

# University of West Florida | Graduate School

## *Student Spotlight: Ray Czaja*

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### **Ray Czaja, Biology**

I knew I wanted to explore the possibility of teaching more. I had a teaching job before graduate school. I very much enjoyed that, so I kind of wanted to explore that a little bit more to see if teaching was the career path that I really wanted to pursue. And I knew that, at least in the sciences, generally when you're a graduate student you have to teach labs.

I had a teaching job before graduate school. I had a... I was actually pretty lucky. I taught kids about marine biology on a boat out in southern California. It was a dream job, and I knew that I really enjoyed that job. Because I enjoyed it, I was thinking I like teaching, maybe I'll want to become a teacher in the future. But at the same time, I realized that teaching on a boat in southern California is not what most teaching jobs are. Most teaching jobs are in classroom-type jobs.

I really enjoy teaching labs. I often wake up looking forward to interacting with the students that I teach. I look forward to, you know, challenging myself to communicate the knowledge I have with others. There's often things that make sense in my mind that aren't the easiest of concepts. And so, you know, I have to figure out ways to get students to understand this and I kind of enjoy that struggle. I think it makes me a better communicator, a better person, a better teacher, a better scientist.