OAKLAND UNIVERSITY™

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OU alumnus gains worldwide attention

By **Dawn Pauli**, *contributing writer*

OU alumnus Matt Basham, CAS '90, likens himself to David taking on Goliath.

As program director and professor for the Cisco Academy, where students at St. Petersburg College in Florida learn how to use Cisco networking products, Basham was appalled at the cost of textbooks. Students were expected to purchase $180 worth of lab and engineering journals designed to go with the official Cisco texts.

So Basham took on a billion dollar company by writing an 800-page manual that replaces the one published by Cisco. His book can be obtained, for free, through lulu.com, an Internet publisher that allows free downloads and low-cost, print-on-demand book copies. Print copies are available for $20 each.

"It's my way of taking a stance for the students," he said. "Students pay way too much for books."

Basham will receive $5 in royalties for each printed book. "I'm not the first to do this, but I am the first to do it on this scale. Cisco makes $30 million a year just from the lab manual alone. This could dent their bottom line."

Basham said about one million people have downloaded the book to date.

He offered Cisco the option of publishing his book, but they weren't interested, he said. However, after his book hit the Internet, they requested a meeting with him at St. Petersburg College.

The media took instant notice of Basham's effort. "I was interviewed on ABC radio and have stories out on CNET news, business.com, Ziff Davis news, Slashdot, and many other sites," he said. "I stumbled onto something. This thing totally went beyond my wildest imagination."

The news stories were translated into Italian, German, Hungarian, Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Greek, Swedish and German.

"Going to Oakland gave me a greater appreciation of different cultures and ethnicities," Basham said. "This is at the heart of my decision to give the book away for free. Computer training has become so expensive that we are becoming a culture of the haves and have-nots. By making the training more affordable, it will allow economically challenged people to change their situations."

After graduating from OU, Basham earned a master's in communication from the University of Florida and he's currently working on an MLS in computer security and Cisco networking at Fort Hayes State University and a Ph.D. in technology policy development in higher education administration at the University of Florida.

With one year of law school under his belt, this busy dad of two young children is planning to complete that degree, too.

Since the success of his venture, Basham has received numerous speaking engagements and was hired as a contributing writer for Convere online, the Center for Digital Education.

SUMMARY
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