

Alumni Pride: Weber finds lifelong pursuits at UWO

by Natalie Johnson - Monday, August 17, 2009

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2122/alumni-pride-weber-finds-lifelong-pursuits-at-uwo/>

William Weber '71, discovered both a vocation (a scientific interest in radiation) and an avocation (a love of downhill skiing) during his undergraduate days at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Weber, of Richland, Wash., will join eight other University of Wisconsin Oshkosh graduates to be honored at the annual Alumni Awards Dinner, during homecoming weekend Oct. 16-17, 2009. He will receive the UW Oshkosh Alumni Association's highest honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award, for his achievements.

"Dr. Weber is an internationally recognized authority and leader in the area of defects and radiation effects in ceramics and has distinguished himself with significant contributions in several areas of materials science," said Yanwen Zhang, a senior research scientist with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL).

After graduating from UW Oshkosh with a degree in physics, Weber continued his studies at UW-Madison, where he received a master's degree and a doctorate in nuclear engineering. Upon graduation, he joined PNNL, a U.S. Department of Energy multipurpose laboratory, where he has worked ever since.

"Most of my research has been related to the fundamental physics of how radiation interacts with materials and how radiation affects materials used in nuclear reactors or in nuclear waste forms," Weber explained.

He has been active in a number of scientific professional societies, including the Materials Research Society, the American Ceramic Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

At UW Oshkosh, Weber found an "excellent" mentor and teacher in professor James E. Gueths, who chaired the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the time. "He provided an opportunity for hands-on research experience outside the classroom."

Weber worked as a summer research intern at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where he conducted his first experiment on radiation effects in materials, which also led to his first publication. Later, Weber was among three students selected for an honors program at Argonne National Laboratory.

Outside of the lab, an introduction to downhill skiing class spurred a love for the slopes.

"While downhill skiing opportunities are limited in Wisconsin, I continued to downhill ski at some of the local ski areas while attending graduate school in Madison," he said. "But after moving to the state of Washington, I became an avid downhill and cross country skier. Today, both my wife and I ski throughout the Pacific Northwest."

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