

Eric Sarnoff

Fast Track Student of the Month

Interviewed by Serene Kamal and Gannon Earhart



Born in: Escondido, CA

High School: San Pasqual HS

Outside Interests: Rock Climbing, Mountaineering, Running, Martial Arts, Soccer, Guitar, Surfing, and Snowboarding

When did you know that you wanted to be an EE?

I knew I wanted to be an electrical engineer the summer between junior and senior year of high school. I was working for a maritime appliance manufacturer, spending most of my time building and repairing desalination units for sailboats. During the summer, I received many units whose membranes were destroyed from neglect, because stagnant salt water corroded the system. I then came up with the idea and helped design an automatic timer

that would turn on the system and flush the membranes with fresh water once every three days. These units needed to be able to be integrated with the existing system which proved to be the hardest problem to solve. Although this experience was simple technically speaking, it opened my eyes to how influential engineering can be. Through this design I saved hundreds of membranes from needlessly being wasted, and in the process saved the customers money and time. In the future, I hope to positively impact society, especially in the context of climate change.



Who has influenced you the most in your choice of your academic field?

It would have to be either my mom or my dad. My dad is an electrical engineer, and when I was five he left his job to start his own company. His vision was to invent an inkjet cartridge refilling machine that provided an alternative to the single use cartridge

business. Although I did not want to be an engineer at that time, seeing the motivations behind his actions and how passionate he was about his project made me want to be that passionate about something. Although he never pushed me into engineering, the way he works motivated me to try to find a career that fulfilling, and at this point engineering is the only discipline I believe will be able to give me that sense of purpose. On the other hand, there is my mom. In elementary school, I always struggled with math. Every day, she sat with me and would make sure I did all my homework. I was so stubborn

that she could have very rightfully given up on me, but she never did. Thanks to her, math became my favorite subject in school. Had she not been so committed to helping me learn math, I can confidently say I would not be at UCLA studying engineering today.



What are you interested in as a career?

In my career, I hope to be able to work with renewable energy, maybe in solar and wind. I am also interested in whole system design and management. I can think of no other field where I would feel more fulfilled and content with my career.



How has it been being on a big campus so far?

It has definitely been a transition. Many of the stereotypes about big schools is true. The relationships with teachers at least at the prerequisite level are less personal. However, the positive stereotypes are also true. There is so much to do it can be overwhelming. At this point during the year, where I am reaching the end of my second quarter at UCLA, I am still discovering resources and activities I can partake in. Literally anything I want to get involved in is available in some facet at UCLA. For me, the activities I have been most involved in have been climbing with the Club Climbing Team and boxing through the John Wooden Center.