

YSU

Cisco Academy to close in June

Position of YSU-ACE President Domhoff terminated

By Leonard Crist
The Jambar

The Cisco Networking Academy, which provides non-credit courses at Youngstown State University's Metro College, will close as of June 30, university officials announced Monday.

As a result of the academy's closing, the administrative assistant position held by Christine Domhoff, the president and chief negotiator for the YSU-Association of Classified Employees, has been terminated. Another employee working at the academy, Michael Glonek, will be moved to a new position on campus.

Ron Chordas, YSU's associate provost, said enrollment at the academy had declined significantly during the last four years. The academy opened in 1999 and enrollment peaked in the winter of 2001 with 110 students, Chordas said. In the spring of 2003, enrollment dropped to 20 students. By spring 2004, there were only



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*Christine Domhoff,
YSU-ACE president, chief negotiator*

three students. There have been no students enrolled in the program this year, Chordas said.

Questions of timing

But the termination's timing has raised questions in the mind of Domhoff, who has led the classified employees union for just less than two years. The YSU-ACE contract expires on Aug. 15, and negotiations are slated for sometime after May.

"I didn't do anything wrong. I have perfect evaluations. I've worked here 23 years," Domhoff said. "The whole action that was taken leaves one to question why. Why at this time?"

The Cisco Network Academy lost \$186,000 last year and is projected to lose

\$115,000 this year, Chordas said.

"It's a budgetary decision to close it and move it to campus because it doesn't make any sense to continue to pay the salaries when there are no students enrolled in the program," Chordas said.

For-credit courses at the Cisco Networking Academy will continue to be offered through the computer science and information systems department in Meshel Hall, Chordas said.

Union attorneys are conducting a legal review and assessing her legal options, Domhoff said. Domhoff can

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remain YSU-ACE president and chief negotiator regardless of her employment status.

"I'm not convinced I'm not going to have a job here. I think they've taken some action, but I don't know what all my legal rights are, so I'm not waiving any rights."

Externally funded positions

Domhoff wasn't reassigned to a new job within the university because she signed a contract in 2001 for an externally funded position, Chordas said.

"Whenever the funding runs out on externally funded positions, the person's contract isn't renewed," Chordas said.

However, Domhoff said after her first externally funded year, her salary was listed as permanent in the university budget.

When Domhoff started at the academy, the program was exclusively non-credit, she said. But it made more sense for students to take for-credit courses to aid in their market competitiveness, so she encouraged CSIS to offer the Cisco classes for credit.

"I took a lot of my students out of the non-credit program and encouraged them to go into the credit program," Domhoff said. "As a result of doing what I was told to do, I've eliminated my job."

YSU last laid off employees in the early 1990s, Domhoff said.

It is very uncommon for a company to terminate a union president so close to contract negotiations, John Russo, co-director of YSU's Center for

Working Class Studies, said.

"Unconscionable"

"I think this is unconscionable," Russo said. "It's clearly an attempt at intimidation."

Russo said the union should file wrongful termination and unfair labor practice complaints.

"It shows you the extent to which John Habat [YSU's vice president for administration and the university's chief negotiator] and the current leadership of the university will go to try to influence collective bargaining," Russo said.

Habat referred all comments to Chordas.

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