#IamPhysSci - Rain Talosig, Ph.D., Chemistry

The doctoral graduate wants answers to a simple question: Why?

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Lucas Van Wyk Joel
UCI Physical Sciences Communications



Talosig will soon head to Lawrence-Berkeley lab to work as a lab safety specialist.

Picture Credit:
Lucas Van Wyk Joel

Rain Talosig was just ten years old when she grabbed a blow torch, switched on its flame, and set to work on a big pile of metal. She was in her father's lab in Vallejo, California helping assemble some equipment that still sits in the lab today. "I grew up in an R&D lab," said Talosig with a grin. "There are pictures of me as a ten-year-old holding that welder in my hands."

Perhaps it's unsurprising, then, that almost 20 years later Talosig is set to graduate with her doctorate from the UC Irvine Department of Chemistry. But for most of her life, Talosig didn't think science was the path for her. "I saw what science looked like, and I wanted to be as far away from it as humanly possible," she said.

Instead, Talosig wanted to be a musician. She plays the clarinet, flute and saxophone, and some of her favorite memroies are of playing numbers like Rhapsody in Blue by Geroge Gershwin in her school's orchestra.

But when she enrolled as an undergraduate at Ithaca College in upstate New York, science rediscovered her. Chemistry, like a good coach or tennis partner, took Talosig to new intellectual heights by pushing her to always ask why something works the way it does. "Chemistry is the first subject that challenged me," said Talosig. "I loved how much it challenged me."

This put her on a path to UCI, where she started as a graduate student in Professor Joe Patterson's lab in 2019. In the Patterson lab, the challenge facing Talosig has been to understand the conditions in which certain crystalline structures can grow. "You can form all these different structures, but no one really understands why that happens," said Talosig, whose research stands to help improve precision drug delivery systems that rely on the crystals she studies.

But the crystal chapter of her life, like her welding days, is closing. Next, Talosig heads to Lawrence-Berkeley Laboratory, where she has just landed a job as a lab safety specialist. "I'm excited about helping to support groundbreaking science at such a historically significant laboratory," she said. Asked what she'll do if she sees a ten-year-old with a blow torch in a lab, Talosig replied: "We will definitely have to chat about how to get them the proper training."

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