



Rhode Island Student and Graduate Profile

When a 2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee fell from a mechanic's lift and crushed his arm, David St. Laurent knew the event would be life-changing. But he had no idea that the change would ultimately be positive.

Three years and eight surgeries later, the doctor told David that he would no longer be able to work as an auto mechanic. David began investigating other careers and his brother, who was already working in a networking position, suggested David investigate the field of information technology (IT). David looked in to Cisco® Networking Academy® at the Community College of Rhode Island and, less than four years later, earned his Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) certification.

At times it was a challenge for David to balance school, studying, marriage, and raising two children, all while undergoing rehabilitation from a life-changing injury, but David was driven by a desire to do better in life and to make a good living for his family. He invested much of his time in study, which was evidenced by his graduation at the top of his class. "I was not like this in high school" laughs David. By his own admission, "I did not have the drive then, and the material was just not interesting; but now, I would rather read a Cisco manual than a novel!"

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David says he enjoyed the entire program, especially the labs. "There was lots of equipment, and I loved being able to work hands-on with actual Cisco equipment. We could set up test networks in the classroom and that was better than just a simulator. The books and online curriculum were also great. They were laid out well and pretty easy to follow," David says enthusiastically. "And the instructors were great, I had an excellent instructor who believed in me," he adds.

David is so passionate about the Networking Academy that he was instrumental in getting his brother— who was already working in the networking area but had no formal information technology education or training— to enroll. Today, some of the same teachers who taught David are now teaching his brother. David has encouraged a mechanic friend to enroll in the academy as well!



David's younger brother, Adam, also has his CCNA certification. They attended classes for CCNA 3 and 4 together and, at times, would get into friendly competitions and strive to outdo each other. David believes this friendly competition caused both of them to raise the level of their game and do better as a result. The Networking Academy "has changed my life" says David. "It gave me a good base education for networking that I can apply in the future and I definitely recommend it for anyone interested in networks, TCP/IP, or technology."

David has since begun a career as a network/systems engineer for ACS Services, Inc., a consulting firm that provides information technology service and support for small to mid-sized companies in Massachusetts. His responsibilities include administering and maintaining networks and equipment for clients and he says he applies the skills that he's learned through the Networking Academy on a daily basis. David is delighted with his job—he has a lot of variety, never gets bored, and learns something new every day—and he's enthusiastic about his life, which he describes as less stressful and more financially

rewarding. When he talks about his experience with Networking Academy David says, “It is a great program and an excellent way to obtain a career in the networking field,” says David.

His injured arm may limit what he can do, but it will not stop David from eventually earning his Cisco Certified Security Professional (CCSP®) and the Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP®) certifications, especially since his brother is already studying for the CCNP certification exams. Outside of work, David enjoys playing and watching baseball, snowboarding, fishing ... and reading Cisco manuals.

For additional information on the Networking Academy at the Community College of Rhode Island, go to:
<http://faculty.ccri.edu/tonyrashid/ccna.htm>



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