



Iowa Student and Graduate Profile

Cisco® Networking Academy® has made it possible for Jon Heinz to earn a living doing what he enjoys without leaving his home town of Mason City, Iowa. While many graduates eventually build their careers outside of the state, Jon feels fortunate to have the opportunity to put his skills and knowledge to work at home in Iowa. Thanks to the education and experience he gained through Networking Academy, Jon has secured his place in the information technology (IT) industry and is building his future, right at home.

Jon's interest in technology began after he repaired his parents' computer a few times and began to understand just how many areas technology impacts from communication to entertainment. While still in high school, Jon even started a part-time business installing and maintaining home networks and local area networks for local small businesses. Around the same time, Jon's parents told him about a new program at his high school that would allow high school seniors to take Networking Academy classes and earn college credits at the North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) at the same time. With his interest in networking and the added incentive of double credit, it was an easy decision to start Networking Academy classes right away instead of waiting for college.

The curriculum supported Jon's learning preferences. He shares, "I'm not a good book learner. I find it hard to focus, so I liked the fact that there were animations and visual aids in the online curriculum."

With a schedule that included freshman college classes, Jon's last year of high school was a challenging one. The difficulty level increased once he enrolled in the associate's degree science and business program at NIACC. Jon was taking a full course load, which included Networking Academy courses, and holding down a full-time job as a systems technician at *The Globe Gazette*, a Mason City newspaper. Jon admits his schedule was difficult at times, but he knew the knowledge and skills he was gaining would lead to a career "where I had fun at work every day."

Looking back, Jon identifies the hands-on labs and Web-based curriculum as key learning resources. "For some things" Jon notes, "you just need to do it. You can read about it in a book, but until you do it and apply it in a lab, you can't see the outcome of what you're doing. You often have to tweak something to get the outcome you want, and doing it in the lab made it easier to remember." The curriculum supported Jon's learning preferences. He shares, "I'm not a good book learner. I find it hard to focus, so I liked the fact that there were animations and visual aids in the online curriculum."

The Networking Academy was a commitment that required extra study time, but Jon is convinced that he would not be where he is today without it. "It taught me many skills that aren't only needed in networking jobs, but also in IT in general" says Jon. His advice to others who may be interested in Networking Academy is to "make sure that you really want to work with in-depth networking technology or it could be a little overwhelming. It's a great program but it does require some hard work to learn the vast amount of material that the program covers. Good note-taking, problem-solving, and study skills are also essential to a student's success in the Networking Academy."



In his current job as Management Information Systems Director for Metalcraft Inc., Jon is responsible for supporting 75 workstations, eight servers, other network devices, and the network infrastructure and phone system. “I routinely find myself using knowledge and skills acquired during my Networking Academy courses in my day to day duties,” says Jon. Someday, he would like to advance into a management role, help develop other IT professionals, and further develop his own networking expertise, which include earning the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) and Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP®) certifications over the next few years.

“I routinely find myself using knowledge and skills acquired during my Cisco courses in my day to day duties,” says Jon.

Outside of technology, Jon enjoys cycling, weightlifting, fishing, and spending time with his family. With his family and his wife’s living in or nearby Mason City, Jon is pleased that the Networking Academy has created job opportunities that enable them to raise their new daughter so close to their families.

To learn more about Networking Academy at North Iowa Area Community College, go to: <http://www.niacc.edu/>



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