



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/erinfosterdrennan/>

EXPERIENCE

Quality Control Specialist – Engineering Operations

Universal Orlando Resort, Orlando, FL
February 2022 - Present

Senior Quality Verification Specialist – Engineering Operations

Universal Orlando Resort, Orlando, FL
September 2019 - February 2022

Physics Quality Assurance Assistant – Proton Therapy – Radiation Oncology

Orlando Health, Orlando, FL
July 2017 – August 2019

Chemistry Lab Assistant 1 -Auto Chemistry

DaVita Kidney Care, DeLand, FL
November 2016 – June 2017

Specimen Processor I - Accessioning

DaVita Kidney Care, DeLand, FL
September 2016 – November 2016



*Erin and fellow Stetson Physics graduate,
Sheila Bonnough, 2021*

FEATURED ALUMNA ERIN FOSTER DRENNAN ('16)

An Open Letter to Stetson Physics Majors and Minors

Thank you so much for choosing me to be this year's Stetson Physics featured alumna. I've been a Hatter since before I was born. My mom worked in the Chemistry Department when she was pregnant with me. She jokes that the smell of formaldehyde all around Sage Hall is what made me want to become a scientist. I grew up in the area, so to me, Stetson was always my first pick college, my dream university.

I began at Stetson in 2012 and graduated in 2016 with only five other physics majors, one of whom I'm still best friends with and who was just a bridesmaid in my wedding last October.

Though I always knew I wanted to be some sort of scientist, I also loved the arts. I played the flute for over a decade, was heavily involved in community theaters, and loved being an audience member supporting ballet, dance, and theater. So, though I went to Stetson to study physics, I thought I'd dabble in the arts as a side gig – just a fun outlet to express myself and to relieve stress as I made my way through a physics degree. I meant to do just one production and then move on.

Oops, I accidentally ended up getting heavily involved in theater, and even was President of Theta Alpha Phi my senior year. My favorite jobs were working on props and set construction. I realized that the reason I excelled at these designing positions was because everything about physics and engineering had taught me to think and approach problems in a very methodical way. I enjoy coming up with practical ways to accomplish crazy props.

Flash forward to 2016 and I graduated with my degree in Applied Physics and with a minor in Theatre Arts. Yeah, that whole "one and done" thing didn't work out. I caught the theater bug.



Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center's Mevion S250

VOLUNTEER

Rebel Legion - March 2018

"The Rebel Legion is an international fan-based volunteer organization dedicated to the construction and wearing of screen-accurate Star Wars Rebel Alliance costumes. The Rebel Legion makes appearances at private and public events, including charitable events and official Star Wars promotional events. The organization does not charge a fee for appearances, instead encouraging a donation to a charity."

501st Legion - January 2019

"...The Legion is an all-volunteer organization formed for the express purpose of bringing together costume enthusiasts under a collective identity within which to operate. The Legion seeks to promote interest in Star Wars through the building and wearing of quality costumes, and to facilitate the use of these costumes for Star Wars-related events as well as contributions to the local community through costumed charity and volunteer work..."

Costumers with a Cause - June 2019

"Our mission is to work together with children's charity organizations and events that promote community growth, unity, and hope for every child's future. Together we believe that a world of difference can be made with a smile, photo or a single hello. It is our goal to utilize our talents to the best of our abilities in order to make a child's day brighter."

Give Kids the World Village - July 2018

"Give Kids the World Village is an 89-acre, whimsical nonprofit resort in Kissimmee, Florida, that provides week-long, cost-free wish vacations to critically ill children and their families from around the world who want to visit Central Florida."



After graduating, I really had no clue what I wanted to do. After four months of job searching, I started my work career at DaVita Kidney Care working in the lab as a Specimen Processor. I was quickly promoted to a Chemistry Lab Assistant. Unfortunately, I did not see room for growth in what I really wanted to do, which was use my physics degree, so I started looking for work elsewhere. It was then that I landed a job as a Physics Quality Assurance Assistant at Orlando Health UF Health Cancer Center. I worked in the Radiation Oncology Department and the Proton Therapy Department.

My job at Orlando Health was to run various patient, weekly, and monthly QAs on the Varian Edge Radiosurgery System, the Varian On-Board Imager, the Accuray TomoTherapy System, the Varian Clinac iX System, the Mevion S250, the Siemens SOMATOM Definition Flash, and the Philips CT Scanner. This particular job is one that doesn't exist at a lot of cancer centers, as this work is typically done by Medical Physicist Residents. However, Orlando Health has a large patient volume, so they decided to hire on two Physics QA Assistants to help the Medical Physicist Residents with the workload. I would conduct patient-specific quality assurance (QA) tests including validation of dose distributions within the Photon Clinic and beam output measurements within the Proton Clinic.

Orlando Health is fairly special in that it offers Proton Therapy. Proton Therapy is an advanced method of delivering radiation to tumors. Both protons and photons deliver radiation, but the benefit of Proton Therapy is that most of the radiation dose is delivered to the tumor and not healthy cells. This means that there are fewer side effects for proton patients. I split my time about 60/40 between the Proton Department and the Photon Clinic.



Give Kids the World Village, 2019



Give Kids the World Village, 2019



An event raising funds for Give Kids the World Village, 2022



501st and Rebel Legion members at Erin and Matt's wedding, 2021



While at Orlando Health I missed theater and performing, but my schedule just didn't allow for me to commit to rehearsals and performances. That was when I got into costuming and cosplay. I channeled my love of props making and made my first costume, Sam from the horror cult classic Trick 'r Treat.

While cosplaying at conventions I learned about the Rebel Legion, which is a worldwide organization of Star Wars fans who make screen accurate "good guy" costumes and do volunteer events in costume. I joined the Rebels in March of 2018 with a Rey costume and quickly added several more costumes to my approved list. In January of 2019 I joined the 501st Legion (the "bad guy" characters) with my Jawa and then added a couple more approved costumes. Then in June of 2019 I joined Costumers with a Cause which is a charity organization that does events to raise money for sick children.

Through these amazing organizations I've gotten the chance to volunteer at places like Give Kids the World, Camp Boggy Creek, Runway for Hope, Advent Health Hospital for Children, Bike MS Tour, as well as a variety of courthouse adoptions, library events, and so many more. The Rebel Legion and 501st Legion are also officially recognized by LFL, which means we also get invited to high profile events like Orlando Magic games, Disney Dark Side Marathons, Weird AI Concerts, Star Wars book signings, and more.

It's through the 501st and Rebel Legions that I met my husband, Matt Drennan. He's a Storm Trooper, and we met at an event that was a memorial for a young boy who passed away who was a huge Star Wars fan. Our first date was after a Give Kids the World volunteer event. We even had some of our Jawa and Storm Trooper friends show up for our wedding.



Visiting the Bourne Stuntacular right before soft openings began, 2020



Outside Flight of the Hippogriff after a field verification, 2022



A view of construction on VelociCoaster, 2020



I was at Orlando Health for about two years when I decided that I wanted a change. I started looking for work again and decided that I wanted to take a hard turn from the medical field and look for work within the world of themed entertainment. I soon landed an amazing job with Universal Orlando Resort (UO). I was hired as a Sr. Specialist, Quality Verification Audit, which is within the Engineering department. It was my job to make sure that all maintenance was properly documented and scheduled for the technicians to do. I also write procedures for Technicians to be trained with. (This is where the skills learned from those very detailed lab notebooks I was taught to keep during my time at Stetson come in handy.) My job is about 50% auditor, 25% verification specialist, and 25% technical writer. I also get assigned tons of projects to work on as needed.

My team and I are involved in the opening of every new venue at UO. My first commissioning project was the VelociCoaster at Islands of Adventure. My team had to make sure that all necessary maintenance is documented and scheduled before any state paperwork can be signed off. This project has been one of the highlights of my career, as I was able to sign off on official documents for the opening of a venue that has been one of UOs most popular attractions.

I was just recently promoted to Specialist, Quality Control Audit. This new job brings on a whole new set of responsibilities that I'm excited to learn over the next few years.

I love working at Universal. This park holds a special place in my heart. My aunt brought my older sister and I there every year for our birthdays. It was also one of the last places we had a full family vacation before my dad passed away. We had so much fun during that trip. I love all the amazing work perks that we get, like free admission, complimentary tickets, and heavily discounted Universal Hotel stays. Like a rollercoaster, this job is full of twists and turns, and I enjoy being able to be creative at the same time as using my technical background.



Erin and her family at Universal Islands of Adventure, 2019



Enjoying work perks – a special event at Volcano Bay



Universal Orlando Resort donates change thrown into the fountains around the resort to Give Kids the World Village



To all current Hatters: You are so lucky to be attending a university such as Stetson. The name itself holds a lot of value. You are fortunate to go to a university where the professors know your name, and you as a person. A professor's recommendation for a job goes a long way. Trust me, my boss at Orlando Health (a Medical Physicist with a PhD) was always talking about the amazing recommendation I received from a Stetson professor. I encourage all of you to stay in touch with your professors and each other. Reach out to fellow Stetson Alumni for career advice and help. Find a mentor and absorb information and life advice. In short, it's ok to seek out help. I wouldn't be where I am today without the help of others, and the mentors I've had along the way.

I love my job, I love that it allows (and encourages) me to participate in my volunteer groups, and I love the work life balance it gives. I'm forever grateful for my time at Stetson, as it prepared me for this amazing job, and every project that has been thrown my way. I get to go to work every day and hear people screaming on Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit. When I walk backstage and look up, I can see guests going over the top hat on the VelociCoaster. You're not really a UO Team Member until you've had freezing cold water fall on you from the Hogwarts Express.

Back at Stetson, when I would tell people that I was majoring in Physics and minoring in Theatre Arts some people would give me a strange look. They'd be so surprised that someone would enjoy both the arts and the sciences, but my time at UO has taught me that this is more common than most people seem to think. Engineers, designers, producers, entertainment crew, and many more must all work together to create these new venues and experiences. There's no need to choose between the two and working at UO has made me realize a passion I didn't even realize I had: I love making people scream for their lives on roller coasters.