

Cisco Academy Handlová – Alma mater of young computer experts



The Secondary School in Handlová offers talented students an internationally successful program called “Cisco Academy”, which presents a head start for future experts in computer networks. Mr. Ján Krausko, secondary school teacher and Cisco Academy Instructor, explains the background of this program.

The students of the international educational program NetAcad Slovakia in Handlová have won the Networking Academy Games (NAG) six years in a row. The NAG competition is a big motivation for all of the students. The national round always takes place at one of the technical universities, and, since 2008, our students have won the high school category (HS3) every year. Moreover, students of Cisco Academy Handlová have also succeeded against university students, something that is definitely not a piece of cake for secondary school students: at NAG 2011 they took second and third place in the UNI category. Furthermore, they have attained various international achievements, for example, 2008 – 1st place at FIT VUT Brno, Czech Republic; 2009 – 2nd place at FIIT STU Bratislava, Slovakia; 2010 – 2nd place Debrecín, Hungary; and 2011 – 3rd place Bucharest, Romania.

Educating talented students is a very long process

NetAcad focuses on educating potential experts for computer networks. They start their preparation already in the first year. The most important thing is

to motivate students to join the NetAcad program, which is very challenging at this age. It is not only about learning how to work with computers but also about improving their English skills. They must study much more than they would if they weren't members of this program. The first two terms are the hardest. If students are able to handle them, there is a big chance that they will continue in the third and in the fourth terms. The best students, mostly the older ones, help and train the beginners. The main motivation for the older students is the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) exam.

The CCNA exam

Seniors at the Handlová school can take this exam in December. If they don't pass the exam, they can retake it in January and then focus on their graduation exams. The average number of students taking this exam is five per year. At least three of them pass the exam on the first try. The timing of this exam is very important. The CCNA exam is valid for only three years. The student who holds this certificate and applies to university must master math, physics, and

programming in the first term and then can use the certificate to find a job. But even those high school graduates who hold this certificate and don't study at university have an enormous advantage and are able to find well-paying jobs much easier. All Cisco Academy graduates who hold CCNA certificates work in IT companies. The Academy keeps in touch with them and receives interesting feedback. They work in companies such as AT&T Bratislava, HP Bratislava, T-Systems Košice or in the same companies in the Czech Republic. Many NetAcad graduates study Information Technologies at universities in Brno, Bratislava or Žilina.

Support from Slovak companies

I would like to express my big thanks to all of the companies that organize and support the NAG competition, also through many valuable prizes. For example, Google Slovakia invited winners to an excursion at their company and they even had lunch with the employees. Others won a fellowship from T-Systems Košice that covered both accommodation and pay during their internship at the company. In my opinion it is very important to support students also materially, especially the ones who participate in competitions like this. In this respect T-Systems Košice should be a role model for other companies in Slovakia; it's a pity that there isn't such a generous company in the Handlová region as well.

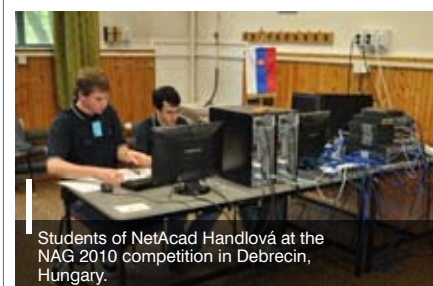
Conclusion

In order to educate professionals for computer networks, someone had to bring the NetAcad program to Slovakia. Therefore a big thank you goes to Mr. František Jakab who created the team of NetAcad teachers and lecturers. The students who didn't give up and did their best to accomplish such great achievements deserve my respect because they worked hard and I'm really proud of them.

I just wish that more people would notice that even in a town like Handlová there are many talented and successful students who need support. Because, unfortunately, talent isn't everything in these days and money is often quite important. It's said: With money comes power. At the beginning of this program it was really hard to find sponsors so we didn't have money, and a lot of people therefore thought that we didn't have power. But this didn't stop us and that's why today I can proudly say that with talent comes power.



*Ján Krausko
Instructor, Cisco
Academy Handlova*



Students of NetAcad Handlová at the NAG 2010 competition in Debrecin, Hungary.



Announcing the winners of NAG 2013 at the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava.

