



SHANNON BROWN is a Senior Lecturer at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security. He graduated from Cal Poly in 1994 with a degree in Political Science.

## **Alumni Spotlight: Shannon Brown**

*By Isaias Diaz*

Shannon Brown graduated Cal Poly with a bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1994. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, a FEMA sponsored academic program for those working in the Homeland Security sector.

Shannon originally applied to the Cal Poly Political science program as a first-year student but was rejected due to the major being impacted. Cal Poly was the only college Shannon had applied to, essentially putting all his eggs in one basket. Still determined, Shannon was accepted into Cal Poly in 1992 as a transfer student. Shannon first visited Cal Poly as a junior in high school, and immediately knew it was the school for him.

During his time at Cal Poly, Shannon was able to hone valuable skills which he believes are very useful in the real world. Skills such as learning how to present in front of large groups, how to use research methodologies, and how to run a budget. The critical thinking Shannon developed as an undergraduate has helped him to distinguish valid information from nonvalid or nonfactual information.

Shannon had no idea what he was going to do post-graduation, aside from a general idea of staying in school. He initially went into political science thinking he was going to do pre-law, but it was during an international relations course that he changed his mind and decided that he

was more interested in attending graduate school for either political science or history. In 1994, Shannon graduated from Cal Poly and immediately began a master's degree in history at the University of California Santa Cruz. While at UCSC, Shannon got a PhD in history, with a focus on history of technology. While studying in a program with a very heavy European and world history focus, Shannon discovered that there was an entire other side of history that was focused on technology, how technology changes the world, and how people interact with technology. Shannon then left California to take a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., while writing his dissertation.

Following his experience at the Smithsonian Institute, Shannon took a position with Science Applications International Corporation, working as a defense contractor. After this position he transitioned to doing history research writing and consulting for a short period of time before being introduced to an opportunity at National Defense University, within the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, (now called the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy). He taught at this institution for a span of fourteen years and credits his success within the role to his background in technology, history, and political science. After serving in several positions within the college and teaching for most of the time, Shannon came upon an opportunity in 2017 to become a Senior Lecturer at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, where he is today.

Shannon cannot say if there is any one specific moment that he is most proud of in his career, but rather that he is proud of having had the honor of working with some very distinguished individuals. He is proud to have had the opportunity over the past fifteen to sixteen years, to interact and be a small part of the lives of people who have gone ahead and done amazing things in their careers, including military officers and those in the civil service. Shannon credits a lot of what he has learned to those whom he has worked with, and it is those interactions that mark as one of the best parts of his career. If he had to choose again, he would not change the trajectory of his career or the direction it has taken. Shannon went from teaching defense policy and international relations to something that's much more focused on homeland security and domestic policy in recent years.

Shannon's advice to current Cal Poly political science students:

Shannon contributes a lot of his success in his career to networking and would suggest going out of one's comfort zone to make connections, as making these connections and interactions sometimes opens a world of career opportunities that may have not been there beforehand. "To always focus on keeping an open mind, since you may be introduced to someone at an event or at a dinner or at a career fair who may make a reference to a job or an occupation you have never heard about before and that may interest you. And after that it's up to you to do some research, explore what that job or that career is. The tools that are available today to do career research, you can do a lot of upfront research on and see if it appeals to you. And if it does, follow up, and jump on it!"