

Lock Your Files, Know Your Policies

Contributed by LADONNA BEEKER (O-N-E EDITOR)
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Catawba Valley Community College utilizes a new program to assist the community in protecting valuable business and consumer information.

Center for Information Assurance (CIA) was designed to ensure only authorized users at certain times have access to classified information not only at CVCC, but at various organizations and businesses in the community.

"We want to teach (business owners) to make sure they lock down their systems and policy and procedures are in place," said CIA Executive Director and CVCC faculty member Tom Foss.

Recently, the program was utilized by four students in the CVCC spring semester for the city of Claremont. For 16 weeks and about 15 hours a week, Foss and the students discussed with Claremont officials their assets, how their system works, backup plans for files in case of an emergency and how to access the files in the situation that city hall is inaccessible.

"We created a bunch of different scenarios to help them come up with strategies," Foss said. "We have taken this degree program and want to reach out into the community."

With Catawba County slowly emerging from a manufacture-based economy to more technology-based with Google established nearby and Apple making plans to move into the county, Foss said its important for the community to emerge into the new century.

Examples would be businesses that accept credit cards. Foss said it's important for businesses to maintain the customer's integrity by keeping credit card numbers secure. He said the same applies to doctor's offices and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

"Almost all businesses have regulations to follow to protect consumers," Foss said.

That's where CIA comes into play. The program, which consists of CVCC expert staff, is designed to assist all businesses and nonprofit organizations with the knowledge needed to protect it and establish policy and procedures that its employees understand and follow.

"There are a lot of rules and regulations out there," Foss said. "There needs to be somebody on staff who understands all the rules, regulations and implement them. If something happened, you want to know where your office records are at. We want to make sure we are reaching out (to the community)."

Foss said that through this outreach program, CVCC will utilize the resources it has to help the community. These resources will help teach employees how to operate computerized medical records, develop training for staff, write policies and procedures to make sure information is implemented and organize a plan if a disaster happens.

"The idea is to help engage the community and transition us away from the old economy into a new economy," Foss said.

CVCC President Dr. Garrett Hinshaw said bringing the faculty members together and then working with the community is one of the college's goals.

"We are trying to create here at CVCC an internal entrepreneurial experience and an environment where faculty have the opportunity to explore areas within and outside their field of expertise," Hinshaw said.

By combining faculty and brainstorming new ideas, Hinshaw said this can only bring success to CVCC.

"This is important because, with any organization, you want your employees to be at the optimal level because they are being inspired and creative," Hinshaw said. "As we develop, that will improve our academic excellence. The key aspects is that it gives the students opportunity to experience real world scenarios. (Businesses) want individuals to be problem solvers and critical thinkers. What better way than with the pressure and real environment to do trouble shooting and theory-based assessment?"

CIA is housed in the college's Cyber Crime department in the computer engineering building on CVCC's campus. However, it is a non-degree program and participants will not receive credit because the courses are not as long as a semester.

Currently, the faculty are looking for businesses who need their assistance and are willing to speak at nonprofit organizations about their services.

"We are very interested in working with the community to bring the general level of knowledge and understanding to make us more attractive for the industry players we want to have here," Foss said.

An Information Technology five-day "boot camp" class will be offered in September at CVCC through the CIA program to prepare professionals for IT certification.

For more information about CIA or to invite Foss to speak at an upcoming event, contact him at tfoss@cvcc.edu or (828) 327-7000 ext 4794.