



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Florida High School Creates Nationwide Model for Tech Success**

*First Four-Year Students from Dunbar's Academy for Technology Excellence Set to Graduate*

**Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., April 28, 2009,** With funding from the CompTIA Educational Foundation and other corporate sponsors, the first four-year students from Dunbar High School's Academy for Technology Excellence are set to graduate next month.

With as many as 14 tech certifications each, these 26 graduating seniors are ready to embark on full-time IT careers or use their credentials for extra college credits as they pursue more advanced degrees. Located in the Lee County school district of Fort Myers, Fla., the Academy is a model for how schools around the country can provide high-end technology training and experience to high school students.

"When you mix the Academy's technical training with Dunbar's Center for Math & Science and AP programs, you create a perfect blend for student success and give these kids a highly competitive edge as they prepare for college and full-time careers," said John Venator, president and CEO, CompTIA Educational Foundation.

The Academy boasts more than 994 IT certification tests passed to date, and teachers believe the students will surpass 1,000 certification tests by the end of this school year. Students receive hands-on instruction from certified instructors. Upon graduation, students have all the prerequisite skills and knowledge to choose an IT career path.

In November 2007, Microsoft recognized Dunbar High School as the nation's first Microsoft Certified High School. Since then, Microsoft has been using Dunbar's program as a pilot program for other high schools in the United States and beyond.

The Academy has created an atypical learning environment compared to most high schools by using laboratory facilities with high-tech tools such as smart boards, custom computer desks, high-end computers, flat-panel monitors, LCD projectors and online training.

"Students often get jobs paying in the \$40,000 range right after graduation, but most aim to go to college and often receive college credit for their certifications," said Denise Spence, Magnet Grant Technology lead teacher at the Dunbar High School. "Our students run the gamut from the novice tech learner to the computer literate who tinkers around with technology on his or her own time. In general, if they want to learn it, they'll get it."

**Certifications for Real-World Success**

The students work toward different IT certifications each year. Freshmen focus on the CompTIA A+ certification. Sophomores prep for the CompTIA Network+ and Cisco Certified Network Associate certifications. Juniors tackle the Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP), Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA) and Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MCDST) certifications. Seniors work toward the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certification exam.

This year, as part of the CompTIA Educational Foundation's Creating Futures program and the CompTIA Education to Careers (E2C) program, 21 students already have passed the CompTIA A+ exam and 11 have passed their Network+ exams. Classes continue through May and early June. If students pass their exams early in the year, then they focus on Microsoft Office certifications, allowing them to obtain multiple IT certifications each school year. For instance, sophomore Diego Mendez already has nine certifications as of this year.

Some students also earn special CompTIA Educational Foundation scholarships to reward their work. Academy senior Ryan Gates received a CompTIA IT Merit Award last November. Nominations for this spring's awards are due May 15.

In Florida's racial diverse population, the Academy helps students from all backgrounds succeed and prepare for the working world. "Technology becomes like a new language for the students. There's lots of new vocabulary to learn," added Spence.

In some ways the technology's language makes it even easier for non-native English students to adapt quickly to the program. For example, senior Juan Quijada came into the Academy primarily speaking Spanish as a freshman. He progressed quickly through the training materials and now has 14 certifications. This year, he was named by the Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board of Lee County as the High School Student of the Year and became the school's "Top Dog", a scholarship award given out to high-achieving students.

### **Partners with Government and Business**

In 2004, Jana Hambruch, project director for the Office of Zone and Attractor Programs at Dunbar, landed a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to launch the Academy. While the original grant money has since run out, the first students who started as freshman at the launch are ready to graduate, and their success has created a greater clamoring from the IT industry and local population to continue the Academy.

Working with volunteer business leaders, the school's Business Advisory Committee analyzes the trends in technology and helps the teachers make curriculum decisions that benefit students by making them a more marketable workforce. Students also can network with the committee members and often receive summer jobs or internships. Committee members include a range of local businesses from Fifth Third Bank and First Community Bank to VTECH, Data Center Resources, and Entech Computer Services and also include representatives from local colleges such as Florida Gulf Coast University, Hodges University and Rasmussen College.

Dunbar currently is trying to raise \$200,000 in donations to continue the Academy program. The CompTIA Educational Foundation plans to continue its support of this model school. Individuals and companies can make a donation to the Foundation by visiting <http://www.comptia-ef.org>. To donate directly to Dunbar, contact the Academy's Denise Spence at [Denisecs@leeschools.net](mailto:Denisecs@leeschools.net), tel: (239) 461-5322.

**Note to Journalists:** *Select photos of the students working in the classroom are available. Contact Lisa Fasold, [lfasold@gmail.com](mailto:lfasold@gmail.com), 703-509-1124.*

### **About the CompTIA Educational Foundation**

The CompTIA Educational Foundation provides career opportunities for individuals who historically have been under-represented in the IT workforce. With the support of individuals, industry leaders, companies and the government, the Foundation creates programs aimed at helping U.S. veterans, at-risk youth, women, minorities, dislocated workers, and individuals with disabilities to obtain the technical and business skills employers require. Since its creation in 1998, the Foundation has helped more than 1,000 individuals enter the IT workforce, helping the industry alleviate its shortage of skilled workers. For more information or to make a donation to the CompTIA Educational Foundation, visit <http://www.CompTIA-EF.org>.

**About CompTIA**

The Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) is the voice of the world's information technology (IT) industry. Its members are the companies at the forefront of innovation; and the professionals responsible for maximizing the benefits organizations receive from their investments in technology. CompTIA is dedicated to advancing industry growth through its educational programs, market research, networking events, professional certifications, and public policy advocacy. For more information, visit [www.CompTIA.org](http://www.CompTIA.org).

**Participant Contact:**

Amy Alexander  
Program Manager  
CompTIA Educational Foundation  
(630) 678-8411  
[aalexander@comptia-ef.org](mailto:aalexander@comptia-ef.org)

**Donor Contact:**

Dennis Zimmerman  
Executive Director  
CompTIA Educational Foundation  
(630) 678-8477  
[dzimmerman@comptia-ef.org](mailto:dzimmerman@comptia-ef.org)

**Media Contact:**

Lisa Fasold  
Communications  
CompTIA Educational Foundation  
703-509-1124  
[lfasold@gmail.com](mailto:lfasold@gmail.com)