

IT Training And Certification Offers Hope In Today's Tough Job Market

(NAPSA)—It's tough out there for every type of job hunter. Entry-level and full-time positions have become increasingly scarce in the current downturn. Every day this year, news regarding layoffs emerges. Because of this, employees are increasingly skeptical about job stability and the unemployment lines continue to grow.

Not all news regarding the current job market is dismal, however.

An industry survey recently noted that one of the most significant challenges facing businesses today is the shortage of skilled information technology (IT) and computer service and support workers. This shortage is not only costing the U.S. economy more than \$110 billion annually, but leaving more than 500,000 IT positions vacant. Computer-related jobs could be the solution for job hunters looking to start or transition into a new career.

To broaden the skill sets of untrained job applicants and position students for entry in lucrative careers, vendor-neutral technology certification programs like CompTIA's A+ certification have been developed to provide potential computer service and support workers with the solid technology knowledge base and entry point to IT.

These certification programs have increased in popularity over the past few years. Individuals with an IT certification can become candidates for jobs that were once only attainable following enrollment in lengthy higher education courses. Certifications provide employers with a reliable predictor of an applicant's potential for suc-



Brenda Malloy accepts her CompTIA IT Merit Award from CompTIA Board President John Dobson at Springfield Technical Community College in Springfield, Mass.

cess on the job. A recently unveiled awards program sponsored by CompTIA, a leading technology industry association, provides today's high school and community college students with funding for additional training opportunities following their initial certification, helping them become more marketable in today's intense and volatile job market.

Aside from a wide range of career opportunities in the IT field, there are other specific benefits to receiving a technology certification. First, becoming certified through a vendor-neutral certification program guarantees a base of knowledge that assures employers they are hiring qualified candidates with proven technical knowledge applicable to a wide range of vendors. Neutrality is key since it provides employers with a more flexible IT employee—a substantial advantage in the fast-changing technology marketplace.

Securing an IT certification provides an advantage to both the

certificate holder and the hiring organization in the highly competitive technology market. Surveys consistently show enhanced salary and career advancement opportunities for certified individuals.

For example, being CompTIA A+ certified guarantees technological expertise at a specific level. Certification signals to employers and clients alike that a recognized certification provider such as CompTIA, Microsoft or Cisco backs an individual's expertise.

Today, virtually every technology professional can benefit by completing a well-chosen certification program. Becoming certified can increase salary, help provide job security, enhance skill sets and increase job satisfaction.

The scholarship program sponsored by CompTIA underscores the importance of technology training and development in today's workforce. CompTIA has endowed \$1 million to its Educational Foundation to provide funding for the CompTIA IT Merit Awards. The program will give \$250 cash awards to students at CompTIA member schools who have obtained a CompTIA certification, to be used toward the recipient's continuing education in the IT industry.

Preference is given to students from an under-represented population, including economically disadvantaged students, minorities, women and persons with disabilities. For more information on certification programs or the awards program, see your local career counselor or visit CompTIA's Web site at www.comptia.org.