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Student Corner: Steven Snay, University of Massachusetts Lowell

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Steven Snay, center in Hawaiian shirt, surrounded by fellow UMass Lowell alumni and students

Submitted photo

This month, the Student Support Committee chatted with Steven Snay, PhD, CHP, director of radiation safety, University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell). He shares with us his background, experiences, motivation, and advice to students, early career professionals, and the Health Physics Society (HPS).

Steven, from a family of tradespeople, started off in a trade school as a carpenter. A visit to the guidance counselor's office changed his life. While there he saw an opportunity to learn nuclear engineering at Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) for free. This started him on a trajectory to where he is today. He went on to the UMass Lowell, where he got the opportunity to learn the health physics content—by immersion. While working at the reactor, he received his BS and was able to secure a health physics tech job at UMass Lowell. He then pursued his MS and, eventually, PhD in radiological sciences.

Steven's motivation to become a health physicist can be traced back to his two years at TRCC and a few summers and outages with Millstone Nuclear Power in Waterford, Connecticut, where he observed a health physicist for the first time. He started looking closely at the profession and after a bit of research, he knew that is what he wanted to be.

Due to his high level of professionalism and excellence as the director of the Radiation Safety Office at UMass Lowell, his office was recognized with the "Outstanding Radiation Safety Program Award" by the HPS Academic, Industrial, and Research Radiation Safety Section in 2022. One of the things that keeps him motivated are his students succeeding and the eagerness to always assist them in navigating projects, theses, and dissertations that will best position them for their own career in health physics. Also having challenges and new things to be done every day keeps him motivated on his job.

Steven's advice to students who are currently in the health physics program:

1. Always be willing to learn (not only in classes).
2. Intern in a radiation safety office. There, one can learn what operational radiation safety is. This action will make a student more marketable upon entering the profession.
3. Examine all the various

Steven said he thinks the HPS is doing a good job by keeping professionals up to speed with new items on the horizon and keeping the me