Professor David Kirkby wins Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education

The cosmologist adapted to remote learning in innovative ways when the campus switched to remote learning.

Friday, September 24, 2021

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Kirkby was one of many Physical Sciences faculty who recast their curricula for an online audience.

Picture Credit:
David Kirkby

Cosmologist David Kirkby is a professor in the UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy who researches the acceleration that's driving the expansion of the Universe — but when he's not doing that, he's been busy, especially during the pandemic, working to expand his teachings into the remote online realm. For his efforts, he recently won UC Irvine's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education. "Remote teaching over Zoom presented many challenges

— but also allowed courses to expand beyond the constraints of the physical classroom," Kirkby said. "I created a series of interactive guided online activities to replace in-person small-group activities for remote teaching. These allowed students to explore model universes and cosmic phenomena more fully than was possible in the classroom, and to build stronger intuition for the key concepts." The work also included building individual kits for students to use to do their own at-home experiments — something that helped make the classes more accessible for students. And the remoteness of the class itself also increased accessibility, as Kirkby reported seeing a ballooning in the number of students enrolling in his class from afar — a silver lining side effect of the pandemic.

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