

Signal Soldiers prepared for certification, licensing opportunities

By Nick Spinelli

An Army-wide initiative is encouraging Soldiers to earn civilian credentials, certifications, and licenses for their military specialties and training. Currently there are 58 Army occupations that have operational credentialing programs and students at the U.S. Signal Center of Excellence have the opportunity to earn various information technology certifications and licenses.

"The U.S. Army Signal Center of Excellence conducts world-class training and education in Signal telecommunications, cyber defense, network operations, and related fields," said COL Bruce Caulkins, SIGCoE G6, in an information paper written 20 Sept. 2012. "And the schoolhouse works diligently to assist Soldiers, warrant officers and officers to help them achieve commercial IT [information technology] certifications on a case-by-case basis."

For example, the SIGCoE offers training in Cisco and Microsoft programs, and the information technology specialist curriculum includes courses that prepare advanced individual training students to take exams for CompTia credentials in fields such as network security.

"We prepare people who will need these certifications," said David Kintner, deputy director of training on Fort Gordon. "We provide Soldiers with everything they need to know in order to take and pass certification and licensing exams in their fields."

In order to accomplish this, the Signal school runs Prometric and Pearson Vue testing centers, enabling students to take and pass any IT exam more conveniently. "Most Signal students are well positioned to take and pass commercial information technology certification tests during their training time with little or no extra training required on their part," he said. While credentialing is encouraged, it is not a requirement for students.

"Currently, no Signal MOS course mandates any student to earn IT certifications - outside of the Information Assurance realm - during training," COL Caulkins said. "However, increasing commercial off the shelf-based training and education requirements at the SIGCoE will continue to allow students to pursue these certifications easily due to the nature of the education they receive during their classes."

Additionally, certain positions require those in them to have certifications.

"There are some jobs where, whether Soldier or civilian, the person holding the position is required to be certified," Kintner said. "And while we prepare people for certification, it's important to note we do not certify them."

Soldiers in Information Assurance Workforce positions are required to achieve the appropriate level of certification within six months of assignment. In order to help them accomplish this, vouchers and requisite maintenance fee tokens are purchased by the Army every year. COL Caulkins says in fiscal 2013, the Army expects to purchase 5,800 Computing Technology Industry Association vouchers; 3,500 CompTIA annual maintenance fee tokens; 500 International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium ((ISC)2) CISSP vouchers; 280 ISC2 CISSP annual maintenance fee tokens; 180 Information Systems Audit and Control Association Certified Information Security Manager vouchers; 420 ISACA CISM annual maintenance fee tokens; and, 20 SANS annual maintenance renewals.

According to COL Caulkins, approximately 4,746 students will attend Signal courses and be eligible to take various commercial IT certifications. Costs for these exams vary:

- Network+ is \$253
- Cisco Certified Network Associate is \$295
- Cisco Certified Network Professional routing, switching, and troubleshooting are \$200 each
- Project Management Professional is \$600
- A+ is \$356 for two tests
- Windows 2008 Server is \$300 for two tests
- Network Appliance is \$200
- VMware is \$150
- SANS Global Information Assurance Security Essentials Certification is \$450
- Security+ is \$253
- Certified Information Systems Security Professional is \$600
- SANS GIAC Security Leadership Certification is \$450.

Soldiers in different career fields and with different skill levels will take different tests based on the individual MOS requirements, and the Army will assist as much as needed. For instance, Kint

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