

Dustin Sumrall

Cleco Corporation | IT Project Manager



2006 Graduate, Computer Information Systems

Hobbies: Playing with my beautiful girls and Attending LaTech Football games



Why did you choose CIS as your major?

Choosing a major was not an easy task. I didn't choose a major until the summer following my high school graduation. One of my biggest fears was that I would choose a major, find out that it was not right for me, and then would have to spend extra time and money to find the right one (and mess up my GPA along the way). I've always enjoyed working with computers and technical things my whole life. When I started investigating majors, I knew that I wanted to focus on a technical major that would lead to a wide array of potential jobs. When I found out that CIS program included the business concepts, I felt like that would open the door to many different job opportunities in the future.

Did you do an internship? If so, how did that help you prepare for your career?

Regretfully, I did not do an internship. Each summer during high school and college, I worked with my grandpa's construction business. Although I did learn many life lessons and a lot about the construction business while pouring concrete in those hot summers, I feel like an internship would have given me a head start on my career. I've watched friends and colleagues excel by starting their careers with internships and I think it's a very valuable thing to do.

Describe your career path since graduating and what you are doing now.

For the past seven years, I have been a programmer/analyst at Cleco Corporation in Pineville, LA. Cleco is an electric utility serving about 284,000 customers throughout Louisiana. As a programmer/analyst, I was responsible for supporting Cleco's existing systems and working with clients throughout the company to implement new ones. Recently, I have transitioned into an IT Project Manager position at Cleco. Instead of making the actual programming changes, I'll now be working with project teams to keep major IT projects on schedule and on budget. So far, I have enjoyed the new position and I look forward to the opportunities it may provide.

Looking back, what were some of the most valuable classes/experiences while you were at Tech?

The CIS 450 capstone class was definitely one of the most valuable classes I took. As a freshman, I remember hearing horror stories about how hard the class was going to be. Watching seniors carry their 5" project binders to the 450 class was quite intimidating. In the end, the class was not as difficult as I pictured and I really feel like it was an accurate depiction of how major IT projects should be managed. Throughout the class, we created a team charter, determined requirements, analyzed risks, and created a schedule and work plan. These are all things that I will be doing in my new Project Manager position and I believe it prepared me well.

If you could go back and do your undergraduate years over again, is there anything you would do differently?

I would get involved in more clubs or organizations. I attended every athletic event and on-campus event possible, but I didn't join many organizations during school. Whether it is profession clubs (like AITP), community service clubs, or student government, those things show that you were involved outside the classroom and they look great on a resume.