

Microsoft Technology Associate



Algebra
university college for
applied computer engineering

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ALGEBRA

LOCATION:

Croatia

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT:

500 students taking MTA
certification each year

SUCCESS METRICS:

- » Promotes STEM subjects to high school and University students
- » Gives students job-ready ICT skills
- » First step in path to career in technology

University College Algebra Encourages Croatian Students to Explore STEM Career Paths with Microsoft Technology Associate Certification

Success Story

www.certiport.com/mta

*"MTA certification
helped me achieve my
goals and prove my
technical expertise."*

Gordon Cindrić
Student

Students Earn MTA Certification to Validate In-Demand Technology Skills

CHALLENGE

University College Algebra was established in Croatia in 2008 to offer professional higher education in computing and ICT. Today Algebra serves 400 students working towards degrees in applied computer engineering with a choice between software engineering, systems engineering or multimedia computing. Both three-year bachelor's degree and five-year master's degree programs are available.

Algebra works with an Economic Council made up of companies who employ ICT engineers in

Croatia and internationally. The advice offered by the Council is used to adjust curriculum annually based on employment needs so Algebra can prepare students for the tasks that will be required of them in the current workforce.

"Our goal is to always be on top of new technologies to make sure our students are provided with the knowledge that is needed in the job market," said Tomislav Dominković, member of the administrative council at University College Algebra. "There is a shortage of computer engineers and computer specialists in Croatia and in the European Union, so our mission is to create new

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computer engineering graduates who can start working in the industry as soon as they finish our program.”

Algebra strives to offer students the latest software, hardware and networking tools along with cutting-edge learning materials developed by experts and technology vendors. They deliver professional certification programs that complement their curriculum and bolster the learning outcomes of their courses. Students studying at Algebra are offered free advanced certifications from Microsoft, CompTIA, Cisco and other leading technology companies.

“We offer certification for two reasons – because employers want certification and because it teaches our students the principle of lifelong learning,” said Dominković.

Due to the shortage of skilled technology professionals, Algebra looks for ways to encourage local high school students to pursue a STEM-related education and career path. They recently decided that one way to attract youth to the technology industry would be to offer a certification to local high school students. They sought out a certification that would be recognized by industry worldwide, and would be attainable and attractive to high school students.

SOLUTION

Since the certifications already offered by Algebra as part of their degree program were difficult for high school students, they looked for another program that would be a precursor to their offerings.

The Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) certification is an entry-level credential that validates essential technology knowledge and prepares students for more advanced Microsoft certifications. MTA includes three tracks: IT Infrastructure, Database and Developer, all of which validate fundamental ICT concepts.

Algebra decided to provide the MTA certification to high school students

with the goal of attracting more students to study at their college or pursue a computer engineering degree at another college. They worked with Certiadria, an international education and certification company established and based in the Adriatic region, to add MTA to their traditional degree programs at Algebra to give students even more professional certifications for their resumes.

“We felt that offering the MTA certification exams not just to our students but to all current high school students was an appropriate way of stressing the importance of a continued education and self-improvement in this sector,” said Renato Barišić, career center manager for University College Algebra.

In order to offer MTA, Algebra became a Certiport Authorized Testing Center and trained their instructors to administer the exam. They worked to raise awareness for the exam using their career center and cooperation with schools, teacher training agencies, vocational education agencies, Microsoft and the media.

RESULTS

During the first year it was offered, Algebra delivered 522 free MTA exams to high school students and other youth considering a career in technology. The following year they delivered 579 exams and the number is expected to continue to grow.

“We feel that we need to influence future students – even those who are now just finishing their primary schools – and show them some of the benefits of choosing an ICT career later in life,” said Dominković. “Giving them an MTA certificate at an early age, in which they invested their own time and effort, serves as a strong encouragement to consider a career in ICT.”

MTA is encouraging high school students to pursue a career in technology, and it is also benefitting current Algebra higher education students and graduates. Through their regular contact with key employers in the ICT sector in Croatia, Algebra receives feedback on how graduates are performing in their new jobs. “The fact that our students have already acquired the leading industry

certificates during their studies is one of their competitive advantages during the hiring process,” said Barišić.

One student, Gordon Cindrić, earned several MTA certifications and is now working as a user experience designer of mobile and web applications. He said, “MTA certification helped me achieve my goals and prove my technical expertise. Being certified has distinguished me among my fellow students and demonstrated my willingness to take the extra step. Now I am shifting my focus and plan to earn the Microsoft Certified Solutions Developer certification to continue my career.”

Algebra just introduced a campaign called “Grab your first Microsoft certificate for free,” which promotes the free MTA certification for high school students. It is now part of the global EU initiative “eSkills for Jobs” for more visibility and to get more students involved in certification programs. In 2014 Algebra was named Microsoft Learning Partner of the Year, demonstrating its success in implementing Microsoft certifications in Croatia.

ABOUT CERTIPORT

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