Executive Summary

Customer
Stanly Community College

Challenge
Deliver online IT training to Cisco Networking Academy learners nationwide, while improving access and training for local students.

Objectives
◦ Provide the same lab experience to online learners as seated students
◦ Increase utilization of costly networking equipment to maximize ROI
◦ Reduce the time required to rollout new courses, schedule labs, and manage classes

Technology Solution
NETLAB+ and Cisco training equipment for distance learning, remote Academy access, and instructor training

Results
◦ Increased FTE (full-time equivalency) from 12 in 2014 to 294 in 2016
◦ Built Academy Support Center that now supports 140 academies across the Southeast
◦ Delivers courses for Cisco, VMware, Palo Alto Networks, Microsoft, and Linux for students all over the world
◦ Enabled 46 local students to obtain new IT careers in the last two years

Building a World-Class IT Program in Rural North Carolina

In 2004, Stanly Community College sought to provide Cisco Networking Academy training to the Communication Workers of America. The problem they faced was how to train learners all over the nation on Cisco equipment that was physically located in rural North Carolina. After evaluating available technology solutions, Stanly Community College chose to use NDG's NETLAB+ platform to deliver the training online. They have since expanded their program to provide training in multiple disciplines (networking, virtualization, cybersecurity, and more) to learners worldwide, while greatly improving the training they provide to local students in class.

The Challenge

Around the world, businesses are grappling with a widening skills gap in key areas like networking, virtualization, and cybersecurity. The challenge is that many would-be applicants lack the training or experience to fill these advanced technology roles, and educational programs struggle to deliver training in the latest technologies.

As early as 2004, Stanly Community College (SCC) sought to address this problem by taking its Cisco Networking Academy training online. While the initial objective of the project was to deliver training to the Communication Workers of America, SCC wanted a solution that would also enable it to better serve students located at its rural North Carolina campus.

Stanly Community College investigated how other academies were delivering online training. Many schools, it discovered, had attempted to build their own systems using SSH tunnels and custom Linux and other custom-built systems. While those approaches worked, they lacked the ability to handle lab scheduling, create and manage users, and perform routine class maintenance and management tasks.

The Solution

Stanly Community College engaged Network Development Group (NDG) to help build a system capable of delivering online training to distance learners, while also improving its ability to educate local students.

NDG's NETLAB+ is a remote access solution that allows academic institutions to host real IT equipment, virtual machines, and a wide variety of curriculum content options. NETLAB+ includes all the software needed to provide an environment through which instructors can manage IT courses, and students can schedule and complete lab exercises. NETLAB+ includes supported content specifically designed for popular IT academies, including Cisco, VMware, EMC, Palo Alto Networks, Red Hat, and more.

"In addition to including built-in lab scheduling and course management capabilities," explained Kelly Caudle, Program Head at SCC, "What NETLAB+ can do, is when the lab is over it can roll everything back to a preset condition. So, no matter what the student did in the pod, when the next student comes in to use it, it's clean and ready for the lab. That's an important feature, and none of the other systems out there could do that very well. We realized that NETLAB+ was the best product available to do what we needed to do, especially given the scope and scale that we were looking at."

Results

The Information Technology training program at Stanly Community College has grown tremendously since then. Today, SCC is a Cisco Networking Academy, Palo Alto Networks Academy, Red Hat Academy, VMware Academy, and Microsoft IT Academy—delivering online training to learners all over the world. It also offers an Instructor Training Program, preparing instructors across the Southeast to teach the latest IT technologies to their students.

NETLAB+ has significantly increased the return on investment (ROI) from SCC's networking equipment. Previously, that equipment would sit idle when the labs closed at night. Now, local students, distance learners, and instructors are able to access networking gear 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This capability maximizes utilization, makes it easy for learners to fit labs into their busy schedules, and enables instructors to manage classes from anywhere.

The biggest benefit of NETLAB+ is the impact that it has had on the local community. Stanly Community College has helped everyone from high school students to unemployed mill workers gain the skills they need to obtain rewarding careers as IT professionals at the city of Charlotte, Cisco, and dozens of local businesses.

Talk to Us About Your Program Requirements

Learn how NETLAB+ can help you deliver the IT training your students need to leap over the skills gap and find rewarding careers. Contact us to schedule a free consultation:

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