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How a Professor Changed the Course of My Life | College of Engineering

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Published in *Creating Tomorrow* – Oct. 15, 2016 – At the end of his junior year fluid mechanics course, Deryl Snyder raised his hand and told the professor he wanted to learn more. The mechanical engineering major had mastered the basics, but only felt comfortable solving very simple fluid dynamics problems.

“I wondered what I would need to learn to design something like a cooling system for a motorcycle, or something even more complicated,” he said.



MAE alum Deryl Snyder (BS '98, MS '99, PhD '02) is the vice president of global business development at CD-adapco, a Siemens business in Orlando, Fla. (Photo: Brian Carlson)

His professor told him the university had recently hired a new faculty member who specialized in the relatively new field of computational fluid dynamics and who could teach Snyder everything he wanted to know. That professor was Dr. Robert Spall – a man Snyder had never met but who would change his life’s direction entirely.

“It wasn’t my intent to go into fluid mechanics when I started at Utah State,” he said. “I had come for the rockets and satellites and planned on a career in the space industry.”

After meeting with Spall and learning what computational fluid dynamics could offer, Snyder was hooked and saw his future calling. “Spall got me excited about this,” he said. “He showed me where the technology was going and where it could take me, and he ended up being my advisor for both my master’s and PhD programs.”



Snyder came to USU to pursue aerospace engineering but instead fell in love with computational fluid dynamics. (Photo: Brian Carlson)

After nine years at the Logan campus, Snyder left with three degrees in mechanical and aerospace engineering including a joint PhD from the von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics near Brussels, Belgium.

His career took off quickly. He landed jobs in aerospace and defense with firms including Jacobs Engineering and Lockheed Martin and, most recently, CD-adapco – a global firm that develops computational fluid dynamics software tools. The company was recently acquired by Siemens.

Snyder serves as CD-adapco's vice president for global business development, leading an organization of industry experts, technical specialists and developers that help engineers apply computational fluid dynamics to improve their products. He travels the world cultivating partnerships with new and existing customers in the automotive, aerospace, marine and a range of other industries. The company's powerful software can make a car more aerodynamic, improve the environmental control system on a jetliner, or even make food manufacturing more efficient.

Snyder is an active supporter of USU Engineering. He offers mentor support to future engineers and serves on the industrial advisory board for the MAE department. He says giving back to a future generation of engineers helps him pass along the benefits he received as a student.

"Being at Utah State absolutely changed what I thought I would do in my career," he said. "The reason that the course of my life changed was because of the people I met – faculty, or colleagues, or even people who visited for a guest lecture. All of those individuals opened my eyes and showed me what I could become."

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