

Interview with Erik Bansleben, Program Development Director for UW Professional & Continuing Education
June 1, 2011

In what capacity are you involved with the Certificate in Green IT program?

As Program Development Director for UW Professional & Continuing Education I developed this new Certificate program along with an advisory board of industry professionals & professional organizations for the purpose of creating a curriculum that is current and highly relevant. My development focus is the technology sector, and our organization has been developing new programs in sustainability for several years now, so Green IT was a logical next step combining technology & sustainability. Additionally, this program is a joint Certificate effort between the University of Washington and the University of British Columbia. Member companies & organizations on the advisory board include Boeing, E2 Squared, Climate Savers Computing Initiative, WTIA, Clean Technology Partners, Bozich Consulting, Evoke Networks, Sustainable Networks, Washington Clean Technology Alliance, and Microsoft.

What can students expect from the learning experience offered?

Students can expect to learn about Green IT from experts in the field and to hear from practitioners in Washington State and British Columbia as well as from guest speakers from outside our own geographic area. Students can expect to learn a wide range of topics including life cycle assessment, creating Green IT baselines, and how to foster stakeholder engagement for transformative change. Other topics include power consumption & energy audits, cloud computing efficiencies, waste stream & recycling, virtualization, data center efficiency, obsolescence planning, ROI analysis, and developing a Green IT roadmap for an organization.

In what ways can students apply this knowledge to the real world?

This knowledge is entirely relevant to the real world as many organizations are already developing, or plan to develop, Green IT plans and need to acquire expertise. Students will review case studies of real sustainability efforts, learn about assessing an organization's impact and then plan for a strategy to bring Green IT to an organization to impact the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit. Everything students learn will be relevant to the real world and can impact both small & large organizations and companies.

What are the most important characteristics students need to bring to this program?

From a technical standpoint, the entry requirements are fairly minimal. We expect students to have an understanding of IT technologies through education or practical experience. Additionally, students should have worked for an IT department for at least one year or managed IT projects within an office environment. Given that the program is online, students should also be comfortable with this environment. While we plan to use such tools and AdobeConnect and Moodle to help keep students engaged, students will have to remain motivated in the online space in order to succeed. Participating in discussion forums and completing assignments on time will certainly help keep students engaged and on track.

What do you expect job growth and salary expectations will look like for graduates of this program?

Job growth should be good over the next decade once the economy starts to recover. As I mention in the question below, there is a degree of inevitability about Green IT specifically and sustainability issues in general. I see multiple job types from the IT manager and CIO to the frontline IT generalist who may be interested in different aspects of Green IT; both groups need to learn more to benefit their respective companies. Additionally, a growth area within consulting exists where companies will hire a Green IT expert to help them apply IT sustainability approaches to their own company. Salary expectations will vary widely depending on the job role, but having a background in Green IT should allow all IT technologists to be well positioned for the next phase of their career.

What unique challenges will graduates of your program address in the next decade?

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important topic. As a country and planet it is an issue we will have to address in the very near term. There is a degree of inevitability about sustainability and - by extension - Green IT, which means that it's a topic we have to address if we expect society to move forward and for us to be able to preserve the scarce resources we have available. The growth of IT-related energy consumption as a percentage of overall consumption, for example, is so pronounced and widespread that solving the problem is mandatory. Therefore, I expect companies will have to become more responsible corporate citizens to earn the respect of their customers as well as to improve their bottom line in what has become a global market. IT departments need to address Green IT issues more in the coming years and also for new companies to develop that focus on specific areas of Green IT consulting or provide a broad range of services to companies who cannot afford to specialize and keep up with the trends internally.

Is PCE planning and/or developing more Green IT related programs?

At this point we are not planning other efforts in Green IT, but we do have a number of programs focusing on the topic of sustainability. We do develop new programs each year, so depending on the need for other Green IT programs, it's certainly possible that companies, and students will demand other programs in the future. To see a list of our sustainability programs, please go here: <http://www.pce.uw.edu/environment-sustainability.html>

How can domestic and international students pay for this program?

There are no restrictions about students who want to participate in this program as long as they meet the entry requirements. Since this is a noncredit program and not a degree program, the total cost is considerably less than other programs that might be of interest to students. The program focus is on working professionals and those with industry experience, but who are wishing to modify their career and learn about new trends that could enhance and update their existing IT knowledge.

What scholarships do you offer for students of this program?

We don't offer any scholarships at this time since this is a noncredit program. However, we are certainly open to partnering with companies wishing to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability & Green IT by making scholarships available to students to grow this sector within information technology.