On the photonics industry: “This is the leading edge in a new era of technology. If you can get into this career now, with all of the changes in the past five years, just imagine what it will be like in the future.”

Alex Dawson decided to pursue a career in photonics because he wanted to work in a field that would allow him to advance in his career. Before studying photonics, Alex had worked in manufacturing, maintenance, and construction, and he even drove a tractor-trailer for a while. “I went back to school after the job market slowed down. I researched my options and found that the photonics job market had not slowed down at all.” In researching the photonics industry, Alex discovered a field in which he could use his talents to build a successful career.

Alex also chose photonics out of dedication to his family. “I was recently married and had a growing family. My wife and I were not earning enough to support our children like we wanted to.” Alex chose a photonics career because he knew that there was a need for technicians. He knew that a job in photonics would allow him to provide for his family the way he wanted.

Alex knew very little about photonics at first. “I knew just enough to catch my interest. I had very few expectations going in, really, but I thought photonics would make for an exciting career.” Alex went back to school ready to learn as much as he could and dove into the material.

Alex received a hands-on education at Central Carolina Community College (CCCC), where he learned about the wealth of job possibilities that would be available to him upon graduation. He was surprised to learn about the many applications of laser technology. “I realized I had only discovered the tip of the iceberg when I was doing my research before going into photonics.” He describes the number of laser applications as “overwhelming.” Photonics opened up a whole new world for Alex, not just in career mobility, but also in variety of job opportunities.

Alex’s education in photonics has paid off well at Preco, Inc. where he works as a laser tech I. Alex aligns and sets up production welding and cutting with a ten-kilowatt fiber laser and a twelve-kilowatt carbon-dioxide laser. He also runs test studies and maintains the machines. Working at Preco gives Alex the career mobility that he had sought as a student. “After only two months of working with Preco, I was able to move to the more profitable side of the company. That was a great step up from where I started, and it also gives me more opportunity to move up within the company.”

In the future, Alex would like to go back to school to get a bachelor’s or even a master’s degree in photonics. Research and development in photonics excites Alex; he would like to earn advanced degrees to go even farther in the field. According to Alex, “the new era of technology is in lasers.” His story is one of encouragement and success for anyone considering a career in photonics.

Alex Dawson lives in New Richmond, Michigan, with his wife and two children, aged thirteen and nineteen. They enjoy spending free time together by going to a nearby park.