



# SRJC Alumni & Friends

As a member of the first graduating class from Maria Carrillo High School, Doug Hofmann intended to pursue his passion for art after graduation. The high school senior was responsible for drawing the mascot for Maria Carrillo still used today and was accepted to UC San Diego as a freshman.

But finances, his sister's positive experiences at SRJC, and the Doyle Scholarship led him to enroll at SRJC instead. Doug took a drafting class at SRJC the summer after high school graduation and fell in love with the blend of art and engineering. Although he never considered pursuing a career in science, that one class sparked his interest and set him off on a new life path.

At SRJC, Doug focused his education in engineering sciences, graduating with both an A.A. and an A.S. and played tennis for the college. "My math and engineering teachers, particularly Kirby Bunas and Jeff Warner, were spectacular. Izzy Derkos was already a legend at SRJC as a tennis coach and was absolutely extraordinary to learn from." An avid tennis player, Doug was ranked in the top ten in the state while at SRJC. Doug also found that the small class size at SRJC meant more one-on-one attention from the faculty. "I knew all my teachers, they knew my name and you were able to really connect with them."



Doug Hofmann stands in the White House next to George Washington's portrait after accepting his PECASE award.



Doug found himself challenged by the coursework at SRJC and ultimately realized he received a better undergraduate education, especially in general education courses, than he would have gotten at UCSD. "The first two years at SRJC are better than people realize and you are far more prepared to succeed as a transfer student." Utilizing the transfer agreements between SRJC and UC San Diego, Doug was able to easily move on to pursue his bachelor's degree.

Doug completed his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering at U.C. San Diego in 2003 and 2004 where he played NCAA Division II tennis. He then completed his M.S. and Ph.D. in Materials Science at the California Institute of Technology in 2006 and 2008, while being the assistant coach of Caltech's Men's Tennis Team and playing semi-professional tennis for the USTA Pro-Circuit.

Today, Doug is the Principal Investigator of the Materials Development and Manufacturing Technology Group at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Visiting Associate and Lecturer in Applied Physics and Materials Science at the California Institute of Technology, both in Pasadena, California.



In laymen's terms, Doug develops materials for spacecraft. Doug's research focuses on developing new materials and manufacturing technologies to enable JPL spacecraft to survive the extreme environments of planetary exploration. When he first arrived at NASA, Doug consulted on components of the Mars Rover, an experience he considers an amazing engineering feat to land a robot the size of a car on the surface of Mars. His current projects include developing new materials for the Mars 2020 launch.

In December 2013, President Obama named Doug Hofmann one of the 102 recipients of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers. Multiple government departments and agencies annually nominate the most meritorious scientists and engineers whose early accomplishments show the greatest promise for assuring America's preeminence in science and engineering and contributing to their respective agencies' missions.

In April 2014, Doug and the other recipients received their awards at the U.S. Department of Agriculture with agency officials, friends and families present in a ceremony keyed by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John Holdren. After the ceremony, the recipients were greeted at the White House by President Obama who thanked them for their outstanding achievements.



President Barack Obama talks with the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) recipients in the East Room of the White House, April 14, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

When President Obama joined the recipients in the room, they began clapping for the President; however President Obama motioned for them to stop and remarked that he felt he should be clapping for them. For Doug, shaking hands and speaking with a sitting President of the United States was a bucket list moment.

Doug currently participates in a number of activities both inside and outside of NASA, including being an editorial board member of several scientific journals, being a research advisor for several Ph.D. students, teaching courses at Caltech, running a consulting company, founding two start-up companies in manufacturing and being a father of two boys, ages 2 and 5.

Doug still considers SRJC one of the best experiences and finest years in the long road of his career and educational journey. Clearly, as one of the PECASE recipients, that journey is just beginning.