



FROM
SC
★ TO ★
DC

Each workday morning, Paul Vann wakes up, offers hugs and kisses to his wife and three children, then heads to the office. The routine may seem typical to most suburban dwellers, but Vann's life is anything but ordinary.

Professionally speaking, Paul Vann stands on the frontline protecting America's information systems against a proverbial worst-case scenario—a "digital Pearl Harbor."

Working in the nation's capital for the Congressional Budget Office, a non-partisan agency providing economic data to Congress, Vann holds the title of Senior Information Security Engineer. Due to the sensitive nature of the information the agency oversees, security experts are necessary to manage the information technology for this high-profile agency. Vann is responsible for keeping the organization and its nearly 300 employees secure from electronic invaders. "Dot-gov" domains are constantly under siege from foreign hackers. Vann and others like him are the first and last line of defense against these intruders.

Though the actual duties of his job are highly technical, Vann felt it was important to share the story that brought him from Schoolcraft College to Washington, DC. It's not simply a story about a local boy meeting with success. Paul Vann's is a story of redemption.

When he graduated high school and enrolled at Schoolcraft in 1994, Vann accepted that he wasn't cut from the best student material. Vann struggled with grades in Schoolcraft's Fire Technology program. It wasn't long before he left to pursue a different program at another school. Vann readily admits he had little idea where he was going in life.

Time passed. A wife and kids entered the picture. Vann had a family and an uncertain future. He turned to Schoolcraft once again. "It wasn't for work," he insists. "It was for me." How could he be an example to his children when he hadn't followed through on something as important as an education?

Ready to return and refocus on his studies, Vann was disappointed to learn SC wouldn't accept his application; grades from his previous stint on campus were preventing his enrollment. Vann petitioned and cajoled administrators, eventually convincing them to accept his application. "They took a leap of faith," he says. To Vann, it was as if administrators said, "He hasn't been here in seven years...but we're giving him another chance."

Determined to make good for his family and follow through on the faith placed in him by administrators, Vann persevered. He reached his goal and graduated with a Associate in General Studies degree in 2004.

During this second go-around with the College, Vann sought out better job opportunities, eventually finding himself employed as an IT director for a District Court. Upon graduation, things moved fast. A chance at a government job presented itself, followed quickly by another even more prestigious opportunity. Suddenly the Vann family was living in a Washington, DC suburb in Virginia. Schoolcraft's gamble on a prodigal student had paid off. It seemed a lifetime away from where Vann started.

It's hard for Vann not to miss home after living in Michigan for thirty years. *The Bell Tower* allows him to stay in touch with SC and a bit of his life left behind. "I'm proud to say I went to Schoolcraft College." When contemplating a return to his home state, Vann is unsure of what lies ahead for his family, but, he asserts, "If I'm back in Michigan, my kids are going to Schoolcraft." ●