

Career Talk

Friday May 12, 2017

Elings Hall (CNSI) 1605

10:00 – 11:00 am

Visible and Invisible Identities: A Personal Journey in the Sciences

Joel Yuen-Zhou, Department of Chemistry and
Biochemistry UCSD



Prof. Joel Yuen-Zhou received a B.S. in Chemistry and a B.S. in Math from MIT in 2007, where he did undergraduate research under the late Prof. Robert J. Silbey. In 2012, he graduated with a Ph.D. in Chemical Physics under the supervision of Prof. Alan Aspuru-Guzik at Harvard University. He was the Robert J. Silbey Postdoctoral Fellow in the Center for Excitonics at MIT in 2012-2015. Since July 2015, he is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of California, San Diego. He recently received the National Science Foundation CAREER award. His research group is interested in the weak, strong, and ultrastrong coupling of light and molecular matter to design and probe new materials and phenomena at the interface of chemical physics, materials science, and nanophotonics.

Before coming to the US, Joel grew up in Mexico City in a Chinese household, where his family owned a small Mexican eatery/restaurant in downtown. Growing up, he was not aware of the possibility of doing science for a living, until he started participating in science olympiads, eventually representing Mexico in several International Chemistry Olympiads in Caracas, Mumbai, Groningen, and Athens (2000-2003) and getting a silver medal in the latter. These experiences influenced him enormously and opened many doors, the most important one being that after graduating from a public high school (UNAM), he applied to college at MIT and got accepted there. By virtue of his upbringing in Mexico, Joel's primary ethnic identity is probably Hispanic, although he believes that his Chinese background makes him relate to the Asian American community too. As a gay man, Joel also believes it is important to be out in his field, especially considering the lack of LGBT representation in the "hard" sciences. In his free time, Joel enjoys cooking (Chinese, Mexican, and many other cuisines), exercising, reading fiction, and watching independent films. Joel enjoys the inclusive spirit of science although he believes there is still a long way to go for underrepresented minorities, and is committed to work with SACNAS to promote further visibility and recruitment of Hispanic and Native American individuals into the sciences.

Snacks will be provided


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gradsacnas@engineering.ucsb.edu