The University of South Carolina partners with VMware IT Academy to help students learn digital technology skills to fill high-demand jobs

Who we are
Located in Columbia, South Carolina, the [University of South Carolina](https://www.sc.edu) (USC) is a public research learning institution. [VMware IT Academy](https://www.vmware.com/it-academy), headquartered in Palo Alto, California, is a global, public-private partnership with institutions around the world. VMware IT Academy helps students lead in their digital future by teaching the applications of VMware technology. This fosters career development, creates a pipeline of diverse talent and helps to lead a positive change around the world.

Educating people for digital jobs
North and South Carolina (the Carolinas) share a common pattern of growth and an increased demand for IT labor. The number of job postings is fueled by the central role of IT in general business operations and the growing number of technology and manufacturing companies across the Carolinas. Columbia, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina, are two major cities with large demands for IT professionals. Yet while located less than 100 miles apart both cities lacked adequate access to hands-on labs and a private learning environment for students to learn digital skills.

Making the impossible possible
By securing a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant for Multi-State Community College, the university and an industry collaboration, the sister states built an academic, distributed virtual cloud that enabled 10 academic institutions—and military learners at Fort Jackson—to remotely access and complete hands-on lab exercises. The NSF grant project included building lab resources for various public-private educational programs, including VMware IT Academy.
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LEARN MORE
Discover more about how VMware IT Academy students can align with the leader by visiting us at www.vmware.com/company/research/it-academy.html.

“As a national ATE center, the team would support systemic reform, broad outreach, community building and leadership among educational institutions, industry professionals, trade associations, educators and practicing technicians.”

DR. JORGE CRICHIGNO,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTING

Collaborating at its best
This project is an example of true collaboration. It reinforces the educational links of common needs between sister states in a unified manner, addressing the demand that is reflected in regional employment statistics. Both cities participate in deploying and testing the distributed platform and virtual laboratories, with the potential to scale and eventually deploy nationally.

The lab resources, funded by the NSF grant, include both industry and open-source career technical education (CTE) and academic research labs for community college and undergraduate students. This powerful partnership includes USC with partners Stanly Community College (SCC) and Network Development Group, Inc. (NDG). USC provides research and undergraduate academic support; SCC provides two-year associate degrees, CTE and vocational train-the-trainer support; and NDG provides online web resources for hands-on lab resources.

Also included are high-speed network protocol labs, high-speed network performance labs and intrusion detection labs. This allows a team of doctorate students the ability to help government network professionals, undergraduate, community college and military learners develop networking and cyber-knowledge skills.

The future looks bright
Looking ahead, we anticipate expanding this project to include more lab libraries, research outcomes and industry programs. The project is funded for a three-year period—July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2022. Conceivably, based on the encouraging results of this first-year pilot, the team expects the project to be continuously supported and become the cornerstone of a national center for advanced technological education (ATE).