I remember clearly what first spurred me to be a physics major in college. It was watching Carl Sagan’s television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*. Never before had I realized the size and beauty of the universe and the fragility of our position within it. I spent a lot of time writing college application essays during my senior year of high school, and many of them discussed themes from *Cosmos*.

One year later I was in the advanced freshman physics track at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. In one of our lab assignments we were asked to create software that could compute orbital trajectories around stars and planets. I soon realized that my true calling was creating computer models, often of physical systems, but not exclusively. My major evolved into “computer science modified with physics,” with a few astronomy courses thrown in for good measure.

However, I had one more interest that had not surfaced in my professional career: a love of history. My passion has always been playing detailed historical strategy games, so in 1999 I made a move into the computer game industry. That path led me to Firaxis Games, where I have led the design of the game Civilization V for the past three years. The game starts 6,000 years ago, when humankind was founding its first cities. Step by step, a player’s people advance through history, replicating many of the key scientific discoveries highlighted by Sagan in *Cosmos*.

In developing the gameplay and artificial intelligence systems for complex strategy games I am constantly creating small computer models that capture the behaviors needed to depict population growth, food consumption, or rates of scientific progress. I have also been able to acknowledge some of my favorite accomplishments in world history; it’s no coincidence that launching the Hubble Space Telescope is one of the best ways to win a scientific victory in Civilization V.

This year, I watched with interest as Neil deGrasse Tyson launched his *Cosmos* sequel, *A Spacetime Odyssey*. As the television series tracked the course of scientific discovery and showed images from the Hubble Space Telescope, I reflected on my career path and how it all started with physics.

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**HUBBLE IN CIVILIZATION V**

Beach features the Hubble Space Telescope in Civilization V by game development studio Firaxis. Firaxis has released dozens of hit games on multiple platforms and is recognized as an industry leader in game development.