

Integrated Studies Interview

Keith Rode, Class of 2002

By David Gonzalez

Keith Rode spent eight years at UC Davis between 1998 and 2006, the first as a member of Integrated Studies and the last four at the Veterinary School. He currently works as a veterinarian in Woodland and continues to maintain a connection with UC Davis.

When were you in the Integrated Studies program?

I was in IS for the 1998 to 1999 school year.

The Integrated Studies dorm recently moved to Miller Hall in Segundo North. Where did you live your freshmen year?

We lived in the Tercero B building. There were three floors and about 25 people on each floor. There were about 72 people in total.

Before we talk about your Integrated Studies experience I'd like to ask about your overall UC Davis experience. Why did you decide to go to UC Davis? What other colleges were you considering?

I had been accepted to Colorado State University, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo—which I highly considered—and a couple small liberal arts schools that I didn't ever really consider. I decided to go to UC Davis because I was interested in becoming a veterinarian and I knew that Davis had a veterinary school. Davis was relatively close to my home in Napa, and I knew other people who had gone to Davis and really enjoyed it.

Did acceptance into IS affect your decision to go to Davis?

It did. I was seriously considering Colorado State and Cal Poly, but the IS invite was one of the determining factors for me for UC Davis.

What major did you come in as?

My major originally was Undeclared-Life Sciences, but I decided that was too broad for me. I wasn't really interested in plant biology and I didn't really want to take a lot of plant biology classes. My sophomore year I switched to the Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior, and that was what I stuck with.

Did you have any minors?

I didn't have any minors. I wanted to create a minor in linguistic anthropology and they wouldn't let me. In the anthropology major there are four disciplines, and linguistics is one of them. But there are only three minors, and linguistics was the one you couldn't minor in. I tried to petition to make it a minor, but they wouldn't do it. I basically pseudo-minored in it, because I took all the classes that they offered.

Why linguistic anthropology?

I took Anthropology 4, which is introduction to linguistic anthropology. It was a triple dip: a writing class, a social science and humanities class, and a cultural diversity class. I took it and I loved it. It was a huge class because, of course, it was one of those classes that everyone wants to get because it's a triple dip. I really enjoyed it, so I followed it up with taking Linguistics 1, which was another huge class. I enjoyed that a lot too, so I took some of the upper division linguistics, anthropology, and Native American studies classes that related to language.

What did you do after completing your undergraduate studies?

After my undergraduate graduation I went to UC Davis for vet school, from 2002 to 2006. I graduated from the veterinary school in June 2006. Now I practice at a small animal clinic up in Woodland.

What kind of animals do you treat?

I see mostly dogs and cats, and the occasional parrot, rabbit, hamster or guinea pig. Last week I saw a snake, and I also see bearded dragons and lizards and things like that.

Did you always want to be a veterinarian?

Yes, it's the stereotypical, "I've always wanted to be a veterinarian" story. Almost everybody thinks that at some point—you either want to be a veterinarian, a fireman, or an astronaut. It's just something that always stuck with me, as long as I can remember.

What clubs or other extracurricular activities did you get involved with?

I was involved in the University Chorus for all four years. I also sang in an a capella group called the Liquid Hot Plates. I was one of the founding members, starting my sophomore year. I did that for about two and a half years. I wrote a second page column for the California Aggie for two years. It was a humor column. On page two you can write about anything, as long as it's not too political or serious. So I just wrote about life. I did that for about two years. I did a lot of intramural sports too, and that was a lot of fun. I played ultimate Frisbee, softball, flag football, inner tube water polo, and outdoor and indoor soccer.

Living in the Integrated Studies dorm freshman year is a large part of the IS experience. How was your roommate?

My roommate was Wes Morgan. I didn't know anything about him until move-in day, except that he was from Las Vegas. I met him on move-in day

(it was a rainy day, of course, as we were trying to move everything into the dorm) and he was a really nice guy. He was an engineering major. We were really good friends, we got along really well. He and I had very similar interests on certain things, and differing interests too. But we tolerated each other's differing interests well and had a great time. I don't think I could have picked a better roommate out of anybody in IS.

Did you spend a lot of time with fellow ISers during your freshman year?

The vast majority of my social circle was within the Integrated Studies program. There were a few ISers in chorus with me, and I had a lot of ISers in class with me so we would study outside of class. If one of our friends was in the orchestra we would go to her performances, and we would do IM sports together.

What did you do for fun in Davis?

We would go downtown and go eat or things like that. I spent a lot of time my first year just going back and forth to Napa because my girlfriend at the time still lived there. When I was in Davis I went to sporting events with friends, and concerts at Freeborn Hall, mainly as a group of IS people, but not always. We were a close-knit group.

Did you still spend time with ISers after your freshman year?

I made new friends from the different activities I was doing and from my major, but all through my undergraduate years I would coordinate with some of my IS friends to take classes together. We'd try to be lab partners in organic chemistry and things like that.

Did you end up rooming with any ISers after your freshman year?

I did, actually. His name was Matt and he and I had a lot in common, though we didn't know it at first. We both had a mutual friend from high

school in Napa and we both wrote for the Aggie. He and I moved in together right after freshman year and we lived six years together in Drake apartments. I did my final three undergraduate years and then four years of vet school, and he finished up his undergraduate studies and then went to Law School here at Davis. So we lived together for six years until we both got married and decided it was time we got our own places.

Which IS classes did you take?

First quarter I took History of Medicine. We talked about different topics in medicine, like tuberculosis, and went through the history of how it was treated and who discovered new treatments for it. It was really interesting. Second quarter I took Psychology and Law, which was different for me because I don't really know anything about either psychology or law. But the class was interesting. We learned a lot about how the legal system works and we looked at things we take for granted, like expert witnesses. There's a lot of psychology behind that. Then third quarter I did the Shakespeare class, which was probably the best. I had never acted before, so it was a lot of fun. I memorized 360 lines of Shakespeare. We did *As You Like It*, and it was great. It was something totally different for me and we had a great time. We put on two shows in the Wyatt Pavilion and then one on the Quad.

What role did you play?

I played two roles. For the performance we did on the quad I played the role of Jaques, who is the fool of the play. He's the one who does the famous "all the world's a stage" monologue. For the performances in the Wyatt Pavilion I played the role of Oliver, who was the brother of Orlando who was the main character. It was neat, I'd never read it. I read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, but I had never done *As You Like It*. It was really good. It's fun to see other people perform it now too, and be able to see the different interpretations of what people think about it.

Do any of your IS professors stand out in your memory?

I think Eric Schroeder stands out because his class was such a big undertaking. We met so much out of class to rehearse and to prepare. He had a passion for it.

Is the Shakespeare class something you would have done without IS?

Probably not, I don't think anything like that is offered as a regular class outside of IS. The Psychology and Law class I probably wouldn't have done outside of IS, because the non-science classes I took were either linguistics or other random GE classes. I probably would have taken the big classes in the big lecture halls, not a small 30-student seminar on Psychology and Law.

Did any of your IS classes surprise you with its relevance in your life later on?

Yes, actually. I was called for jury duty a couple months ago. I didn't end up getting picked, but I remembered back to what we talked about in the Psychology and Law class as I was mentally preparing myself for the possibility of serving on a jury. It was really interesting as the lawyers got up and questioned the jury. I thought back to that class. A lot of what we had talked about was coming into play.

Do you still keep in touch with former ISers?

I keep in contact with a lot of different people on a regular basis. I keep in touch with my roommate Matt. He still lives in Davis, and I usually meet up with him at least once a week to hang out and watch 49ers games. There were two ISers that went through Vet school with me. I keep in contact with my freshman year roommate Wes, who's still in the area. I also keep in touch with my friend Amanda, who's currently living in South Carolina, and my friend Amber who's living in Washington, D.C.

Do you think IS provides a unique freshman experience?

I didn't have a different experience freshman year, so it's hard to tell. I talked to my wife about it, who also went to Davis. She lived in Webster, the off-campus dorms. She had a core group of people that she lived immediately with, but she never knew her next-door neighbor or the people two doors down. In Segundo the floors are so large that you probably wouldn't know the people on the floor above you. I talked to other people from Tercero. In Tercero there are about 70 people in each building, so it's a more intimate setting. But even people in C building who I knew didn't know the people around them. They didn't play IM sports with people from their dorm and didn't do activities with them. I definitely think IS was unique in that way. If I had lived in another Tercero building, I probably wouldn't have known Matt, my roommate for the next six years. He lived up on the third floor of the building and I was on the second floor. I wouldn't have known him if we hadn't taken classes together and done IS thing together.

Is there anything more you'd like to say about your experience at UC Davis?

If I could go back and change it, I wouldn't. I would still have gone to UC Davis. I'm sure I would have had a good experience at Colorado State University or at Cal Poly, but I really like the community of Davis. I like the college atmosphere and I'm a big fan of campus. I miss being on campus. It was really strange after I graduated from vet school, because even in vet school I was still on the UC Davis campus. After I graduated and September 2006 came around, it was the first time in twenty years that I wasn't going back to school. It was the first time in eight years I wasn't going back to Davis. I miss it. I love getting the chance to go back to campus. I still try to be involved with campus issues when I can. That's one of the reasons I haven't moved far away. Both my wife and I love being near the university.

And how does Integrated Studies fit in?

Integrated Studies was by far the best thing I could have done to help develop a community in undergraduate and to really have some unique

experiences—like the Shakespeare play—and to have lifelong friends that I don't think I would have had otherwise.