



## Illinois Student and Graduate Profile

Derek Murray stepped into the Cisco® Certified Networking Associate (CCNA®) class at the University of Illinois-Springfield (UIS) eager to see what networking was all about. As a result of his experience in the Cisco Networking Academy®, he grew personally, fostered peer relationships, left a positive impact on his university program, and impacted his community through his volunteer work.

In 2006, Derek completed the CCNA courses and obtained his CCNA certification. He graduated from UIS with a bachelor's degree in computer science. Currently, Derek works full time at State Farm Insurance as a statistical modeler systems analyst.

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Derek's interest in technology began at age ten when he received a used computer from an uncle. He was curious to learn how the machine worked, and before long he learned how to program the computer himself. When a dial-up ISP came to his hometown, Derek was one of the first customers to sign up and enjoy the Internet.

Most of Derek's early technical skills came from troubleshooting as he tried to connect to unreliable dial-up networks and debug simple programs. He later used this experience to help out in his junior high computer lab when the school hosted "open lab nights" to provide Internet access to the community. In addition, Derek taught basic computer skills. This solidified his interest in IT as he realized the benefit of helping people do their work more efficiently.

In 2005, while in college, Derek enrolled in the Networking Academy CCNA courses. "He demonstrated high-level, critical thinking skills, grasped new ideas quickly, and produced high quality work," says Janis Rose, academy instructor at UIS. "Derek exemplified the ideals of the Cisco Networking Academy and often offered to explain difficult concepts to help his classmates better grasp the content."

Derek took advantage of every opportunity to advance his job and interpersonal skills, attending seminars on resume building, interviewing techniques, and business etiquette.

He completed the CCNA courses in 2006 and obtained his CCNA certification. That same year, he was featured with another student as the first from UIS to be admitted into the State Farm Summer Internship Program and was invited to interview for full time employment at State Farm upon his graduation. Derek's outstanding work helped pave the way for a recruiting relationship between the UIS Computer Science Department and State Farm.

In addition to his studies, Derek dedicates his time giving back to his community. Building on his interest in networking, Derek spends some of his free time volunteering at the Computer Banc where he refurbishes donated computers for financially challenged families with children in grade school.



"Seeing the faces of the families and children who receive these computers is very rewarding for me and makes me thankful to be able to help out in some sort of way. I remember when I was first given a computer and the impact it made in my life. Hopefully, I can share some of my time, talent, and fortune with others so that they can go on to a better life," says Derek.

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Derek's current role at State Farm Insurance includes designing and writing computer applications for actuaries. Beginning in fall 2008, he intends to pursue a graduate degree in computer science and obtain additional certifications for Cisco IP Telephony and network information security.

For more information on the Cisco Networking Academy at the University of Illinois-Springfield, visit: [csc.uis.edu](http://csc.uis.edu)



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