



## Mississippi Student and Graduate Profile

Sometimes finding the right career feels more like climbing a mountain than traveling on a highway. After dropping out of high school, earning his GED, and working different jobs in various fields, Charles Morris wondered if he would ever find his niche. In 2007, as a result of some influence and inspiration from his wife and father-in-law, Charles enrolled at Itawamba Community College (ICC) in Tupelo and starting taking Cisco® Networking Academy® classes. By July of that year, Charles had landed a full-time job as a network and security administrator for a local employer. He has completed all of his coursework and will receive his associate of applied science degree in LAN/computer servicing technology in May 2008.

Interest in networking technology seems to run in the family. Charles first heard of the Networking Academy from his wife Emily who graduated from Itawamba Community College in 1999 with two degrees, one in computer networking technology and one in computer programming technology. Charles says it was tough balancing a full-time job at a furniture factory, school, and family time, but that in the end, “It was very worth the stress!” He enjoyed the hands-on experience of programming routers and working with classmates who shared his technology interests.

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**“Without the technical education I received through the Networking Academy, I would not have this awesome job working in an environment I have grown to love.”**

### **Charles Morris**

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Charles says his wife and father-in-law were significant factors in his success. Emily is a hardware coordinator for a local computer repair business and her father is a self-employed technician whom Charles often helped on home theater, wireless, and PC installations. That’s when the road straightened out for Charles with the realization that he had found his career. “My wife and her father really influenced me by sharing what they were doing. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. I realized computer networking is something I knew and something I could do and still stay in the same geographic area.”

Besides his wife and father-in-law, Charles credits his instructors as a significant factor in his success with the coursework. “They were more than willing to help out including one-on-one time to break complex ideas into more understandable ones. It made the learning process easier,” says Charles. He also appreciated the flexibility the online curriculum provided: “Having the curriculum available online to read and study was especially helpful for me with a family and full-time job. It left the decision with me as to what time I had to dedicate myself to it.”

In terms of personal qualities, Charles believes his “strong work ethic, a drive to succeed, and lots of studying” were important factors in his success at the academy. Charles advises others interested in the Networking Academy to “Study and stick with it. It gets hard at times, but is worth it in the end.” When Charles is not working, most of his spare time is spent with family, working in the yard, playing video games, and going to concerts.

Charles is currently working as a network and security administrator for Central Service Association (CSA), a not-for-profit association that offers consulting, networking, Internet, hardware, and software sales to more than 100 utilities in eight states. Charles applied and was selected for the position after CSA contacted academy instructors about the job opening.



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Not only does his position give Charles the opportunity to continue learning on the job, he also has the flexibility to finish his coursework and, after six months on the job, CSA will reimburse Charles for the cost of acquiring certifications, including the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®), which Charles intends to earn in 2008.

“I have applied the skills learned through the Networking Academy with my job responsibilities, including monitoring our current WAN connections, installing and maintaining firewalls, routers, and spyware/filtering equipment, and helping customers through any problems they encounter. Without the technical education I received through the Networking Academy, I would not have this awesome job working in an environment I have grown to love.”

Charles enjoys his job and does not see himself leaving any time soon. His career path now is looking more and more like an information highway.

For information on the Networking Academy at Itawamba Community College: [www.iccms.edu](http://www.iccms.edu)



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