

Ed-Co Alumni
Rob Kerns
Written by Addy Kirby



Rob Kerns graduated in the class of 1987. He is a Professor of Medicinal Chemistry. After high school Rob “went to College at Iowa State University. Started in Chemical Engineering, then switched to College of Education to earn a degree in education along with a chemistry BA and with athletic training to teach high school and coach sports. Toward the end of my undergraduate studies I learned about the field of Medicinal Chemistry (design and evaluation of new drugs); I changed my major to graduate in 1991 with a BS in chemistry and went to graduate school. I earned my PhD in Medicinal Chemistry in the College of Pharmacy at the University of Iowa in 1996, followed by postdoctoral research in the Chemistry Department at Princeton University. My first job in 1998 was as a professor of medicinal chemistry at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. In 2002 I moved to the University of Iowa and have been a professor here at the U of I ever since. I teach medicinal chemistry and some other topics, and my research program is focused on small molecule drug discovery, with current projects toward new therapies to treat cancer, diabetes, and various types of infectious disease.” Rob currently resides in Iowa City. He mentioned it is nice to finally return closer to home. When asked what his favorite part about Ed-Co was he stated, “My favorite memories of high school at Ed-Co are of the times with my friends, teammates, and classmates. I did not do a good job of keeping in touch after graduating from high school and heading off to college, but many of the best memories of my life are from time spent with friends and classmates in high school.” Rob’s advice to current high school graduates is, “Don’t be afraid to change paths if and/or when an opportunity arises, and balance that with not changing paths just because a path gets hard. The key word here is balance; most of the happiest individuals I know are those that have found balance among the different aspects of their life.” Rob chased his big goal and changed his lifestyle to achieve it. Once a Viking, always a Viking!