

Erik Novak, PhD, 1998



What influenced your decision to attend graduate school at OSC?

I was an undergrad student at OSC and realized that unlike in many fields, PhD's actually did real work, not just teach, and could lead product development. Plus, there was funding to make grad school affordable.

What do you wish you would have known your first day of graduate school? Was there anything you wish you had done to prepare more for graduate school?

For me it was pretty seamless, since I completed my undergrad degree at UA.

Which classes did you find most enjoyable? Which ones did you find most difficult?

All the labs were excellent. I struggled most with quantum mechanics.

Was there an individual (professor, advisor, staff, friend, family member) who played a particularly important role in your education?

My best friend was also in graduate school at OSC, which made things much easier. There was someone to work with and ask questions of.

What was your research while attending OSC?

Performance optimization of large aperture interferometers.

What was the cost of rent in Tucson while you were in school?

Around \$500/month for a two bedroom.

If you owned a car during graduate school, what year and model was it?

1969 VW bug.

What was your favorite restaurant/student hangout near campus?

Zachary's Pizza and Gentle Bens.

What did you do for fun during your time in graduate school?

Video games and racquetball.

What was most memorable about your commencement ceremony?

The UA speaker was absolutely terrible. In my opinion, a nobody with no personality.

At the time of your graduation, what were the most sought-after jobs/most popular industries/most popular companies?

The telecom industry was pretty big.

What was your first job after graduation?

Working at WYKO here in Tucson.

What was the most significant world event during your time in graduate school. How were you affected by this event?

The Oklahoma City bombing. I was amazed that folks would demonize our government so much.

Was there a campus or community event in Tucson that was especially important to you?

I attended all the UA basketball games.

What advice would you give to this year's graduating class?

Maintain good relationships and a strong reputation, as the optics industry is quite tight knit.