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Contact: Deana Wiese, 701-355-4458 or office@itcnd.org

Workforce Challenges Facing IT Industry

Open IT positions over the next decade equal one-third of current workforce

Bismarck, N.D. – North Dakota’s information technology (IT) industry will have 2,500 (1,200 new and 1,300 replacement) open positions over the next decade, according to a recent study conducted by the Information Technology Council of North Dakota (ITCND). This equals one-third of the current IT industry workforce of 7,500.

These numbers reflect the workforce needed only in the core IT industry consisting of computer systems design, software publishing and data processing and hosting. These areas represent merely 10 percent of the state’s total IT workers. Not taken into account are the roughly 90 percent of IT workers employed in the state’s other top industries including agriculture, health care, energy, manufacturing and financial services.

“IT is an integral component of virtually every sector and industry statewide. This magnifies the need for a high-quality IT workforce,” says ITCND president Gary Inman of Echelon Corporation in Fargo.

The North Dakota IT industry has seen significant growth since 2002, doubling the national job growth rate at 24 percent, an increase of 1,144 jobs. Despite the economic downturn, the IT industry is projected to continue its growth. Based on projected growth factors and current wage information, Job Service North Dakota reports that the two hottest jobs in North Dakota are computer software engineers in systems software and computer and information system managers. Average annual wages for the two jobs, respectively, are \$71,821 and \$82,557 (more than double the statewide average of \$33,086).

North Dakota IT businesses reported that the technical skill sets in highest demand are system analysis and design, development languages and client server software. Also in demand are database, associate project manager and business application certifications. Communication and marketing as they relate to the IT work process were also identified as important skill sets for current and future IT employees.

To address these workforce needs, ITCND is developing the IT Career Awareness Program. It is also working with the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education to make sure students exposed and motivated to pursue IT careers through the career awareness program have the IT courses at the secondary and postsecondary level to continue down an IT career path.

“One of the goals of the department is to develop and implement courses to meet the needs of North Dakota’s industry,” says Wayne Kutzer, director of the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education. “We are enthusiastic about the unique partnership that has been established with the IT industry and look forward to positive results.”

The study was supported by ITCND, the North Dakota Workforce Development Council and Valley City State University. To view the 2009 *State of the IT Industry Guide*, which summarizes the 2008 *North Dakota IT Workforce Needs Assessment*, visit www.itcnd.org/pdfs/2009_IT_Guide.pdf. For additional information visit www.itcnd.org or contact Deana Wiese, ITCND executive director, at 701-355-4458 or office@itcnd.org.

ITCND is the leading information technology advocacy organization in the state. It was founded by North Dakota business, government and education leaders to encourage the use, growth and development of information technology in North Dakota.

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Note to Reporters: *If you are interested in developing a story about the IT industry in North Dakota, ITCND is available to help put you in contact with IT professionals across the state. Contact Deana Wiese at the telephone number or e-mail address above.*