

# careerfocus

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NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION

## Industry has important voice in IT program's direction

As chief information officer for Elliott Davis, Bob Jamison's days are busy. Yet for the past three years, part of his day has been devoted to Greenville Tech, where he serves as chair of the advisory board for the Information Technology program.

This involvement ensures that the college produces students who meet industry needs, including the needs of Jamison's company, where two graduates are on staff and an intern has recently been placed.

"Graduates have been very well-qualified," Jamison says. "We typically start them out as entry-level technicians, and they've been able to hit the ground running."

With over 10 companies represented on the advisory board including Michelin, Ahold, ParaChem, and Ethox, the perspec-

tive is broad.

"A group decision is typically better than a decision made by one person," Jamison says. "For example, if one committee member states that he has seen a trend in the IT Industry, and the committee agrees, we know it has merit and is not an isolated observation. With such a diverse group participating in the committee we believe we better understand where our focus should be."

Recently, the advisory board has overseen the IT program's move to a consolidated location along with the evaluation of wireless technologies and security courses to ensure they meet industry needs.

The board has recently discussed storage

technologies for the program and recommended the Cisco Academy be created.

The committee has also been instrumental in obtaining equipment donations from companies including Elliott Davis to meet the needs of new networking courses.

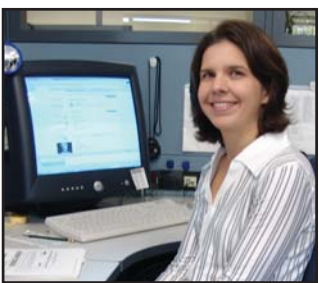
All of these efforts are aimed at ensuring that students exit the college with the skills they need to enter the work force.

"Greenville Tech is turning out quality students, students that can be

productive when they graduate," Jamison says. "They have skills that are marketable. The committees and college work hard to ensure students have the right skills when they leave."



## Two degrees help graduate land one great job



Some people earn a two-year degree at Greenville Tech and then go on to a four-year college. But Melissa Sweeney did

just the opposite, and it's a path she recommends.

Starting out at USC, she earned a bachelor's degree that prepared her for a career in public relations. She spent several years in that field before she decided on a new direction. Greenville Tech's Computer Technology program gave her the skills she needed to get there.

"A university does a lot for you," Melissa says. "I feel that there are benefits to having a four-year degree. And the practical training at Greenville Tech was valuable. I think it's great to mix the two."

Greenville Tech provided a smaller campus feel than Melissa's previous college experience. "I liked the interaction with the professors," she says. "You're not at a research university, so they really care about you learning."

Thinking she might be coming from a different place than other students, Melissa was surprised to find common ground with her classmates.

"Most were older, coming back, changing careers, and wanting more education to be able to get a different job in the company. I was less in the minority than I thought," she says.

Working at CoLinX as a business analyst, Melissa recommends the computer field to people who are eager to learn and like challenges.

"There's not one solution that you repeat numerous times. It's always a new challenge," she says.

## Two plus two takes students from Greenville Tech to USC Upstate

Thanks to an articulation agreement between Greenville Tech and the University of South Carolina Upstate, many students begin a bachelor's degree in Information Management and Systems by first completing an associate degree in Computer Technology/IMS at Greenville Tech and then transferring to USC Upstate to complete the degree.

Upper-level courses may be taken at the university's Spartanburg campus or at the University Center of Greenville. Currently, there are about 160 students enrolled in the USC Upstate major, 15 to 20 of whom are completing the program in its entirety at the Greenville campus, a number that is expected to grow rapidly.

Dr. Ron Fulbright, chair of the USC Upstate program, is a software engineer with more than 22 years of experience, who established an Internet solutions company and worked for a global IT solutions company before completing a Ph.D. and entering academia, which had always been his dream. He enjoys watching students realize their capabilities.

"The program attracts a wide variety of

students, especially those not normally found in technology-oriented programs," Fulbright says. "But everyone has an innate ability, and it is gratifying to see students suddenly realize their natural abilities, even if not in mathematics or science, are of value in a technical field and that they can contribute something unique."

Graduates are well-prepared for the work force and have been hired by companies including QS/1, Advantica, BMW Manufacturing, Extended Stay America, and Michelin.

"The program involves nearly equal preparation in computer/information technology, communication, and business, so it gives students a well-rounded preparation that is very marketable and portable in today's job market," Fulbright says.

The USC Upstate program, formerly called Information Management and Systems, was recently renamed the Informatics department. This change reflects the program's emphasis on the study and application of information technology to a specific field of endeavor. Current emphasis includes health care, business, and education.

Fulbright, hired by the university to be the first full-time director of the program in 2003, believes in the Informatics curriculum.

"Information is the unit of value in today's and the future's global economy," he says. "Regardless of the domain, every company processes information and nearly every job in a company is related to the processing of information. Success today is being measured by the ability to process and exploit information, and this program offers the best preparation for that kind of expertise. What you learn here is in demand everywhere."



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## Points of Interest

### • Hit the Books

Due to the wide range of skills needed, there are many ways to prepare for jobs in the IT field such as computer support specialist, systems administrator, website designer or computer programmer.

Most employers prefer to hire people with a college education, some requiring a computer-related associate degree or a certificate and others a bachelor's degree.

Required skills vary from job to job, but the demand for various skills generally is driven by changes in technology.

### • Money Matters

In 2002, median annual earnings were

**\$39,100** for computer support specialists

**\$54,810** for network and computer systems administrators

**\$60,290** for computer programmers

**Note:** Median annual earnings include salaries of those with years of experience. Starting salaries will be lower.

### • Related Occupations

- Computer Support Specialist
- Systems Administrator
- Computer Programmer
- Computer Software Engineer
- Systems Analyst
- Computer Scientist
- Database Administrator

### • Forecast

In the past 10 years, computers have become an integral part of everyday life, used at home, work and school. The explosion of computer use has created a high demand for people who assist users, work in day-to-day administration, program, maintain, and support computer systems and networks. Job prospects should be best for those with college degrees who are up-to-date with the latest skills and technologies, particularly those with relevant work experience.

### • Dot Communications

Learn more about this profession and others by checking out books, magazines, and videotapes at your school or local library. The Internet is also a great resource. Check out these sites:

[www.acss.org](http://www.acss.org)  
Association of Computer Support Specialists

[www.sage.org](http://www.sage.org)  
System Administrators Guild

[www.nwctet.org](http://www.nwctet.org)  
National Workforce Center for Emerging Technologies

[www.iccp.org](http://www.iccp.org)  
Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

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[www.greenvilletech.com](http://www.greenvilletech.com)

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