

# High-Tech, In-Demand and Hands-On Learning

BY MELANIE HESS

**I**n-demand jobs require specialized education and skills, a fact that can often be discouraging for those looking to make a change. However, a number of growing careers do not require the attainment of an entirely new degree. For careers like cyber forensics and project management, industry-recognized certifications will do.





## Cyber Forensics

Chuck Easttom, a Collin College Continuing Education (CE) instructor and author, is an expert in cyber forensics, which he defines as the study of forensics using any sort of digitally-stored devices such as phones or computers.

"Basically, it is CSI [Crime Scene Investigation] for digital devices," Easttom said.

As an independent consultant and researcher, Easttom has worked for an array of companies and agencies, namely the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Secret Service.

According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, cyber forensics is a well-paying and rapidly growing field. Easttom also considers knowledge of the area a smart investment for network administrators and individuals already employed in technical support.

"People in those positions are often the first to discover a computer crime," Easttom said. "If they mishandle evidence prior to calling in a specialist, they may render it inadmissible."

Easttom teaches several technology courses through Collin College CE, including hacking and penetration and information systems. His most recent addition, a hands-on cyber forensics class that prepares students for the field's certification test, will debut this fall.

Easttom expressed that he looks forward to sharing his professional experience with participants by bringing in real-world cases.

"They will do forensics, not just discuss it," Easttom stressed. "Students will examine the Windows registry, make a forensic copy of a drive, recover data from a phone, recover deleted files from a computer and more."

## Project Management Professionals

Often working hand-in-hand with the information technology industry are project managers.

Project management practitioner David del Barrio is also an advocate for experiential learning. He stresses that qualified



Vernetta Thomas' new smartphone photography course teaches skills anyone can use personally or on the job.

project management professionals (PMPs) are in demand in nearly every industry.

"We are highly sought after," said del Barrio, who currently consults for AT&T. "A project can be any temporary endeavor that has three primary constraints, project scope, time and cost. PMPs are not limited by industry, and the skills and methodologies we exercise are entirely transferable."

Instructing a CE project management certificate series, del Barrio explains that, in addition to a passing test score, completing project management courses is one of the requirements for earning the marketable national certification.

With course sections focused on integration and scope management, time and cost management, human resource and quality management, communication and risk management, procurement and stakeholder management and certification preparation, students are exposed to the range of tasks and activities that they may encounter as project managers.

"The most rewarding aspect of project management is completing a high-quality project on time and within budget and having satisfied stakeholders," del Barrio said. "An intact project team that can take the experience of a win into their next project creates a recipe for success. Winning begets winning."

While frequently utilizing reading materials, these courses are not only theory-based. Students hold regular project team meetings and create project deliverables, including an example project plan.

Del Barrio said he greatly enjoys helping other project managers (PMs) succeed.

"Some of my most exciting success

stories are my fellow PMs," del Barrio said. "In addition to helping them prepare for the test, I've also been a part of helping individuals find new positions."

Collin College CE Director of Computers and Technology John Byers emphasized the quality career skills training the CE department offers in high-demand and high-tech fields.

"Through a combination of classroom and virtual-learning opportunities, students are more than adequately prepared to apply and test for nationally-recognized industry certifications," Byers said.



## Everyday Learning

While high-tech and in-demand skills can be great career builders, hands-on learning is also a resource individuals can seek merely for personal enjoyment and enrichment. One example of this is Vernetta Thomas' new smartphone photography course.

Today, smartphones function as most individual's means for capturing photos. Still, not everyone knows how to use a phone's features to create the best image or how taking a great photo with an iPhone or Android differs from the same objective with a dSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera.

The goal for the course is to demonstrate techniques for taking advantage of smartphone camera's strengths and explain how users can minimize the device's weaknesses.

"The course is exciting and introduces students to a plethora of exciting functions and applications available on their device," Thomas said. "It covers smartphone camera usage, how to utilize lighting in images, how to shoot macro, high-definition resolution exposure (HDR) and more."

With both in- and out-of-class shooting assignments, each student will build a large portfolio based on a variety of techniques.

"When we focus on composition and lighting, they will be asked to return with photos that highlight those areas," Thomas explained. "Then we will evaluate and discuss how they can be improved. The same process will occur when we learn about new or creative applications."

Additionally, Thomas notes that students will learn how to turn their smartphone into a mobile scanner, mobile hotspot and live TV.

Other creative courses new to the schedule this fall include music publishing, film-short writing and production, digital photography-point-and-shoot and digital photography-dSLR.

To learn more or register for Collin College Continuing Education courses, visit [collin.edu/ce](http://collin.edu/ce) or call 972-985-3750.