Eduardo Bendek, PhD, 2012

What influenced your decision to attend graduate school at OSC?
Mostly the fact that UA is a powerhouse in astronomical telescopes, and the mirror lab was manufacturing the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) mirrors. I saw a big opportunity to become specialized on the GMT mirrors, and then go back to Chile to work on that project.

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?
I spent 10 years working in industry before coming back to graduate school. So, you can imagine that my first class of Electricity & Magnetism (E&M) was a bit rough. Taking a math ‘refresher’ course before I started would have probably been a good idea.

Which classes did you find most enjoyable? Which ones did you find most difficult?
Most enjoyable was OPTI 505R with Professor Milster. Most difficult was OPTI 501, E&M, with Professor Mansuripur.

Was there an individual (professor, advisor, staff, friend, family member) who played a particularly important role in your education?
Gail Varin, in the Academic Programs office, provided valuable advice on which classes to take and how to ‘navigate’ the PhD program.

What was your research while attending OSC?
Multi-laser adaptive optics for astronomical telescopes.

What was the cost of rent in Tucson while you were in school?
Approximately $500/month for my room.

If you owned a car during graduate school, what year and model was it?
2003 Toyota Corolla.

What was your favorite restaurant/student hangout near campus?
The Taco Shop.

What did you do for fun during your time in graduate school?
Mountain biking and road trips.

What was most memorable about your commencement ceremony?
Having my parents attend my commencement ceremony.

At the time of your graduation, what were the most sought-after jobs/most popular industries/most popular companies?
Tech industry in Silicon Valley—Apple, Google, Facebook, etc.

What was your first job after graduation?
NASA Postdoctoral Fellow.

What was the most significant world event during your time in graduate school. How were you affected by this event?
Election of President Barack Obama.

Was there a campus or community event in Tucson that was especially important to you?
Davis-Monthan Airshow.
What advice would you give to this year’s graduating class?
Enjoy learning the class material—this may be your last opportunity to be a full-time student. Now, I barely manage to spend one or two hours a week learning something new.