

# TCAT Shelbyville Prepares Students for the IT Job Market

Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Shelbyville is located in a rural area of central Tennessee. TCAT-Shelbyville sits between the two major cities of Nashville, Tennessee and Huntsville, Alabama, within close proximity of two military bases. Part of a seven-campus system, TCAT provides technical education for a diverse population of students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The college was the first of its kind, providing custom educational programs to suit the unique needs of the geographical area. In 1999, TCAT Shelbyville partnered with CompTIA to offer a variety of vendor-neutral certifications to empower students to enter the career of their choice.



## CHALLENGES

TCAT focuses on educating students to solve real-world problems in their local area. Because employers want to see job candidates who possess hands-on skills, TCAT wanted to equip graduates with trusted certifications that would illustrate they were fully prepared to handle the challenges they would face on the job. TCAT was also charged with generating a pool of employees that would boost the local economy. Considering so much of today's business world relies on skilled informational technology talent, TCAT recognized the importance of developing a cutting-edge program. In order to provide the most up-to-date instruction, reflecting current industry trends, TCAT required a well-known, reputable partner.



## SOLUTION

By providing vendor-neutral certifications offered by CompTIA and various other certification options, TCAT is able to customize its programs to meet the demands of the local job market, supplying students with applicable skills needed to participate in a constantly evolving IT job market. TCAT consistently provides fresh instruction by taking advantage of the numerous instructor training tools offered by CompTIA.



## RESULTS

- The Information Technology and Infrastructure Management program at TCAT Shelbyville has a retention rate of 96%.
- TCAT Shelbyville has a job placement rate of approximately 94%.
- New hires earn approximately \$50,000 on average their first year of employment.

## BY THE NUMBERS



Approximately 600 students have graduated from TCAT's Information Technology and Infrastructure Management Program



In 2018, graduating students accrued \$0 in student debt.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ Certifications and hands-on training are critical for ensuring student gain real-world job skills.
- ▶ In order to provide relevant education, instructors must be consistently trained on the latest IT trends.
- ▶ Business needs vary in different geographical regions. It is important to equip students with the education they need to enter the job market in their area.

# TCAT Shelbyville Filling IT Skills Gaps with Hands-On Training

TCAT Shelbyville has long maintained educational objectives that focus on hands-on job skills. Since opening their doors in 1964, TCAT Shelbyville has made it their mission to provide low-cost training that prepares students to enter a rapidly changing job market in their geographical area.

As the IT job market expanded in central Tennessee, TCAT Shelbyville realized the need for certifications to illustrate to employers that students possess the necessary skills for the workplace. To help prepare students for a job market in a variety of industries, TCAT partnered with CompTIA. The Information Technology and Infrastructure Management Program now offers six vendor-neutral CompTIA certifications, among other certification options.

Steve Mallard, ITIM Sr. Instructor for TCAT's Information Technology and Infrastructure Management Program, recognizes the value of certifications for students seeking employment: "Many of our recruiters require a minimum certification level for the students to be hired. With employers demanding the hands-on skills and certifications, CompTIA's relationship as a partner is invaluable."

TCAT Shelbyville is one of 27 Applied Technology colleges. As a multi-campus system, the college seeks to provide students with the most relevant skillset for each unique geographical location. To achieve this, each college offers custom programs to best fit the demands of the local job market. A constantly fluctuating

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program means that instructors are consistently training to remain on the cutting edge of IT trends. To ensure they are offering the best level of education possible, the instructors regularly take advantage of instructor certification vouchers and engage in the free training opportunities offered by CompTIA.

## STUDENT INSIGHTS

**Ben Beddingfield** had been employed in the tire industry for 20 years. He was unexpectedly laid off and seeking a new career path as a middle-aged man. After investigating his educational options, a friend directed him toward TCAT Shelbyville.

Ben recalls his initial trepidation at entering a tech-related field of study. He remembers, "I wasn't a techy person. I was out of my element." Thankfully, TCAT's program is specifically designed so that students get the real-world job skills they need to enter the job market. "We just jumped in. What helped was actually doing the work everyday."

Ben was looking to gain the hands-on experience he needed for a new career. He knew that certifications were extremely important when entering the job market. Ben remarked, "The certification is really what you're after because, in the job market, that's what people are looking at."

After graduation, Ben was offered a job with a starting salary of \$60,000. He currently holds seven certifications, including CompTIA's A+, Security+ and Network+. His career path has taken him from the manufacturing industry to healthcare, then on to education where he has worked since 2011. He currently works as Technology Director for Fayetteville City Schools.

Ben fondly recalls the valuable experience he had at TCAT Shelbyville: "We didn't just learn theory—we had to actually do real-life tasks. We worked all over Shelbyville on real projects."

Without the certifications Ben received through TCAT, he would not have been able to embrace the opportunities offered to him through the world of IT.