began working as a seasonal information systems technician at Kings Dominion, a theme park in nearby Doswell, and was promoted to Information Systems engineer where he is now responsible for the network infrastructure and designing and modifying corporate and local level applications used throughout the organization. Charles also maintains back office and point-of-sale systems and administers two of the primary SQL servers.



Charles commented on his Networking Academy education: “Many of the things I learned taking the Cisco courses I still apply today, even in an environment that is not fully network based. Many of the diagnostic skills you learn in Cisco carry over with you no matter what field of IS you are working in.”

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Charles graduated from VCU in October 2008 with a bachelor’s degree of science in information systems. He plans to earn a master’s degree in computer information systems security in the next two years.

When asked what he enjoyed most about the Networking Academy, Charles replied “I felt challenged throughout the program, more so than most of my classes at the time. I had an interest in the material and principles, and I knew it would benefit me throughout my career. Finally, the teacher, Ms. Lester is one of the best I have ever had.”

Charles remains in touch with his former instructor, serving on the advisory committee at Chesterfield Technical Center where Linda now teaches. Linda adds, “Charles has been an active member of our advisory council for the past year. He attends and participates in all activities such as speaking to the classes and working with the second year students on their gaming event and capstone project. He is a great guy and continues to work with our students.”

When Charles is not working on computers, he builds houses and enjoys fishing, going to the beach, and gaming. Looking back he says, “The Networking Academy has given me a distinct advantage throughout my career. It provides both the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to work in the real world. It opened doors for me and gave me the confidence to walk through them.”

For more information on the Networking Academy at James River High School: <http://jrhs.ccpsnet.net/> or [http://jrhs.ccpsnet.net/cte\\_infosystech.php](http://jrhs.ccpsnet.net/cte_infosystech.php)



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