A brief interview with Rick Fruchey, Director of Facilities for the School of Physical Sciences

Meet the Physical Sciences staff member in charge of designing and building laboratories and much, much else around the school.

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UCI Physical Sciences Communications



Rick Fruchey

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PSC: What brought you to work at UCI?

RF: I was a plant engineer for an aerospace company for many years. The majority of the aerospace companies were moving out of California, though, so I started looking for employment elsewhere. I had the opportunity to apply at UCI and, in doing so, my career at the School of Physical Sciences began in December of 1991.

PSC: What are some of the things you do here at the school?

RF: I ensure and manage the daily operations of all Physical Sciences spaces in multiple buildings, which encompasses over 400,000 square feet. That includes all modifications of existing space and, when changes are required, to accommodate new laboratories for faculty.

PSC: What do you like most about your work here?

RF: Physical sciences has a very diverse faculty that requires constant creative thinking alongside the ever-changing needs of modern science. Over the years I've developed many meaningful relationships with faculty members. Working with them on daily activities and long-term research projects has been challenging and fun.

PSC: What was one challenging moment for you here?

RF: The July 2001 Fire in Frederick Reines Hall. Dealing with the fire itself was a challenge, as well as reestablishing building operations and rebuilding Dr. Evans' lab as quickly as possible in order for him to continue his research.

PSC: What might someone not know about the intricacies of your job upon first glance?

RF: Science buildings are very intricate, from their mechanical systems and their support facilities, to the necessary facilities support needed to maintain and provide a safe work environment for all Physical Sciences research labs, as well as all building occupants.

PSC: What do you like to do aside from work at UCI? What are some of your hobbies?

RF: From a very young age, drawing, drafting and construction were great passions of mine. When I was 11 years old, I won first place in a school contest designing a “futuristic home.” I love engineering and mechanics; I have always been interested in finding out how things work. Any time I am able to work on a construction project at home in my spare time, I find great satisfaction and joy. I designed and remodeled our home myself and have helped many personal friends with design and construction as well. I love building things.

I also grew up loving sports. I played football all the way up through my high school years and still enjoy watching professional football games. I’ve also been riding motorcycles for years on- and off-road. But after I had my children it wasn’t wise to ride motorcycles on the highway – too dangerous. So, for the last 35 years it’s been strictly desert riding, although with age my trips have slowed way down to once or twice a year. But I still enjoy it.

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