



# News Release

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## **Employers and students benefit from NMCC computer electronics program agreement to offer specialized computer certifications**

**Aroostook County** - Collaborative partnerships between Northern Maine Community College and an association representing the computing technology industry, as well as a leading national corporation, are providing students enrolled in the college computer electronics program and the employers who hire them upon graduation a significant professional advantage, not to mention thousands of dollars in savings.

NMCC agreements with the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) and the Microsoft Corporation that allow the college to administer more than half a dozen certification examinations on the Presque Isle campus as part of the computer electronics associate degree program curriculum save graduates up to an estimated \$17,500.

The professional industry certifications, which run the gamut from general vendor neutral skills based verification to complex program specific skills testing, are desired by most employers in the field.

“Part of the curriculum of the computer electronics program is to prepare students to be computer repair technicians and to engage them in network repair, troubleshooting, and network operating system management. As they are attending the classes, they are learning to do these things. Instead of making up a final exam for the individual courses, we use the industry standard certification exams provided by CompTIA and Microsoft,” said McLaughlin. “Upon successful completion of the exams, the students achieve globally recognized certification.”

According to McLaughlin, there are many benefits from the on-campus access to examinations and the preparation that comes beforehand. Were the opportunities to earn the certifications not available at NMCC, the veteran instructor says the students – or the employees who hire them – would likely pay much more expensive out of pocket fees.

“The students are ready to go to work upon graduation. The employer does not have to spend considerable money and time away from the business getting them certified,” said McLaughlin. “If a student were to choose to do these certifications in ‘boot camp style,’ one would cost in the vicinity of \$2,000 to \$2,500 besides room, board, and travel expenses. They can take the course here at NMCC for the price of three credit hours plus the exam fee.”

Charges for the exams offered through NMCC range from \$60 to \$225. The College offers a series of three certification courses/examinations through CompTIA and four through Microsoft.

The CompTIA courses validate general knowledge and skills needed by today’s computer support professionals, networking professionals, and communication and computer related security issues. The vendor-neutral certifications are recognized by major hardware and software vendors, distributors, and resellers.

“Our successful completion of these certification tests will show prospective employers what we are capable of and that it has been verified by a third party,” said Alan Jalbert of Caribou, a student enrolled in the NMCC computer electronics program.

“Customers will be more confident in our ability as a result of these certifications,” said Duane Whittle of Van Buren, also a student in the program. “It will also likely mean more money both in terms of our starting salaries as well as more money in the pocket of our future employers, as they will not have to send us away for training.”

All but one of the four Microsoft certifications offered at NMCC cost \$60 – less than half of the \$125 typically charged for Microsoft certification tests.

Upon successful completion of all four Microsoft exams, individuals achieve Microsoft Certified System Administrator status, a benefit that NMCC students as well as local employers and area residents are taking full advantage.

“Most of the courses that offer certification do not have prerequisites. This allows industry or people in the area to take the course and get the certifications without traveling downstate. We have had three Maine Public Service employees this past year doing this,” said McLaughlin.

NMCC first required certification as a benchmark for successful completion in one of its computer electronics course offerings in 1998. At that time, McLaughlin would drive a van load of students to Fredericton, New Brunswick for the testing.

“We have come a long way in the past decade. We now offer a wide array of computer certifications right here on our Presque Isle campus which afford both our students and the community at large a wonderful resource,” said McLaughlin.

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*NMCC computer electronics students recently earned several industry certifications as part of their program curriculum. Among those completing both CompTIA and Microsoft examinations were (front row, left to right) Johnathan Langley, Alan Jalbert, and Jeremy Haines all of Caribou.*

*Also earning certifications were (back row, same order) Duane Whittle of Van Buren, Patrick Littlehale of Gorveton, New Hampshire, Marc Duperry of Ashland, and Jesse Cray of Presque Isle. Photographed with the students is NMCC computer electronics instructor Joseph McLaughlin.*