

NORTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECOGNIZES STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

Meet Jennifer Belanger, a senior in the computer electronics program at NMCC. From the time she was a child, computers have always been a part of Jennifer's life. In fact, she was only four years old when she used her first computer. Her father owned Alder Digital Services, a computer repair shop, and also owned an office supply store. Growing up, Jennifer spent countless hours watching her father at work. Jennifer has also job shadowed with her father at his current job with Xerox, where he repairs printing equipment. She reports that it has been a great experience. "It's a lot of fun."

Prior to attending NMCC, Jennifer studied Cisco networking at Job Corps and computer programming and networking at UMFK. A native of St. John, ME, Jennifer decided to transfer to NMCC for several reasons. "NMCC was the most affordable school I could find that had the program I was interested in." Jennifer was also impressed with the various certifications she could obtain while earning her associate in applied science degree in computer electronics, such as Security+, Linux+, A+, and Network+, to name a few. "I have seen job postings where these certifications are needed." Jennifer is learning skills that will be useful in the field. "I feel like my classes are preparing me for work. It's a confidence booster."

Jennifer describes her experience in the program as being, "very challenging and time consuming", referring to the level of commitment and focus needed to successfully complete the work required. Jennifer enjoys the mathematical component of the program most and likes doing calculations. "I love numbers and patterns." Jennifer is also pleased with the education she has received from her instructor, Joe McLaughlin. "I can't say enough about him. He's a great teacher. He has a lot of certifications and is a great example of a lifelong learner." Because computer electronics is a rapidly changing field due to the constant advances in technology, lifelong learning is essential.

Jennifer also credits another instructor, J.P. Levasseur, for helping her succeed. "In electrical math, I learned everything based on his lectures. He is very knowledgeable. It's impressive how much he knows."



Photo: Jennifer, building a circuit on a breadboard trainer, in the Computer Electronics Lab

Jennifer admits that there are moments in class when she needs assistance. "I can't always reach things and sometimes the equipment is too heavy." However, Jennifer doesn't see this as a limitation because others will offer support. Jennifer feels that classmates are willing to help her not because she is a female, but because she has built strong relationships with her peers.

Jennifer recalls a time when a peer thought she was receiving special treatment from an instructor because of her gender. Jennifer disagreed with the peer. "It's frustrating because I work really hard." It's obvious that Jennifer has a strong work ethic and exceptional time management skills. She currently has a 3.5 GPA and has been able to maintain above average grades while working various jobs and participating in campus activities. Jennifer works in the NMCC library and in the Academic Success Center, where she tutors students in several different subjects. She is also involved in the student senate and is the president of the game club on campus.

Jennifer is also very innovative. She makes jewelry, body products, and bookmarks. Her

bookmarks are currently selling both locally and nationally. In addition to her passion for computer electronics, Jennifer is also interested in the business industry and hopes to someday own a large, multi-faceted business that includes a German restaurant, gift shop, classroom to host arts and crafts workshops for children and adults, and studio apartments, all in one building.

When Jennifer graduates in May, she would like to find employment as a network technician, performing hook-ups and constructing diagrams and crossover cables. She recently applied for an apprenticeship position in Germany, where she would have the opportunity to gain work experience while attending classes. Jennifer has dual citizenship and has lived in Germany before. Three years ago, Jennifer moved to Germany and spent a semester teaching the English language to German apprentices and also completed an internship with a programming company. Jennifer continues to visit Germany because her boyfriend resides there. Despite the distance between them, Jennifer states that he has been very supportive while she has been attending NMCC, which has motivated Jennifer to pursue her goal of earning her degree.



Jennifer offers advice for females considering a career in a predominantly male career. “Don’t let things get to you. If you need help, ask for it. Don’t worry about what others will think of you.” Jennifer feels that gender is irrelevant, and states that people are accepting of women in the computer electronics field. “My gender hasn’t been an issue. I’m just another student. I do my work. No gender applied.”

**Quick Facts:
Computer Networking Support
Specialist**

Job Duties: Identify the causes of networking problems using diagnostic testing software and equipment, document network support activities, install network software, troubleshoot network or connectivity problems for users or user groups.

Skills Needed: Systems analysis, complex problem solving, critical thinking, and active learning.

2013 National Average Pay: \$28.93/hour; \$60,180/year

Job Outlook: Projected to grow 7% between 2012-2022

Source: O’Net Online (2014)

**NMCC Computer Electronics 2013
Graduate Success Rate (Employed, Cont.
Education, or both): 70%**

Jennifer shares her secrets to academic success. In addition to studying well in advance before an exam, Jennifer finds that reviewing the material about an hour before a test helps her to do well. Also, asking for help, even if she is confident she knows the answer, is beneficial, as it gives her a sense of reassurance that she understands the material. “I am paying for school, so I do the best that I can. I want to do well.”

For more information about non-traditional programs available at NMCC, please contact Lori Smith, Student Support Career Specialist at 768-2793 or nlosmith@nmcc.edu



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