

# FAST FACTS

## IT Jobs Continue to be Hard to Fill

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Bridging the Gap: Information Technology Skills for a New Millennium, a recently released report by the Information Technology Association of America, is a national study of the information technology (IT) industry. The report considers such factors as the size of the IT workforce, the demand for qualified workers and the gap between the two. It also considers the jobs most in demand and the best ways for workers to acquire the needed skills. Highlights from the report are listed below.

- The demand for IT workers is large and growing. Employers will attempt to fill 1.6 million new IT jobs in 2000.
- The South has the largest number of IT workers overall.
- Technical support jobs are in demand by both IT and non-IT companies alike (one-third of all new positions over the next 12 months). Required skills ranked highest for technical support jobs by managers were: 1) Troubleshooting (97 percent); 2) facilitation/customer service (91 percent); 3) hardware/software installation, configuration upgrades (82 percent); and 4) system operations, monitoring, maintenance (67 percent).
- The single most important skill is a good knowledge base in the relevant area.
- The second most desirable skill is hands-on experience.
- More than one-third of the skills identified by managers as important are non-technical skills such as good communication, problem-solving, and analytical skills, along with flexibility, and the ability to learn quickly.
- Four-year colleges and private technical institutes were rated highest among pre-hire skill acquisition methods when comparing all positions. Short courses and seminars, informal training, and community colleges were rated high when analyzing specific positions.

Strengths of community colleges include being focused on specific skills, providing a well-rounded education, and providing sufficient hands-on experience. Suggestions for improvement included more hands-on/real world experience, more focus on specific skills/technologies, and more up-to-date curriculum/equipment.

The Florida Community College System is addressing several of these concerns with its sector strategy on Information Technology. Several aspects of that strategy include:

### Program Standards and Curriculum Development

The Information Technology Sector Consortium for the Community College System is being led by Tallahassee Community College in collaboration with Daytona Beach Community College, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, Hillsborough Community College and Seminole Community College, and their business partners. Some of their current activities include:

Business representatives and faculty are meeting to outline needed skills and abilities for the IT industry. They are using DACUM (Developing a Curriculum - a national process) to help develop or revise curriculum for the Associate of Science Degrees in Computer Programming and Analysis, Computer Information Technology, Networking Services Technology and Internet Services Technology.

Plans are underway to establish a Technical Advisory Committee to serve all 28 community colleges and a yearly IT forum is being planned, involving all 28 community colleges and their business partners. Available distance learning products are being identified along with recommended equipment and software.

Contact Program Specialist Rhanda McKown (850/201-8337) at Tallahassee Community College for more information.

### Program Start-Up and Expansion

In 1999-2000, 19 community colleges received Capitalization Incentive Grants totaling \$3.8 million to start and expand programs in computer electronics, multi-media network engineering technology, micro-electronics manufacturing, as well as CISCO, Oracle and Microsoft Certification. In the year, 2000-2001, with significantly reduced overall funding, 12 community colleges received approximately \$2.4 million, the majority of which is being used for state-of-the-art programs in web design, Internet services, E-commerce, and advanced network technology.

### Industry Specific Certification

The majority of the community colleges offer instruction for Microsoft (22) and CISCO (18) certifications. Additionally, 12 colleges either currently offer Oracle certification courses or will be offering them within the next year. Other certifications offered include Novell, A+, Nortel Netknowledge, and C-Tech.

### National Science Foundation Grant

A National Science Foundation grant of \$3 million over three years has been awarded to Daytona Beach Community College and Seminole Community College, in partnership with the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida, and Seminole, Volusia and Flagler County school districts to establish the Southeast Center for Network and Information Technology Education (The Center). The Center is a regional facility focusing on the education of technicians in the field of computer networking and information technology. The target audience for the Center includes pre-college and undergraduate faculty and students. The work of the Center encompasses curricula in all areas of information technology (IT) beginning with curricula that include competencies to develop workplace skills in computer networking and the networking environment (both hardware, software and system technologies).

For additional information on the IT Sector Strategy contact Dr. Lanny Larson, Deputy Executive Director for Workforce Development, Division of Community Colleges at (850) 488-0555, ext. 161

Copies of the full report may be ordered from <http://www.itaa.org/workforce/>. The Fast Facts series is produced by the Office of Educational Services and Research, Division of Community Colleges, 325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1344, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400. For additional information, contact Patricia Windham, Ph.D.