

a match

OF MILITARY AND LIBERAL ARTS

Dr. Gregg Gunsch truly enjoys 'the most challenging job he's ever had' teaching computer forensics at DC

by Kathy Punches, Director of Public Relations and Marketing

Dr. Gregg Gunsch watched proudly during 2008 commencement ceremonies as the first six graduates of Defiance College's computer forensics program accepted diplomas and walked across the stage with their classmates. For Gunsch, it was more than the efforts of the past two years as a faculty member in a new academic major. It

was the culmination of 30 years of experience as an engineer, military officer, and teacher.

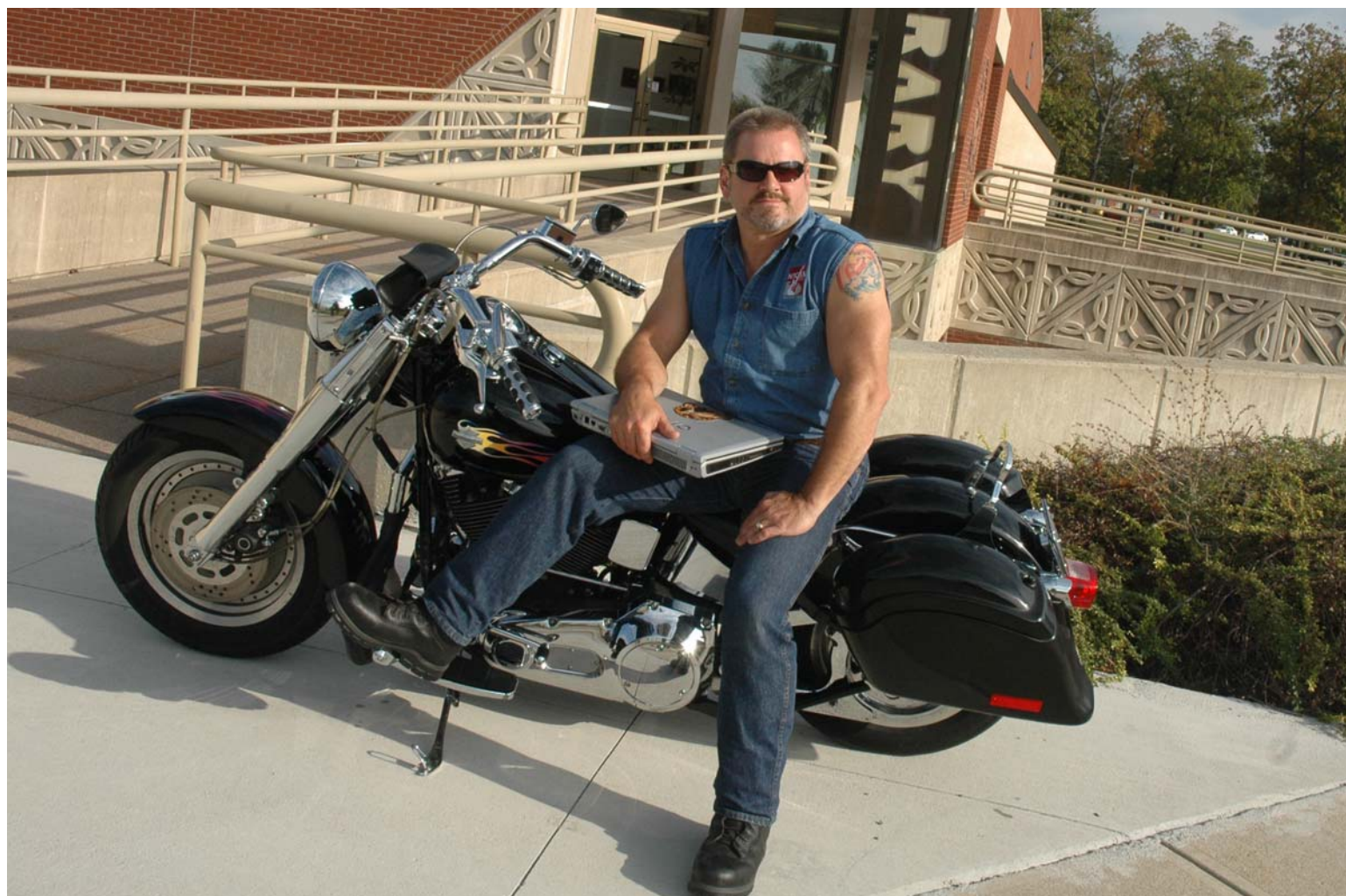
"I consider it the most challenging job I've ever had, and that's not a bad thing," says Gunsch, associate professor of computer forensics.

A retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, Gunsch might seem at first glance to be an unlikely match for a classroom of 19-year-old college students. But for the Harley-riding, tattooed military man and the liberal arts

college, it's been a perfect fit.

"This is clearly God's hand in the works, doing something that I can really enjoy, something I can totally embrace," he says. "I love the environment where they say, 'Here, we need something, figure out what it is, and we will help you,' and they mean it.

"Here it's just totally embracing ... I walked across the campus during my job interview day, and it was an absolutely compelling place to come to. I have



commented to some people that I walked across campus the last week of school last year and felt just as good about the job as the first day I was here. I've been working long enough in my adult life to know that's profound."

Gunsch had always envisioned himself in what he calls his "sunset years" teaching engineering at an undergraduate college. At Defiance, he's very close except that instead of electrical engineering, he's teaching an exciting, cutting edge program in computer forensics, one of only a handful of such programs in the country. Computer forensics is the collecting and analyzing of computer-related evidence.

Gunsch previously taught at the USAF's graduate school, the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB, where he developed and taught graduate-level courses in computer engineering, artificial intelligence, and information systems security. His students were "Type A personality engineering officers that were all essentially A students intent on beating everybody else out."

So there was some adjustment for the professor when he began teaching post-high school students. Things like maturity level, absenteeism, and personal responsibility were suddenly obvious. "It's a big culture shock for the students, learning self-discipline, and owning up to self-education," he says.

"In the military environment I didn't have to get on people about missing classes because they wouldn't, no excuses. I have to work at becoming less emotionally invested in students missing class. I can't fix it for them. They need to learn to pick up, and take responsibility for themselves."

Coming from a rigid military and engineering background, Gunsch has made other adjustments. "I'm getting accustomed to a different teaching style, or multiple teaching styles. This is a liberal arts environment. You just do things differently."

Doing things differently – defying the ordinary – hasn't been a problem for Gunsch. He's taken his love of systems, how things work, and applied it in some not-so-ordinary circumstances. "I've always been a tinkerer, an engineer," he recalls. "Even as a kid I was always taking things apart to see how they worked. It wasn't until I was about 13 or 14 years old that I was able to put them back together."

"I always knew I wanted to be an engineer, either an engineer or an astronaut. There were never any other considerations."

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Do you enjoy solving problems and deciphering puzzles?

Is it enough for you to know how to work something, or do you also want to know how and why it works?

Are you comfortable around computers? Are you the kind of person who's always changing them, making them work better?

Do people sometimes call you a "geek," and when they do, it's a compliment?

Do you do well with details, science and math? Do you have patience and personal discipline?

Do crimes against innocent people make you angry and wish you could do something about them?

Computer Forensics May Be the Career for You!

He studied electrical engineering in college and then joined the Air Force. His first job from 1979 to 1982 was troubleshooting Minuteman missiles on the test range at Vandenberg AFB in California. "It was a great job for somebody fresh out of school, because you learned how things worked in the real world. Machines break, things don't work like they're supposed to," he says.

Vandenberg was the launch site for testing missiles in the Pacific. "When something went wrong, and they ran out of published procedures on how to fix it, we'd get a call, and we'd have to go and do some honest-to-goodness troubleshooting," says Gunsch. That included climbing into a launch silo with live missiles. "If it had gone off while we were in the hole, then we would have died. You get a sense of your own mortality when you're standing in the bottom of a silo staring up at a rocket nozzle."

With several years of experience, Gunsch went on to teach computer engineering, artificial intelligence, and operating systems

for the Air Force. In 1995 he became involved with a USAF study that looked 30 years into the future. "I became acutely aware that this whole information sphere, everybody talking to everybody else, the massive amount of information sharing that we're seeing now, it was going to happen," he says.

The awareness included recognition that such a huge information sphere would become a target requiring sophisticated security. After the study, he began teaching information systems security at the Air Force Institute of Technology. He developed an interest in forensics "which is really just the whole troubleshooting and puzzle-solving, investigative aspect."

Gunsch retired from the Air Force in 1999 and spent much of the next several years as a civilian teacher at the base. A serendipitous chain of events led to Gunsch's visit to the Defiance campus in 2006 to discuss with administrators the creation of a new academic major in computer forensics. "I came up to see what it was about and was totally sold on the place," he recalls.

"It's basically taking everything I've learned and accomplished in my past and getting to apply it here. It really seemed to be a culmination of experiences."

Gunsch spent his first two years as a Defiance faculty member commuting weekly from his home in Fairborn. He and his wife, Cherryanne, have purchased a rural Defiance home and she is planning on studying wellness and business here in the fall. They have two adult children, Virginia and Jason.

Part of the attraction of Defiance College for Gunsch was its relationship with the Family Justice Center of Northwest Ohio which provided some grant monies for the computer forensics program, and a crop of students already in place, eager to learn about the discipline.

He asked his students why they took the risk on a new, uncharted major. Many like the idea of forensics, of going after criminals and pedophiles. "But mostly, they've said it's giving back, it's technological, it's cool, and it's cutting edge."

He feels a connection with his students who, like him, were willing to take a risk for something they felt compelled to do. "It's another of those God things," he says. "It's a confluence, all these different factors coming together at once, and you get something spectacular out of it." ♦