In 1983, as a recent graduate of Brandeis University, Ed Sullivan enrolled in the Software Technical Writing Program at Middlesex Community College. Armed with an English degree and no job prospects, he credits the intensive, eight-month program with redirecting his professional path toward the high-tech field, where he’s now an executive at a software design firm.

“I went into the Software Technical Writing Program straight out of Brandeis,” said Sullivan. “I had no preconceived ideas about the program. I just knew I had to find a job and that I wanted to learn a more practical skill.”

His wife, Eileen Baird, on the other hand, was drawn to computer technology early on. The Scotland native earned her master’s degree in electrical engineering at MIT on a Fulbright Scholarship. However, after a flourishing career as a software engineer, she is now shifting her focus away from the high-tech industry and has enrolled in online accounting and bookkeeping courses at MCC.

“Having a background in software technical writing has been an asset as a manager,” said Sullivan. “As I moved up, I began managing writers and my technical writing experience has really helped, in terms of understanding the issues and problems facing the writers.”

“Technical writers often feel undervalued and isolated from the other engineering groups working on a project,” he explained. “It’s always difficult to be at the tail end of the engineering process – and writing up the manuals and instructions on how to use the software is the last step. Everybody else can be late and miss deadlines, but they expect the writers to still meet the original deadline,” Sullivan said.

“My first job after graduating was a half-programming, half-writing job. That was my transitional job,” Sullivan explained. “At that time, in the mid-’80s, the job market wasn’t as flooded with technical people.”

When Sullivan enrolled in MCC’s Software Technical Writing Program, he was almost immediately drawn to the technical part of the program. “My first job after graduating was a half-programming, half-writing job. That was my transitional job,” Sullivan explained. “At that time, in the mid-’80s, the job market wasn’t as flooded with technical people.”

From there he moved into pure programming as a software engineer at a variety of companies, and eventually got into management. He’s now vice president of engineering at Openwave Systems, which designs software for communications service providers.

With clients such as Verizon and other major Internet service providers, Sullivan’s focus at Openwave is on large scale e-mail systems. “We have more than 100 million e-mail boxes. Anybody who has Verizon DSL has one of our mail boxes,” he said. His division is currently tackling the pressing issue of unsolicited junk e-mail or spam. “Spam is the No. 1 problem out there today, and we’re working hard on it.”

“I went into the Software Technical Writing Program straight out of Brandeis. I had no preconceived ideas about the program. I just knew I had to find a job and that I wanted to learn a more practical skill…”

“Twenty years later, it looks like it was a pretty good decision.”

- Ed Sullivan

Couple Turned to MCC for Career and Technical Training

With Degrees from Brandeis and MIT in Hand, this Carlisle Couple Turned to MCC for Career and Technical Training