The Future is Bright for CIARA Graduates

By Sara LaJeunesse

When Bin Liu decided to leave his home in China to come to the U.S., he was looking for a better future.

After working for six years at a telecommunications company in Xian, China, Liu was disappointed to find that, although the programmers were smart and industrious, the final product did not meet his expectations.

“We did not have enough experience to manage a large-scale system and to collaborate with hundreds of developers,” said Liu. “U.S. companies like Microsoft and IBM have a lot of seasoned project managers and methods of managing a project that improve the quality of the product.”

With a desire to join ranks with some of the world’s most brilliant computer programmers, Liu set his sights on a future job with Microsoft Corp. But to achieve his goal, he first needed to broaden his expertise. In 2003, Liu was accepted to the master’s program in the School of Computing and Information Sciences at Florida International University (FIU).

He conducted his thesis research within FIU’s Center for Internet Augmented Research and Assessment (CIARA), where he focused on network monitoring and performance analysis, a project that was part of a larger effort funded by CISCO-URP (University Research Program).

Liu concentrated on the link between Internet2, a high-speed Internet dedicated to advanced network applications for university education and research, and AMPATH, the international exchange point in Miami connecting national research and education networks in South and Central America. Monitoring this link is important to managing the network’s use and security. Liu’s goal was to integrate the Cisco monitoring tool, Netflow, with the National Laboratory for Applied Network Research tool, Passive Measurement and Analysis (PMA), to get a better view of the dynamic network traffic.

During his last semester at FIU, Liu worked as a network engineer for CIARA, focusing on more tangible duties, such as network configuration, maintenance and grid computing. He split his time between AMPATH and CHEPREO, the Center for High Energy Physics Research & Education Outreach. Liu was responsible for coordinating between FIU and the Network Access Point (NAP) of the Americas, which serves as the Internet gateway for Latin America.

“Working for CIARA was a very good experience for me,” said Liu. “I learned a lot of things there.”

It was so good in fact, that it landed him his dream job as a programmer for Microsoft Corp. According to Liu’s faculty advisor, computer science professor, Chi Zhang, interviewing with Microsoft is really tough.
“It is well known that even top-tier programmers don’t get hired by Microsoft,” said Zhang. “The interview was very difficult and I’m extremely proud of Bin,” he said.

And, he adds, “CIARA played an important role in Bin’s education by providing the financial support, as well as the computer and the infrastructure.”

In February, 2006, Liu left the Sunshine State and headed for cloudy Seattle, WA. But with a master’s degree from FIU and a new job at Microsoft Corp. his future will be bright.