

# Planetarium BS (Bachelor of Science)

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## Abstract:

*When I finally decided this was the career I wanted to pursue, a degree in Planetarium Science seemed the only way to go. Unfortunately, like most universities, mine did not offer one. So I did what any other planetarian would do: I created one from scratch.*

When I first began classes at the University of Toledo, I was still a bit unsure as to what I wanted to do with my life. At that time, I was pursuing a degree in physics. During the beginning of my second year in college, something happened that changed my life in a profound way. I had gone to a public viewing of a lunar eclipse in late November of 1993. There, after mentioning to a student employee that I thought she had the best job on campus, I was unexpectedly hired by Mr. Alex Mak to work at Ritter Planetarium. Never knowing that the university even *had* a planetarium, I had no idea what I was getting into. After a few weeks, I was hooked! Immediately the planetarium began to change me and my desires in what I wanted to do. I became increasingly more interested in astronomy and planetarium activities. I was slowly metamorphosing into a strange, nocturnal, dome-loving person -- a planetarian. After two years at Ritter, I decided that this is what I'd like to continue to do after graduation. But how could I go about getting the proper education in becoming a planetarian? Sure, I could gain lots of experience just working at the planetarium, but I decided to take it one step further. I decided that I wanted an actual degree in "planetariumology." After scouring the university's course catalog and list of offered degrees, I was disappointed to discover that they didn't offer a degree in "planetariumology." But that didn't phase me. I did what every other planetarian would do: I made my own.

Fortunately, I was lucky enough to be enrolled in a university that allowed students to create their own specialized degrees. All I had to do was list the skills necessary to become a good planetarian and find the courses offered by the university that would give me those skills. Easier said than done. As we all know, there are so many things one needs to be able to do to run a planetarium. Not only do we have to be well-versed in astronomy, but we also have to be communication specialists, public relationists, educators, artists, engineers, scriptwriters, electricians, photographers, and a host of other -ists and -ers. Knowing that I had to have at least some to great my degree program.

The first step was finding the right courses. Luckily, I had a lot of help. I worked on creating my list of courses under the close supervision of both the Director, Dr. Lawrence Anderson, and the Associate Director, Alexander T. Mak, of Ritter Planetarium. Unfortunately, after finding all the classes I thought I needed, I realized I had a course load big enough to keep me in school for the next 10 years! Needless to say, I had to cut it down a bit. Realizing I could gain much of the experience I needed just working at the planetarium, I was able to lop off about two-thirds of the classes. The remaining courses included such classes as photography, play writing, education, mythology, intro to public relations, and, naturally, astronomy in the planetarium. And of course, the university had its own set of core requirements I needed to fulfill. Fortunately for me, however, in my past years at college, I had already completed most of them. At last, after much hard work, I had a degree plan I felt would give me all the experience I needed. Now, all I had to do was get my planetarium B.S. past the review board.

Upon seeing my degree plan, my advisor assured me that I shouldn't have a problem getting it approved. That reassurance did little to calm me. So I wanted to hear of the approval. And waited ... and waited ... and waited. Finally, about two months later, I received notice that my degree plan was approved! I would soon be the first person to receive a Bachelor of Science in Planetarium Sciences from the University of Toledo.

I am currently about a year and a half from receiving my degree in planetarium science: I have approximately three terms left. Since the development of my own planetarium science degree program, a similar degree plan has been taken up by another person working at Ritter Planetarium. Although the degree plan has been slightly changed for him to teach him any skills needed, it is essentially the same program. I know there are some universities that may offer planetarium-intensive programs, and even a small few that may offer full-fledged degrees in planetarium directorship, but certainly there are none in my area. By the time I graduate I will have at least four years' experience working at a planetarium. But I'll also have something that many people won't: a degree in Planetarium Science.

## PLANETARIUM SCIENCE RELATED COURSES

The University of Toledo

- Astronomy 201/202 - Solar System Astronomy/Stars, Galaxies, and the Universe
- Astronomy 205 - Elementary Astronomy Lab
- Astronomy 311 - Life in the Universe
- Astronomy 312 - Black Holes and General Relativity
- Astronomy 314 - New Frontiers in Astronomy
- Astronomy 405 - Astronomy in the planetarium
- Physics 207/208/209 - General Physics I, II, & III
- Physics 300 - Big Bang Theory
- Biology 211/213 - Fundamentals of Life Sciences I & II
- Geology 100 - Physical Geology
- Geology 102 - Historical Geology
- Communications 300 - Public Speaking Principles

- Communications 306 - Graphics
- Communications 321 - Introduction to Public Relations
- Communications 331 - Business and Professional Communications
- Theater 104 - Introduction to Stage Lighting and Sound
- Theater 321 - Playwriting
- Theater 347 - Theater Sound
- Art 281/386 - Photography I & II
- Classics 310 - Mythology
- English 372 - Literature and Mythology