

# Microsoft Office Specialist



**LOCATION:** NORTHWEST  
IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Program Enrollment:**  
*10 students per year*

## Success Metrics

- » Validates in-demand software application skills
- » Industry-recognized certification builds strong resumé
- » Sets students on a path for continued professional development

Northwest Iowa Community College  
Validates Microsoft Office Skills in  
Administrative Office Assistant Program

## Success Story

[www.certipoint.com/mos](http://www.certipoint.com/mos)

## Microsoft Office Specialist Certification and GMetrix Practice Exams Set Students on a Path for Continued Professional Development

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) is the community college of choice for more than 2,700 credited students seeking lifelong learning, personal development, and retraining. NCC's student placement rate averages 98 percent, and many of the highly skilled specialist programs consistently achieve 100 percent employment success for their graduates.

One of those specialties, the Administrative Office Assistant program, prepares students for the demanding work of an administrative assistant in today's automated office. The program aims to prepare students for entry-level

employment with potential for advancement in offices of virtually any industry. Graduates of the program find employment opportunities in a wide variety of business environments from small businesses to large corporations.

## Validating Microsoft Skills for Professional Development

Janet Boone first learned about Microsoft Office Specialist certification when she was the assistant to the president of NCC. Boone quickly realized it would help her identify herself within NCC and she set a personal goal to become a Microsoft Office Specialist. "From what I read, I was

convinced this was a valuable global certification," Boone said. "I knew it would be a great way to demonstrate my abilities and proficiency with Microsoft Office products."

NCC's president was both aware and supportive of Boone's goal. "He always encouraged and supported me, and I appreciate it so much," Boone said. "It speaks volumes—NCC is an employer that believes in the value of professional development." After earning her first certification in Microsoft PowerPoint in 2000, Boone earned Microsoft Office Specialist Master certification in six successive versions of Office. She began teaching part-time for the continuing education department and worked directly with industry.



After more than 12 years as assistant to the president of the college, Boone came across an opportunity to advance to a full-time instructional position within NCC's Administrative Office Assistant program. "My Microsoft Office Specialist credentials have paid dividends for me, both personally and professionally, and I approach every day as an opportunity to teach my students to think critically and to learn workforce preparation skills," said Boone.

## Microsoft Office Specialist for Students

For many years the Administrative Office Assistant program at NCC offered Microsoft Office Specialist

certification and training to students, but the program expanded in 2014 when NCC became a Microsoft Imagine Academy in partnership with the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council. The Microsoft Imagine Academy program is designed to help drive employability, digital literacy, career/technical certification, STEM-focused training, and 21st-century workforce development for Administrative Office Assistant students.

"Microsoft Office Specialist certification is distinctively aligned with industry standards, provides computer program literacy, measures proficiency, and identifies opportunities for skills enhancement," said Boone. "Our partnership with the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council allowed us to broaden the scope of certification testing for students."

Now Administrative Office Assistant students take two courses called Intro to Microsoft Office Applications and Advanced Microsoft Office Applications, which include study in

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access. They learn the specifics of the programs they will use in the workplace and practice hands-on learning to develop specialist-level skills. The target or capstone achievement for students is Microsoft Specialist Certification.

Through the Microsoft Imagine Academy membership agreement and four annual renewals, NCC has been awarded a free Microsoft Office Specialist exam site license to test all students in the program.

NCC uses the GMetrix Skills Management System with proven results to show that learners will be equipped with the tools they need to

master the concepts and achieve their Microsoft Office Specialist certification.

"In my opinion, GMetrix software is the premier assessment and practice test solution for Microsoft Office Specialist certification preparation," said Boone. "GMetrix accurately replicates the live-in-application testing environment for Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access, and it maps directly to certification exam objectives."

## Making Microsoft Office Specialist Count

Boone has had the unique perspective of seeing Microsoft Office Specialist benefit her own career, so she can tell students it will be tremendously beneficial to them. "Virtually all open jobs specify proficiency in Microsoft software programs as a requirement for workers," said Boone. "Microsoft Office Specialist certification validates this knowledge and is indisputable."

Too many students to count have gotten jobs after earning Microsoft Office Specialist certification at NCC, and over the years Boone has watched many of them succeed and continue their professional development by earning more certifications down the road. NCC graduate Megan Vander Plaats said, "Mine was the only application with Microsoft Office Specialist certification on it when I applied for my job, and it definitely played a part in getting hired."

Since 2002, NCC has delivered more than 310 Microsoft Office Specialist certifications with outstanding pass rates.

"My students are motivated by the powerful distinction that the Microsoft Office Specialist certifications will have on their resumés," said Boone. "They are motivated because that credential carries such weight on their career path. I always tell them – you have everything to gain and nothing to lose, the benefit is ultimately for you."

