

Thomas College Shines as the Undisputed Leader in Computer Education

Waterville, Maine --- Fall, 1998 -- The announcement was a surprise, even for those employed by the College.

"At this point Thomas College is only one step below the top technology focused schools in the nation like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) with respect to the level of complexity and sophistication of its computer training programs, use of technology, technology available to students, overall innovation and demand for graduates." That was the statement made by Chris Rhoda, Director of Information Technology at Thomas College. "The main difference is that we focus on applying technology to all business related areas."

People at the meeting of Thomas College professors, staff and visitors, peppered Rhoda with questions for the next hour. How can a small college in central Maine legitimately claim to have achieved so much? Can you summarize, in a step-by-step fashion, just why your statements are true? After an hour, few doubted the truth of Rhoda's words. Facts speak for themselves.

This summer, for instance, SolutionsIQ, a nationwide manufacturer of software systems, singled out Thomas College for a nation-wide case study. Thomas College, the company had learned, had taken the SolutionsIQ systems and driven the technology further than any college the company had encountered. The recently completed study, to be distributed nationally by SolutionsIQ, tells only part of the Thomas College technology story. The full story goes back a decade, when the then newly installed President of the College, Dr. George Spann, a Harvard University trained educator, made technology a top priority.

"Our progress has been very rapid, outpacing even the pace of general computer technological innovation," Rhoda explained at the recent meeting to discuss technology at the College. "In computer terms we've gone from a two-lane highway to a twenty-lane highway in just the past five years. Many schools are still at two lanes, maybe three."

On campus every employee, administrator, student, coach, professor and assistant is wired-in to a web-based server system that is a marvel to visitors. Rhoda reports that the web-based computer system at Thomas College is one of the best and actually outpaces systems at such large, nationally-known schools as Boston University (BU) and Northeastern University. Try to get a student transcript using a credit card from BU and you will learn that it is not possible. Attempt to retrieve your grades as they are posted electronically by the Registrar's Office at other big, nationally known universities, and again, you will be sorely disappointed. Students at Thomas College, whether computer technology majors or not, all have access to such exceptionally advanced web-based services. Classes can be paid for online, professors can be contacted online, some classes are held online, every service the College offers can be obtained online, the list of specifics goes on and on. The computer training program offerings for 2 year, 4 year and graduate programs along rival those offered by colleges many times larger than Thomas College.

Computer Information Systems major Jim Allard of Lewiston had nurtured a deep interest in computers by the time he graduated from Lewiston High School. He saw his skills expand "light

years" in just his first semester at the College. "I've been allowed to do things here at Thomas College that other schools don't touch," Allard began. "I have friends in other programs who are starting to realize the differences when they sit down with me and I show them. One of the biggest advantages, aside from working in a computer environment that's just about equivalent to MIT, is that when I graduate my skills will last."

Allard explained that in researching colleges, he discovered that Thomas College programs were based on Windows and NT Server technology, in essence the backbone of most future computer systems. In fact, Thomas College has designed a new major in Computer Management to teach students everything they need to know about Windows NT Systems.

"That's why I chose Thomas College, because I know that when I graduate, I will have the tools for a solid career in computer technology," Allard offered. "I also will not have to get further training just to keep my job, simply because the company I work for makes the leap to Windows and NT Server technology."

Allard expects to pursue a career in web based technology. His options extend far beyond the state of Maine, although he may well decide to stay. "My marketability will be exceptional," Allard stated. "The placement rate here at Thomas College is over 94% within three months after graduation, best of any college in Maine or the university system. What's more. I think that placement rate is even better for graduates in computer oriented jobs."

A quick check with Bob Harriman, Director of Career Services at Thomas College, reveals that Allard is indeed correct. The rate is even better for graduates trained in computer fields.

Those wishing to check out the computer systems at Thomas College can simply log on at www.thomas.edu, where the journey begins. The SolutionsIQ case study on Thomas College computer systems may be read at their web site, located at www.solutionsiq.com/products/casestudy.html.