



Kentucky Student and Graduate Profile

Dana Brown is a pragmatic person, so when she was suddenly faced with the need to support her three children single-handedly, she began looking around for a quick way to pick up some marketable skills. She had heard from a good friend that networking skills were in demand, so when she discovered the Cisco® Networking Academy® at West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC) in Paducah, she enrolled in the network administration track.

Dana soon graduated with her associate's degree in applied science and her Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certifications. She is now an instructor in the Computer Information Technology Department at Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington, Kentucky.

Dana already held a bachelor's degree in molecular biology so she was used to challenge academically but had no prior information technology (IT) background. Despite her lack of experience, Dana saw the network administration track as a personal challenge and forged ahead knowing that the skills she acquired would serve her well in building a career in IT and networking.

When she first started in the academy, Dana wasn't sure she would be able to complete it. She felt the pressure of being one of the few women enrolled in the academy, and she shares, "I was terrified of the equipment and didn't know anything about cabling or running things through walls." She attributes her success at the academy to instructors John Vos and Mike Stewart. "I had fabulous teachers who knew what they were doing and knew how to teach it—a rare combination. And both were challenging and helpful and made my experience a great one," says Dana. She also enjoyed the well-equipped labs that gave her the opportunity to work with real equipment and learn skills she would need in the real world. But overall, she gives credit to John and Mike who "encouraged me and made me feel I could do it as well as the guys ... or better." Their encouragement also helped Dana manage her hectic life, which at the time, included attending school full-time, raising three teenagers, and working 12-hour shifts on the weekend in the IT department at a local tire plant. But Dana rose to the challenge and even scored a 987 out of 1000 on her CCNA certification exam.

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Dana is currently an assistant professor at Bluegrass Community and Technical College at Lexington and teaches the Networking Academy curriculum and other information technology-related classes. Despite growing up in a family of teachers, Dana did not think she would ever work in the same profession. So it came as a surprise when her love of technology converged with seemingly innate teaching abilities. Dana is now confident that her networking and teaching experience and certifications will enable her to find work anywhere she lives.

Dana's advice to others who may be interested in the Networking Academy is "Do it. Get help if it gets hard. But once you've got the skills, you've got them forever." As someone who gets bored easily, Dana likes the fact that information technology is a constantly changing field that will give her plenty of opportunities to learn and teach new things.

In retrospect, Dana says "I can't imagine what I could have done that would have turned out better. I now have skills that will serve me well. I don't think you could find anything better" Dana adds, "and I feel fortunate that the program and professors were there."

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Now that her children are grown, Dana is able to indulge her new-found passion for teaching and technology. “I do it because I love it,” says Dana. When she is not at work, Dana spends time with her family, plays with her home network, consults with local businesses, and participates in professional development activities.

For more information on the Networking Academy at West Kentucky Community and Technical College go to:

<http://business.westkentucky.kctcs.edu/it/>

For more information on the Networking Academy at Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington, visit:

<http://www.bluegrass.kctcs.edu/csis/cit/>

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