



# SUCCESS STORY

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## **TECHNOLOGY AT THE UTM, IN MEXICO** **Accelerating Progress, Shortening Distances in Mexico**

The need for training, does not admit borders or limitations. It is true that geographic zones and the scope of the educational programs do not always go hand in hand, however, there are people who make their best to make educational tools available to isolated regions and those who make their best to obtain the best education. That is the case of the Universidad Tecnológica del Valle del Mezquital (UTVM) in Mexico and its students.

This institution is located in Ixmiquilpan, a population considered as the heart of the Mezquital Valley, in the central part of the State of Hidalgo, México.

The ethnical group Hñähñu(\*), settled in this zone characterized for its aridness, has been constantly supported by the UTVM in its professional and social development in a significant manner. The accelerated changes of the cultural patterns, due to the influence of mass media and a consuming society, are provoking that the habits, legends, traditions, rites and mainly the use of the native language of the Hñähñus, are now a threatened treasure.

Furthermore, the districts that belong to the Mezquital Valley are rated as "high" of "very high" underprivileged zones, due to the specific conditions of scarce economic activity, as well as of severe ecological problems that the inhabitants of the region suffer.

### **Cisco Networking Academy Program in the UTVM towards development**

Since 2001, the UTVM decided to become part of the Cisco Networking Academy Program, which has the purpose to support the educational development of institutions and students of medium high, high and postgraduate levels; thus, supporting the commitment Cisco Systems has with the population of the places where it has presence: the technological progress of these regions. The program works through innovative alliances with the government, companies and educational institutions worldwide and prepares students for the huge opportunities that the information economy offers.

The Cisco Networking Academy Program, available in Mexico since 1998, was created to teach students how to design, build and maintain networks, besides making specialized instruction accessible free of charge to students through all the Mexican geography. To make this possible, the support and commitment of educational institutions is vital to incorporate a technological infrastructure in their facilities, to provide the curricula, on-line exams, practical and theoretical teaching, training and support through the Internet.

A clear example of this commitment is the UTVM, a university that has made continuing efforts to improve its educational offer and to give an added value to its students through this program. The commitment shared between Cisco and



Iraiz Zongua helping his father in the field.



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Hilda Demhá working on a lab



## The Cultural Richness and Need for Development

The need for development is evident in the zone of the Mezquital Valley. Through the joint effort of the UTM and Cisco Systems, these young people may aspire to improve their life quality and to explore better opportunities for their professional career by means of a specialized training in networks. The adoption and acceptance of the Cisco Networking Academy Program in institutions that are far away from the big cities, such as the UTM, have shown that it is possible to take technology and education practically to any zone, through a modern e-learning education model.

This generation of Hñähñu youngsters, committed with their traditions and habits, prepare themselves every day to get a college degree, and at the same time, to get the preparation needed to be certified as networks specialists. As of today, they start seeing a real and practical application of the concepts that they learn during the program and they know the huge potential they represent to support the development of their community.

*"I see that the program gives us great opportunities, as the certification has a global validity", comments Faustino Cruz Huizache, descendant of Hñähñu natives and student of the UTM. "It is nice to feel the interest of other young people of my community when I explain to them what I study and its applications. It results gratifying and even astonishing, that programs such as the Cisco Networking Academy are at our reach. I think it is very complete and with the practices you can know in depth the necessary technology for the development and implementation of networks".*

## Technology and traditions live together in harmony

The Hñähñu students of the UTM are convinced of the importance of establishing educational programs in schools, in order to take technology to the rest of the population and to continue the development of the region.

As members of the new generation of young people of Mexico, these Hñähñu students are considered as progress drivers who, without leaving aside the strengthening of their culture, are showing that traditions and technological progress can coexist in harmony, improving the life quality of individuals, no matter where they are or where they come from.

*"I don't live in the Mezquital Valley, I live in the Sierra (mountain range)", clarifies Jazmín Hernández Pérez, another girl student of the university and member of the program. "With what I have learned up to now, I realize how valuable this type of efforts can result for others. When I talk with my family about the possibilities of having a better communication through the Internet and the IP telephone system, they can not fully understand what all that implies, but they know it can benefit all of us".*

These students, who by the way are studying the program in English, are trying to show that the use of technology is not going to stop the preservation of the traditions of an ancestral town. On the contrary, to aspire to improve their life level through a specialized training using global information resources, shows that low resources regions in which indigenous peoples traditionally live, can increment their development in the extent in which technology reaches everywhere.

Moisés Roque Corona, another 21 year old student, who has lived almost all his life in the Hñähñu community of El Decá. district of Cardonal. Hidalgo. comments:



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Iraiz with typical dress.



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*in Hñähñu, which I have digitalized and gone over it through my computer. I hope to have the opportunity to disseminate part of our culture, with all that I am learning at the academy".*

## New communication and learning tools for young leaders

The demand of highly trained people in networks is becoming greater and more complex; and the Cisco Networking Academy Program is giving students the necessary tools to achieve better personal and professional development.

Currently, the Cisco Networking Academy Program is in 148 countries with more than 10,000 academies around the world. The content is distributed through the Internet to the academies that belong to the program and has served more than 269 thousand students and 32,395 thousand instructors across the world, who have found a new and attractive way of learning. As of today, Mexico has 248 academies with presence in almost all the Republic covering 30 of its 32 states.

The program has not only helped the students of the Hñähñu ethnic group to complement higher studies, but it has also given them the opportunity to revalue their roots and to think in the future development of their communities. According to these students, the knowledge obtained will help to the progress of their ethnic group and to make their cultural wealth known to other societies through the Internet and technology.

Iraiz Zongua Vega, a 19 year old student, comments: *"I am very grateful for the opportunity that the UTM has given me to belong to the Cisco academy, as this type of programs motivates students to go on studying. For me it is a great pride to be able to speak Hñähñu, as my ancestors inherited it to me. What I would like to do is to teach others to speak like me, so that they know that our language is not dead, and that we can always learn new ways of communicating".*

With initiatives such as the Cisco Networking Academy program it is hoped to prepare future generations of workers of Internet networks. Cisco Systems, its business partners, academic institutions and the government, through this program, will successfully create a bridge through the digital divide, to generate opportunities in Mexico, with the firm objective of "Forming Today the Leaders of Tomorrow."

### (\*) About the Hñähñu ethnic group

The word Hñähñu is made up by two linguistic elements: Hñä that means to talk and hñu that comes from the word xihñu, that means nose, thus the word Hñähñu means: the one that talks with the help of the nose. Its history goes back to the prehispanic period and different origins have been given to them, amongst which, that they came down from the mountains to live in the Mezquital Valley, that they practice hunting and recollection.

### An ethnic group with deep roots

Dominated by the Aztecs, the Hñähñu saw -during the conquest- in the Spaniards the possibility to get free from the Aztec's oppression, so they became allies of this new race. According to historical data, in a very short period of time the Hñähñu converted to Catholicism and contributed to the religion dissemination among the peoples of the north, thereby favoring colonization.

However, the Hñähñu people of the Mezquital Valley started to be victims of the domination and exploitation of the Spanish Colony, situation that led to the resistance,