



Seminole State College of Florida

Networking

At Seminole State College of Florida, the network systems technology program is dedicated to expanding access to information technology careers for women and students of color.

This starts with robust outreach: visiting middle and high schools to speak to underrepresented students; partnering with a local youth-serving nonprofit, CodeOrlando, to highlight the dynamism of IT careers and engage high schoolers in an intensive summer program; and designing marketing materials specifically to appeal to women and students of color. As well, students can begin on the networking pathway through dual enrollment, and at the college, tuition and fees have held steady for nearly a decade.

This focus on access has paid off: Almost one-fifth of students in a recent cohort were female, and more than half were Black, Hispanic, or Native American.

Once enrolled, Seminole State networking students experience a web of supports and encouragement. “I was worried about being a non-traditional student because of my age,” says Padmaja Parise, 46, who has received an associate degree in networking and a bachelor’s in information systems technology from Seminole State. “[But] the professors, lab assistants, and students made me feel accepted. I was viewed as a Seminole State College student, not just as a minority or a female. Furthermore, I had a great support

system from the National Honor Society and Women in Technology club on campus, which was instrumental in helping me achieve my educational goals.”

These supports and the networking program’s intentional equity strategy has started to influence employers too. After the networking program held symposia where students demonstrated their skills for regional employers, the college says that Deloitte, a major IT company with a presence in the region, has reassessed its historical bias against hiring community college graduates. Seminole State’s networking graduates, the college says, are now among the most recruited for positions previously reserved for bachelor’s degree holders. ■

88%
of students
employed one year
after graduation

Average salary
one year after
graduation:
\$50,693

