

Garam Yun Young, PhD, 2011

What influenced your decision to attend graduate school at OSC?

My undergraduate professor, who had visited OSC during his sabbatical, introduced me to OSC. Prior to then, I did not know that OSC existed!

What do you wish you would have known your first day of graduate school? Was there anything you wish you had done to prepare more for graduate school?

Your PhD research topic is not as important as you demonstrating your self-driven research capacity (unless you are looking to become a professor in that particular area, in which case your research topic matters more). Also, the optics community is very small, so it is important to not 'burn bridges' while at OSC.

Which classes did you find most enjoyable? Which ones did you find most difficult?

Professor Russell Chipman's classes were some of the most difficult for me, but I also learned a lot taking them.

Was there an individual (professor, advisor, staff, friend, family member) who played a particularly important role in your education?

I met my husband, Stefano Young, during grad school. He served as the Student Optics Chapter (SOck) president and hosted OSC's first student-run conference, IONS-NA. He introduced me to American culture, helped me become more fluent in English and, most importantly, I became a better person with him at my side.

Russell Chipman was a great advisor to me. He taught me much about polarization, and introduced me to working in the optics industry.

What was your research while attending OSC?

My research focused on polarization ray tracing and analysis algorithm development. This work resulted in the text book (Polarized Light and Optical Systems) written as a collaboration between Russell Chipman, Tiffany Lam and myself. We are also teaching SPIE courses based on the material.

What was the cost of rent in Tucson while you were in school?

Rent was very affordable—the most I paid was \$450/month, including utilities. This is one of the great benefits of attending graduate school in Tucson. Friends, who studied at Stanford or MIT, were being paid slightly higher graduate stipends but after rent and other living expenses, they were 'poorer' than me.

If you owned a car during graduate school, what year and model was it?

I purchased a used 2002 Honda Civic, and I still drive it. ☺

What was your favorite restaurant/student hangout near campus?

The Hut on Fourth Avenue, where Vampyros Bonobos (Stefano Young, Eric Aspnes, Josh Gordon and Tyler Neely) played regular shows.

What did you do for fun during your time in graduate school?

Many hikes, rock climbing, hanging out with OSC friends, Sports Fridays, and group trips to San Diego.

What was most memorable about your commencement ceremony?

My family came from Korea to attend my OSC commencement. My friends, Hannah Noble and Anna-Brit Mahler, who had already graduated from OSC, also came. It also happened to be the last year that Dr. Wyant would serve as the dean of OSC. I was happy to have him hood me and sign my diploma, as he is my grandfather PhD advisor—Dr. Wyant had been Russell Chipman's PhD advisor.

At the time of your graduation, what were the most sought-after jobs/most popular industries/most popular companies?

I graduated in December 2011 before most of the consumer electronic companies (Apple, Google, FaceBook) were hiring many optics PhDs. So, it was mostly the semiconductor industry or core camera manufacturers.



Garum Yun and Dean James Wyant

What was your first job after graduation?

I joined Synopsys (formerly, Optical Research Associates) as a code developer for LightTools software.

Was there a campus or community event in Tucson that was especially important to you?

The OSC Student Chapter (SOck) participated in Club Olympics in 2010 and won, competing against all the sororities and fraternities in various sporting competitions. That was one of the most fun memories of SOck. Another rewarding event was the SPIE/OSA sponsored student-run conference SOck hosted in 2010, the IONS-NA Conference. Planning and hosting the conference probably delayed my graduation, but it was totally worth it. We had many attendees from within the U. S., as well as a few international attendees.

What advice would you give to this year's graduating class?

When looking for job opportunities, it's as important to have good co-workers and mentors, as it is to have a good compensation package. I found all the jobs I have had since my first one through internal referrals from people I knew. The optics community is a small one, so it is important to build your reputation by doing credible work.