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In high demand: grads in IT; Tips for a successful job hunt; all in this month's issue of [MentorNet News](#)

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MentorNet News – November 2007

Demand for Information Technology College Grads Soars

The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) [forecasts](#) record growth of computer and information-related jobs to the tune of an anticipated 1 million jobs added to the U.S. workforce by 2014.

Study Links Diversity to Success

Demand for women and minorities to fill IT jobs is higher than ever. According to a [September 2007 story in Forbes](#), a recent National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) study showed that the most successful IT teams were the most diverse.

The article suggested, "If you want to create a really useful invention, make sure you have both women and men on your development team."

Yet, while the demand has increased, the supply of potential job candidates has dwindled.

In 2004, only 26% of women were employed as professionals in IT-related occupations. Of computer scientists, 4% were African American females; 2% were Asian females; and only 1% were Hispanic females. Since then, these numbers have [decreased](#).

Why Women and People of Color Turn Away from IT

So here's the million-dollar question. Why, if diverse IT teams are in such demand, are so few women and people of color preparing to fill those hot spots?

Here's one theory. A recent Wall Street Journal article (*Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2007; Page B5), quoted Jenny Slade, Communications Director of NCWIT, saying, "Women feel discrimination in IT" and leave at higher rates. Part of the reason, she says, "is that there aren't other women in the field."

What Do We Do?

The solution, believes Jim McGrath, Cisco Systems' Global Leader of University Relations and Recruiting, is to expose all students, including people of color and women, to the broad spectrum of jobs available in IT today. "We need to tell them IT is no longer an impersonal interaction between human and computer. IT is now enabling human interactions in a way never realized before."

McGrath said employers and educators need to do a better job of "re-imagining IT" to get this message out and make careers more attractive to students, "particularly women and minorities."

Opportunities in IT, he continued, range from product development and design/engineering to consulting and services "where you are solving customers' business problems" to sales and management.

He suggested that universities and employees continue to partner on ways to reach junior high and high school level students. "There is a need for an organic solution which attracts young people to math and science early in their school careers, which would hopefully lead to the pursuit of IT-related majors."

Turning Students On to IT

As for what he thinks might excite younger students to learn, he said, "Today's business

environment is tremendously dynamic with technology leading the charge. As we continue to globalize, this opens up even more opportunities to work with teams around the world."

While some students may believe IT won't provide a long-term career path because so many positions are outsourced to other countries, McGrath indicated this simply isn't true. "There are limits on the number of foreign nationals that can be hired due to H1-B visa caps. IT is one of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S."

At Cisco, McGrath said, the demand for recent college grads in IT is "extremely high and getting higher. We are increasing our college grad hires 100% year over year and are seeing increased competition for talent as we recruit."

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