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## Keiser University's information-technology degree programs in Melbourne prepare students for wide range of job opportunities; students use Windows 8

By Ken Datzman

The bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000 sent the high-flying, job-creating information-technology sector reeling. Then off-shoring became popular and grew, giving the industry a double blow.

But now it looks like IT is solidly back on track, returning to the days when it played a leading role producing jobs and powering the U.S. economy.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is projecting IT job growth of 20 percent or more in many areas of the far-reaching industry over the next eight years.

"IT is business. It touches everything. We support virtually every business process at every business everywhere. So there is an incredible opportunity and we are seeing it," said George Lee IV, the program coordinator and academic advisor for Keiser University's associate and bachelor IT programs at the Melbourne campus.

The IT trickle-down effect even includes today's high-end refrigerators, which are networked.

"The world is networked," said Lee. "Look around you. Are the lights on? Do the traffic lights change? I get asked all the time. What kinds of jobs are there in IT? It's difficult to answer because the field is so encompassing — health care, cybersecurity, and on and on."

Growth will be driven in part by organizations upgrading their IT systems and switching to newer, faster, and more mobile networks. "In our field, we are used to change. But change is now coming very rapidly. It's getting more specialized as well," he said.

Additional job growth will likely result from the need to increase security in IT departments. More attention is being focused on cyber threats, a trend that is expected to increase over the next decade.

"Security is pretty much exploding. Everything needs to be secured, from health-care patient records to company documents."

Both consumers and businesses have become more concerned over the security of their private information online.

The gigantic health-care-provider industry, which experts say is far behind in the use of IT, is converting from paper to digital records, a big undertaking that

requires specialized skills and training in the installation of the infrastructure.

"IT and the encouragement of the flow of that information, both wired and wireless, is changing the medical field," said Lee, who earned three technical degrees from Keiser University, including a bachelor's in IT management.

"It's saving lives and saving money. There is collaboration. Specialists in their fields from different states are teaching people in local areas that would never have had the opportunity to have somebody look over their shoulder at what they are doing. They are learning and they are able to pass on that knowledge. So we are creating mentors in their field."

Keiser University, long known for its Microsoft-certification programs and IT offerings at its campuses around the state, is "seeing a resurgence in information-technology enrollment," said Kelli Lane, associate vice chancellor of media and public relations for the Fort Lauderdale-based institution.

Students studying at the Melbourne campus have the opportunity to earn from the associate to master degrees in a range of IT programs. And Lee is one of the instructors for the associate of science in IT program. He joined the university in 2009 and has entrepreneurial experience.

"I received a great education at Keiser. It was very thorough. It's so surreal to stand in the front of the classroom that I used to sit in as a student."

His school recently obtained membership in the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, an organization that includes private schools such as Florida Tech, Rollins College, Stetson University, and the University of Miami.

Keiser University is the second-largest independent university in Florida, said Lane.

She cited an outside study conducted in December 2011 that shows the school delivers a total annual economic impact of more than \$2.8 billion, while supporting roughly 28,000 jobs throughout Florida.

Sixty-two percent of Keiser University graduates annually earn degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health care, Lane said.

The school cut its niche in higher education providing programs in growing fields and coupling the instruction with extensive hands-on training, which has



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

George Lee IV is the program coordinator for the A.S. and B.S. information-technology programs at Keiser University in Melbourne. He earned three technical degrees from the private nonprofit institution. A new report, "Looking for Jobs? Look to IT in 2012 and Beyond," says IT is an untapped job creator.

driven the institution's success.

Keiser University students, for example, are hands-on with the newest Microsoft Windows product that has yet to be released to the public.

"We have all of the operating systems through Windows 8," said Hill, adding that his school is part of the Microsoft Developers Academic Network Alliance.

"We are considered a developer, so we were given access to the developers' preview for Windows 8. It became a part of our curriculum as soon as it hit. I look at all of the new products. If it's new, it's being used in our program."

Microsoft's professional-level developer and designer-software products that are available through the alliance not only enhance a student's educational experience, but also gives them a head start on

their professional careers by helping familiarize them with the tools and practices they will need to seek employment in a fast-changing industry.

The Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based think-tank, details the industry's future in a new report titled "Looking for Jobs? Look to IT in 2012 and Beyond."

The report calls IT an "untapped" job creator. The growth will be fueled by innovative new strategies, increased investment in research and development, and expanding partnerships between business and government to develop and commercialize ideas.

The ITIF says a commitment must be made to these innovations to fully capitalize on future IT job growth.