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The People of Physical Sciences Podcast, Ep. 4 — Jim Smith

An episode about masks and coronavirus and much, much more.
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UCI Physical Sciences Communications



Self-styled UCI "nanoaerosologist" Jim Smith's dad was a park ranger, and Smith spent his childhood in the Sierra Nevada mountains, and growing to love the outdoors. He followed that love into what he now does at UCI.

Picture Credit:
Fe Valencia

I'm Lucas Joel, and this is The People of Physical Sciences — a podcast from the School of Physical Sciences at the University of California, Irvine. It's a show about the people at the school, and it's my chance to find out what motivates them, to discover what questions keep them up at night, and to get a sense for the forces that've influenced their work.

My guest today, professor Jim Smith of the Department of Chemistry, works in a lab in Rowland Hall where he heads, among other things, the UCI Face Mask Project — a team effort that aims to find out what kinds of fabrics are best to use when making a coronavirus-deflecting mask, and which recently had its origami face mask design features in National Geographic. When you first walk into his lab, you'll notice, off in the corner, the figure of a man, and you'll probably then notice that something's not quite right. The figure doesn't seem to have any arms, or, for that matter, any *body* at all below the chest — and yet, somehow, it's standing upright, and it has a mask strapped to its face — the kind you might wear to ward of coronavirus. Oh, and it's locked inside a Plexiglas box.

This episode orbits around that figure, whose name is Tony, and its connection to Jim and the science Jim does. I had a hard time figuring out exactly what kind of scientist Jim is, so why don't I just let him tell you himself.

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