Chris Baggett chose photonics as a second career. He started out as a private investigator and owned his own investigative company for about twenty years. Chris primarily worked on insurance and fraud cases, especially ones concerning medical malpractice and worker’s compensation. His natural curiosity lent itself to his first career, and he was highly successful. However, he eventually found that he wanted to make a change.

Chris’s mother was a continuing education teacher and was involved with Central Carolina Community College (CCCC). She was acquainted with Gary Beasley, the lead professor of the Laser and Photonics Technology program at CCCC. She knew of the program and recommended it to Chris, who, true to his investigative roots, did some research to investigate the program. Chris has always had a passion for learning, and he has always loved math. He is also fond of working with his hands and likes to fix up old cars. “I was always interested in fixing things,” he says. Eventually, he decided that the Laser and Photonics Technology program seemed like the right start to a new career.

As a student, Chris enjoyed learning about optics and photonics, and he particularly enjoyed the labs and working hands-on with the equipment. He found the classwork stimulating and fun, in part because of his love of math and science. “If you like those things,” Chris says, “there’s nothing really hard about it. It’s a fun experience. I love it, I love the challenges.” Professor Beasley taught many of his classes, and Chris speaks highly of him. “Gary Beasley is one of my favorite people in the world,” Chris says. “He cares about what he’s doing; he cares about his students. I’ve never met anyone like him.” The program was rigorous, but Chris graduated at the top of his class in 2015.

Chris now works for Northrop Grumman as an Operator Level 2. “My coworkers and I, we’re always talking about math and different ways to do things,” he says. And, thanks to his degree from CCCC, Chris has been given many responsibilities that are generally reserved for those who have been working in the field for years. Chris’s two-year associate degree in laser and photonics technology gives him a significant advantage in the workplace and makes him more valuable to his company.

“If you go for a technical degree you will get a job. There is no doubt in my mind.”

Chris Baggett graduated in May 2015 from Central Carolina Community College with an associate of applied science degree in laser and photonics technology. He enjoys working on cars in his free time.