

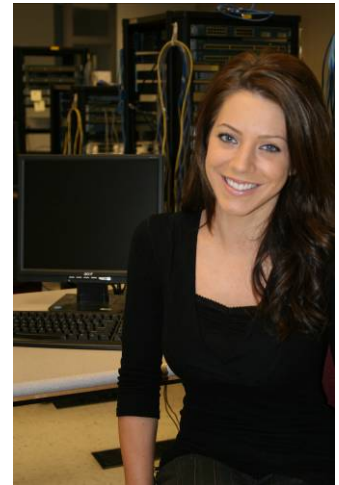


Michigan Student and Graduate Profile

Kelly Ghesling never imagined that her career in networking would be launched by a casual conversation in the Cisco section of a book store. Nor did she imagine that conversation would eventually lead to her first professional job as a network engineer. As she was preparing for the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) certification test and browsing the bookshelves for additional Cisco resources another customer commented to her, "Funny, you never really see women interested in networking." Kelly smiled and told him she was preparing for her CCNA exam, and that yes, women could configure routers, too.

A few weeks later, the night before her CCNA certification test, she was back at the book store focused on her subnetting preparation, when the same man approached her and said "I own a streaming media company here locally, and my Internet service provider is looking for a network engineer. I mentioned you to them, and they asked me to pass along their information." Two weeks after passing the CCNA certification exam, Kelly interviewed for the position and was offered the job on the spot! In her two years there, Kelly progressed from network engineer to customer service manager, managing the team of account managers and giving presentations on the network infrastructure to Fortune 500 Companies ... all at the age of 19!

Kelly's journey began in 1999 when there was a lot of buzz about the new Cisco® Networking Academy® at Henry Ford Community College. Kelly wanted to be a part of the technological revolution and, after reading about the Networking Academy in the college brochure, decided to give it a shot. Driven by pure motivation and a true passion for technology, she set her sights on her goal of completing the one-year program and earning her CCNA certification. At first, the curriculum was a bit intimidating, but as one of only two women in the class, she was determined to prove herself. The course was broken down so that each objective was explored, practiced, and then integrated into real-world scenarios. And the "hands-on" nature of the curriculum and labs enabled her to develop skills instead of simply memorizing theory. Kelly was able to configure, practice, and troubleshoot Cisco equipment, and having experience with real-world network infrastructures was a real asset during her job interview.



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In addition to the curriculum, Kelly also acknowledges the "dedicated instructors, eager mentors, and supportive co-workers" she's met along the way. "They taught me to find the drive within and to always push for more. Early in my career, my employers took a chance on me, based largely on my participation in the Networking Academy. I find this profession is full of exciting, interesting, and brilliant people, many of whom I now call friends." One of these is her academy instructor, Todd Browning. "He was passionate about the program which made it a better experience for the entire class." Kelly remains in contact with Todd and others at the academy at Henry Ford Community College and serves on the Networking Academy Advisory Board at the community college along with several other former students.

Kelly was asked to speak at Henry Ford Community College's Technology Day while she was still enrolled in the academy. State representatives and members of the community, neighboring educational institutions, and city council attended. Kelly

shared her experience and encouraged other colleges and students to participate in the innovative, career-building Networking Academy. Kelly was also invited to speak at the Imagine Your Future Seminar at Henry Ford Community College. This seminar encourages high school girls to explore non-traditional careers for women and Kelly's presence dispelled stereotypes many girls had about IT professionals.

Kelly often tells people that choosing the Networking Academy was the best decision she's made for her professional life. "It has been the foundation of my entire career. The experience of being part of this program has opened so many doors for me ... for a student with an interest in information technology, attending the Networking Academy is the single best choice for building your education and your career. It truly is a lifelong investment."

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Kelly's success has allowed her to live a life of comfort and stability, including purchasing her first home when she was only 22 years old. In retrospect, what Kelly enjoyed most about the Networking Academy was the sense of accomplishment and achievement upon completing it. "Going through an intense, career-building program and seeing the progress you have made, the knowledge you have gained, and the opportunities that lie ahead give an irreplaceable sense of achievement" says Kelly.

For the past seven years, Kelly has been supporting national networks and designing, planning, and managing large-scale, complex network projects. She is expanding her "technological tool belt" and is now working as a UNIX system administrator and project planner at a leading automotive financing company. Her long-term goal is to become vice president of information technology for a major corporation.

"Working in this industry keeps you on your toes, with technology ever-changing and so many avenues to explore. As I make steps forward in my career, I carry with me the knowledge and the solid foundation that the Networking Academy built to strengthen my networking skills and apply those concepts to become proficient in multiple platforms in the IT arena. I love my job and I am forever grateful for all of the doors this program has opened."

For more information on the academy at Henry Ford Community College, visit: www.hfcc.edu



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