

# PAVING THE PATH TO AN IVY-LEAGUE COLLEGE WITH CERTIFICATION



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Tyler Millis  
Florida



## Ivy League Approved

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is considered one of the top universities in the United States. Getting accepted, however, is definitely not an easy task. In 2016, only 7.9% of applicants were accepted. Basically, overcoming the odds and being accepted is no small feat. Just ask former MOS World Champion, Tyler Millis. Tyler is definitely an exceptional student. Most importantly though, he has an exceptional drive to succeed. Find out how he used his certification to get into one of the world's most prestigious universities, and what he plans for his future.

## 46 Certifications and Counting

**Certiport:** Thanks so much for taking the time for this interview! We know that MIT must keep you pretty busy.

**Tyler:** No problem. I would love to see certifications become more mainstream worldwide, so I hope that sharing my story will inspire students to get certified.

**Certiport:** Speaking of certification, how many certifications have you earned?

**Tyler:** Great question. I have 30 Microsoft certs: 17 Microsoft Office Specialist certifications, six Microsoft Technology Associate certifications,



and seven higher level Microsoft certifications. I also have six Adobe Certified Associate Certifications, three Autodesk certifications, three CompTIA certifications, two Cisco certifications, and two Aruba certifications.

**Certiport:** What?! You have 46 certifications? That is incredible!!

**Tyler:** Luckily at my high school in Florida, students had a lot of opportunities to explore certification. To me, there is nothing greater than the feeling that comes after finishing a certification test. You submit the test and your heart is beating so fast as the software is performing its calculations to determine your score. Seeing your score pop up and finding out you passed after a lot of hard work is such a rewarding moment. Plus, I can't even tell you how beneficial it's been to have learned so much about technology before coming to MIT.

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## Gaming for Work

**Certiport:** Tell us more about what you're studying and doing here at MIT.

**Tyler:** Well, I am currently a sophomore. I am majoring in Computer Science and Engineering and plan on also getting a minor in Mathematics. I have worked for the MIT Game Lab as a Game Developer since February of this year.

**Certiport:** What a cool job to have while you're in school! What do you get to do as a Game Developer?

**Tyler:** I initially worked on a two person team to design a game surrounding printing presses and the Protestant Reformation. This included paper prototyping and then creating the game in Unity (a game engine). More recently, I started working to implement game design changes in coordination with my supervisor and implement art and audio created by a remote team in Maine.

## Bringing Home the Gold

**Certiport:** That's so great. Now, let's go back a few years and talk about your participation in the MOS World Championship. When did you compete?

**Tyler:** I participated in the MOS US National Championship in 2013 for Excel 2010 and did not place in the top three. After not placing at Nationals, I was really motivated to work hard and perform even better the next year. It was in 2014 that I made it to the MOS World Championship and won first in PowerPoint 2007. The next year is when I received 2nd place at the MOS US National Championship for Word 2010.

**Certiport:** I'll never forget when you won at the MOS World Championship. Your mom's reaction was priceless! I don't think we've ever seen a parent get so excited!

What were some of your favorite parts of participating in the competition?

**Tyler:** My favorite aspect of the MOS World Championship was the feeling of it actually being a global competition. It was so interesting interacting with students from all over the world.

## Molding Educational Goals

**Certiport:** That's so great! Learning from and interacting with students from around the world is definitely one of our favorite parts as well. Do you feel like participating in the competition and earning your certifications has helped you get to where you are today?

**Tyler:** Simply put, I do not think that I would be where I am today without certifications. Certifications helped me mold my educational goals in high school by giving me something attainable to reach for and by demonstrating what knowledge and skills are used in the work force. I was able to intern at a Fortune 1000 company my junior year of high school, which I believe to be due to my certifications and winning the MOS World Championship. My certifications have set me apart from others and demonstrated my skillset. I was also accepted to and am attending the college of my dreams, MIT. In high school, I focused on taking classes that focused on my interests, such as technology and game design, instead of overloading on AP classes and the like. I do not think I would have been able to take the path that I did and still be able to attend MIT without having shown them everything I learned in the classes through certifications.

## Future Opportunities

**Certiport:** Wow! Hearing testimonials like that make us so proud of our students around the globe who use certification to help them succeed. Do you feel like you've had other opportunities opened to you because of your certification?

**Tyler:** It is difficult to say what exact opportunities have opened for me from my certifications, but my certifications make up a large part of my skillset. They show employers what I actually know and can be a great talking point during interviews. If nothing more, since a lot of students my age do not have the certifications that I have, I bring something unique to the table.

**Certiport:** Very true. Standing out as a unique candidate in education and the job market can make all the difference. As far as jobs and careers go, do you have any future plans after you graduate from MIT?

**Tyler:** Game development is something I am really interested in and enjoy doing in my free time. I'm not sure yet what exactly I will want to do after college, but I know at some point in my career I would like to work on creating educational video games. Education is critical and exploring non-traditional mediums, such as video games, for learning is vital, in my opinion. I would love to design games where kids are having fun and don't even recognize that they are learning.

## Point of Pride

**Certiport:** That's so great that you're already planning on giving back to future students. Do you have any advice or last thoughts you'd like to share with other students?

**Tyler:** It is hard putting into words my feelings about certifications. I am just so thankful that I had the opportunity to certify and learn about so many different things while I was in high school. I feel like there have been so many conversations and experiences, with potential employers and adults in general, surrounding certification that have changed my life. Certifications are a big point of pride for me and my self-confidence has been boosted tremendously due to them, especially so after winning the MOS World Championship. So my biggest piece of advice is to try out certification and learn as much as you can while you're in high school. You never know where it will take you.