

# Fabián Bombardelli

## An interview

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### The American Dream

The life of Fabián Bombardelli is truly an example of the American Dream. Born in La Plata, Argentina, he marveled at the Rio del Plata, one of the major waterways in Argentina. Although his upbringing was humble, from a young age he had ambition. Intrigued by the world around him, he wanted to understand its natural processes, especially through the lens of math and physics. He did not necessarily come to the conclusion that he would be an engineer, but what he did know was that he wanted to apply himself and be the best. Growing up, I did not know which profession I wanted to enter—even within my senior year of high school I was uncertain—although I was interesting in learning how the world works. I was always a little bit jealous of my friends who, even as a child, knew what they wanted to be. Looking back, I think the desire to be an engineer was always hiding in plain sight. Bombardelli attended the University of La Plata, where he majored in hydraulic engineering. Being exposed to new things and having excellent professors, who revealed the knowledge that every engineer needs for success, were reasons why he enjoyed college. Math and physics came naturally to him, but he had more difficulty with classes that dealt with legal issues and required extensive memorization—he said it was as if he had to “study the newspaper.” The challenge of these courses was met and overcome with discipline. Bombardelli made a point to note that there were not any classes he disliked, simply classes he liked less. This positive outlook is fundamental to overcoming challenges, and is absolutely a factor of his success—I hope it will be a part of mine. Once graduated, he had no trouble in securing his first job in Argentina’s National Institute of Water, for which he applied research to water issues within the country. He earned his Master’s degree in Numerical Simulation and Control at the University of Buenos Aires while working this job. This degree involves the use of computer models to solve problems of hydraulics and of different aspects of science which are far too complicated to solve by hand. With these models, a given response in a mechanical system is generated.



*La Plata, Argentina*

## The Life in the United States

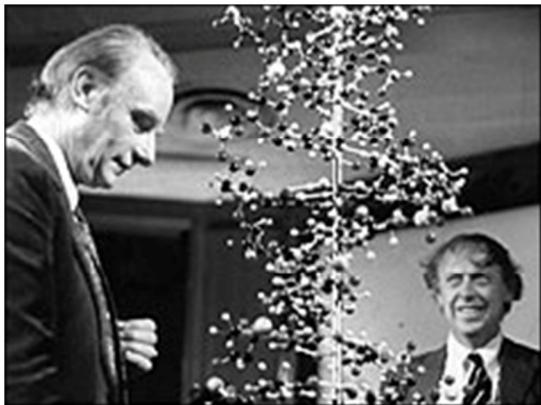


After enjoying his job for seven years, he decided to immigrate to the United States to continue his education. He explained that it took some effort to adapt to the new culture, even though it was not so terribly different from his own. Neither culture is better or worse, he wisely noted, just different. Once again applying persistence and hard work, he earned his Ph.D. and found a niche here at Davis. As was I, he was drawn by the strength of the engineering program and the international prestige of UC

Davis. He loves his job, especially the opportunity to research areas that interest him, to interact with students, and conduct research in his own backyard, namely the Sacramento River, Lake Tahoe, and the San Francisco Bay. I find it encouraging that he did not have an answer to my question of what he dislikes about working at UC Davis.

Drawing from his career in engineering, Bombardelli imparted important pieces of wisdom about engineering as a whole. Engineers are extremely important, he explained, and many of the problems today's world faces are a result of undervaluing science and engineering. Engineering is a part of virtually everything, and because of this and a new realization of its utility in modern society; the production of engineers is not sufficient to meet the world's need. Because engineers would make better decisions for the benefit of society, he argued that there ought to be many more engineers in positions of power and leadership—especially in our government. Also stressed was the weakness of many engineers: communication. Being an immigrant whose native language is not English, he acknowledged that he himself occasionally shares this weakness. I find it rare that a professor would admit a weakness, and I find this openness to be refreshing. To prevent limitations of success, engineers need to learn better communication skills, especially when speaking publically, talking with reporters, and discussing subjects in terms that are accessible to more people. Bombardelli's more than twenty years of experience have given him a great deal of wisdom, some of which he imparted to me.

## His Inspiration



*Francis Crick (1916-2004)*

The first piece was from Francis Crick, one of the discoverers of the structure of DNA, who said that to be successful, you need hard work, persistence, and good luck. He taught me that although you need a little luck to reach your goals, such luck will never come about without hard work and persistence. Hard work guarantees that results are being produced. Just as important, persistence means that the disappointments which one faces in life (which everyone faces in life, he underscored) must be moved past in order to fulfill that which one desires. His second piece of advice came from Picasso, who was asked the difference between work and inspiration.

Picasso responded, "Inspiration does exist, but it always finds me working." Bombardelli stressed that inspiration usually transpires when we are working our hardest. If he taught me anything during the interview, it is the imperativeness of resolve, tenacity, and determination in all areas of life. Although he had fulfilled his overall aspirations, he clarified that he is not quite done yet—he looks forward to doing meaningful and beneficial research, contributing to society by training future leaders, and more. Fabián Bombardelli is a testament to the success of the American Dream. He reminded me that this dream is not just for those who have immigrated, but for all citizens as well. Moreover, we share the common ideal that if you work very hard, you will achieve success, or at least end up better than when you started. During the latter part of my senior year of high school, I started to become disillusioned with always trying so hard. Although I did reach many of my goals, you could say that I was "burnt out." Bombardelli is evidence that my continued ambition and persistence will bring me success, both vocationally and personally. When I am studying for a Chemistry midterm, or writing up a report for an Engineering class, or grappling some challenge that I have not even learned about yet—even when it is difficult to see the immediate impact or benefit—the commitment to simply work, to give my all, to persist, will carry me through.