Colt Dudley
Central Carolina Community College

Colt Dudley enrolled at Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) right after high school. As a student in the Laser and Photonics Technology program, he learned about how lasers work and the science of optics and photonics. He appreciated the program because it gave him “a firm foundation on the inner workings of every component involved” in photonics. For Colt, the hardest part of the program was the time and dedication it took. Having come to CCCC straight out of high school, Colt was one of the few students without prior college experience. That meant that he needed to take all the general education classes in addition to his photonics classes; this gave him a heavier course load than most of his classmates, but Colt persevered, even taking summer classes to keep up. In May 2015, Colt graduated with an associate of applied science degree in laser and photonics technology.

Colt’s initial involvement in photonics was unplanned and a bit spur-of-the-moment. After high school, he received a scholarship to Campbell University. Colt knew he wanted to work with technology, but he didn’t have a clear goal in mind, and he chose not to attend a costly private university without a plan. He enrolled at CCCC for their two-year transfer program, initially intending to transfer to a university as a mechanical engineering major. But during CCCC’s orientation process, Colt learned that the mechanical engineering transfer program was only available at a campus forty-five minutes from his home. When Colt heard of the Laser and Photonics Technology program at the campus nearest to him, he said “sign me up” without having any idea what he was getting himself into. He says, “I kind of expected to be shooting missiles out of the sky with lasers.”

During his time in the Laser and Photonics Technology program, Colt learned technical skills as well as a new way of solving problems and viewing the world. Colt believes that the CCCC program and other technical degrees teach students to think “in a common-sense way,” something that he says is more and more rare in the world today. Colt says he is a “firm believer in the [Laser and Photonics Technology] program and what it teaches you.” He encourages all his friends to enroll and stands by the program so strongly that he has offered to pay the program’s tuition for a few of his friends.

After graduation, Colt had no problem finding a job, and his current position was one of three jobs he was offered. Colt works for Aqueti, Inc., in Durham, North Carolina. Just after he was hired, Colt was able to recommend hiring another CCCC alum; he now has the pleasure of working with his former lab partner.

When he began working for Aqueti, Colt traveled on a weekly basis to work with q360 cameras. This technology was developed by Aqueti and has been used to record Premier Boxing Champions’ matches across the country. Because of the partnership between Aqueti and Premier Boxing Champions, footage from Aqueti cameras has been featured on national networks such as ESPN, CBS, and NBC.

For the past month, Colt has been designing a new camera. The company’s president is currently reviewing his CAD drawings, and Colt expects to receive positive feedback and constructive criticism on his design. Although he’s not shooting missiles out of the sky, he enjoys his job very much.

“I love coming to work every day and not knowing what’s going to happen. There’s always something new to learn—something new you learned yesterday that you can apply today to solve a new problem. The technology is forever advancing, every day.”

Colt Dudley graduated from Central Carolina Community College in May 2015 with an associate of applied science degree in laser and photonics technology. He is engaged and planning to marry his fiancée in May 2016. He enjoys running the sound system for a band, spending time with his fiancée, and playing guitar.