Agriview

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

ahhh... SPRING AT CAL POLY

BY DEAN DAVID WEHNER

By the title, you might think that this message is about springtime in San Luis Obispo, with flowers and trees blooming, which of course, we enjoy greatly. No, I am talking about the hundreds of potential students who are visiting campus to learn about the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and trying to decide whether to attend this great university.

As I write this, it is Open House weekend, with our program for new students and their parents on Friday and Poly Royal on Saturday. At the parents' session on Friday, I ask how many of them have attended orientation programs at other universities with their sons or daughters, and at least half raise their hands. I then ask how many have attended a program where they were provided lunch, and only a few hands remain raised. Finally, I ask how many have attended a program where the current university students have made some of the ingredients and cooked the lunch. There are no hands raised at this point.

That simple exercise drives home the uniqueness of our learn-by-doing approach to education. Students in our meat science classes made the hamburgers for lunch, and many other students were involved in setting up the farm shop for the event, by cooking and serving the food and then cleaning up afterwards. Additional students were involved in the programming for the event and publication of a newsletter that helped describe some of the programs and activities that are available at Cal Poly.

There is no more powerful message about Cal Poly than our students demonstrating the strength of character and responsibility to conduct a major event for over 1,200 people. It comes from our learn-by-doing approach to education, always and forever.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES ABOUND

Robert Flores (left), head of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, is the national winner in the Community/Business Leader category for the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award program sponsored by the National FFA Organization. Flores was recognized for his leadership promoting professional agricultural careers to minority students, scholarship fundraising, establishing strength training and team building programs among youth leaders, and teacher training to accept and incorporate diversity in student populations.

Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration faculty member Cynthia Moyer (center) was selected as the university's 2007-08 Outstanding Faculty Advisor. Moyer's nomination letters depicted her robust contribution to not only advising in her department, but to her college, the university, and on a national level. Nomination letters described her as knowledgeable, skilled, encouraging, approachable, and "the glue that keeps us together...a well-rounded source of information coupled with genuine interest for any student."

David Headrick (right) received the 2008 Distinguished Educator Award from the American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources. The award was presented at the 2008 annual conference held in Kentucky and hosted by Murray State University. Mark Shelton, CAFES associate dean of research and graduate programs, introduced Headrick to the group of deans and associate deans from around the country.
BANKING ON FARM CREDIT

The Agribusiness Department and the farm credit industry have forged a new partnership to create the Farm Credit Chair in Finance and Appraisal at Cal Poly. The $500,000 commitment will ensure that the Agribusiness Department continues teaching courses in appraisal, as it has since 1961.

Rural appraisal is facing a severe shortage of qualified young professionals. This gift will allow Cal Poly to better champion rural appraisal as a viable career. "With this incredible support, I see Cal Poly continuing to train most of the rural appraisers in California," said Wayne Howard, chair of the Agribusiness Department.

This five-year partnership is supported by a consortium of farm credit organizations. Principal sponsors are American AgCredit and Farm Credit West. Supporting sponsors are CoBank, Farm Credit Services of Colusa-Glenn, FLBA of Kingsburg, Fresno-Madera Farm Credit, Northern California Farm Credit, U.S. AgBank and Yosemite Farm Credit.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

After approval by the U.S. Congress, the main Post Office in San Jose was recently renamed as the Gordon N. Chan Post Office in memory of Gordon Chan, a 1959 Cal Poly ornamental horticulture alumnus.

The honor recognizes Chan's leadership and community service as a pioneer in the San Jose-area Asian-American community, and as an advocate for agriculture. He was the first Chinese-American to become a member of the Santa Clara County Planning Commission and was the first and only Chinese-American to serve as president of the Santa Clara Farm Bureau. He served on numerous community boards and commissions.

For more than 30 years, Chan, who passed away in 2001, ran his family's successful chrysanthemum and rose-growing business, formerly located about one mile from the Chan Post Office. His wife, Anita, and his three daughters have made a gift to Cal Poly in his honor to support a horticulture laboratory.

NOTEWORTHY APPOINTMENT

Animal science major Nessie Early has been busily engaged in fulfilling her duties as this year's secretary of the National FFA Organization. In addition to meeting top leaders in business, government and education, Early expects to travel more than 100,000 miles, including trips to over 40 states and a tour of Japan.

"I believe that national officers are the greatest representatives of leadership and service," said Early, "and becoming one is my chance to give back to the industry, community and way of life that I have loved so much."

A graduate of Shandon High School near Paso Robles, Early follows on the heels of another Cal Poly agriculture student, Kari Boettcher, who served as the National FFA Western Region Vice President in 2007-08.
Dr. Rafael Jimenez-Flores, dairy science professor at Cal Poly, recently offered his popular seminar on cheese making for the first time in Spanish.

The one-and-a-half-day seminar was created to demystify the science behind cheese making, emphasizing artisan cheese practices. The sold-out event, held at the College of Marin, covered the basic principles of cheese making, such as dairy microbiology, starter cultures and coagulants, pH and sanitation. The course also included an introduction to the manufacture of different families of cheese.

Born in Mexico City, Dr. Jimenez-Flores received a Bachelor of Science degree from La Salle University, Master of Science degree from Cornell University, and Ph.D. from UC Davis. Dr. Jimenez-Flores has been a member of the Cal Poly faculty since 1995, working at the Dairy Products Technology Center.

The seminar was supported by the California Artisan Cheese Guild.

Mr. James G. Boswell, who grew his family's business into one of the largest family-owned farms in the world, passed away on April 3, 2009, at the age of 86. Through the James G. Boswell Foundation, the Boswell family had previously endowed three faculty positions in California to further agricultural sciences.

Shown above, from left to right, are Dr. Bruce Roberts, the J.G. Boswell Chair of Agronomy at Fresno State University; Dr. Jeffrey Wong, the James G. Boswell Professor of Plant Biotechnology at Cal Poly; and Dr. Will Horwath, the James G. Boswell Chair of Soil Science at UC Davis.

The three, along with numerous Cal Poly faculty and staff, attended Mr. Boswell's memorial service on April 22 in Corcoran.

"On behalf of all of us in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, I extend my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of J.G. Boswell. He was a pioneering California agriculturalist and philanthropist, and Cal Poly greatly benefitted from his generosity."

- DEAN DAVID J. WEHNER
IT WAS A TIME NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM TODAY.

The nation was in recession. Major industries – banking, housing and automotive – were in trouble. And high unemployment made for a tight job market.

The year was 1981 and Charles Harrington ("Charlie" back then), the valedictorian of his high school class, was preparing to graduate from Cal Poly with a degree in agricultural engineering. He knew where he wanted to work, but he didn't have a job.

After much persistence and getting to know the right people, Harrington was offered an associate engineer position at Parsons, an international engineering and construction company. One month later, the oil industry collapsed and Parsons was forced into layoffs. He's still not sure how, but Harrington was spared.

"There was a lot of luck involved," Harrington recalled.

With coursework that prepared him to be a generalist, and the hands-on approach, Harrington found that everything he discovered in the classroom had an immediate application. He thought, he says, he soon learned "it was made for me."

Harrington came to Cal Poly from his family's rice farming operation in Live Oak, Calif., and admittedly didn't know anything about agricultural engineering when he arrived. But, as he says, he soon learned "it was made for me."

Harrington said his Cal Poly agricultural engineering education prepared him to fight for that first job offer – and to keep his job when times got tough. "What Cal Poly and ag engineering taught me was this: You can compete. You just have to work hard. There is no challenge you should shy away from."

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Shy away, he doesn’t. Nor does he allow his team to do so.

Take, for example, this Parsons project. During the 1960s, the United States Army produced and stockpiled VX, the dangerous nerve agent developed for chemical warfare, at the Newport Chemical Depot in Indiana. Production was subsequently disbanded, leaving a hazardous supply of the toxin and a great challenge for the nation.

In 1999, Pasadena-based Parsons was awarded the contract to design, build, operate and ultimately dismantle a facility to disarm 1,973 tons of these chemical weapons. They developed a high-temperature, high-pressure, water process and earned patents for the work.

“This is something to be proud of,” he said, pointing to the innovative spirit. “It’s just chemistry and really creative people. Find us challenges the world is struggling with, and we just shine.”

Don’t forget to look ahead and dream with your comrades, he added. “There are a lot of fancy names for it, but we spend a lot of our casual time as a team, thinking and discussing the future.”

Of course, Harrington didn’t just find a career at Cal Poly. Like so many others, he also found the classmate who would become his wife. Diane Walls (‘81 OH, ‘83 MA-Ag Ed) and “Chuck” Harrington, as he’s now known, met while serving on the School of Agriculture Student Council. He represented the Agricultural Engineering Society, and she, the Ornamental Horticulture Club.

They began dating and were fast friends with another Cal Poly couple, Diane DeMesa (‘80 OH) and Russ Reed (‘81 AgBus). Both couples married. Over the years, the four have stayed close and watched their families grow. In time, the Harringtons’ daughter, Josclyn, and the Reeds’ son fell in love and, too, were married. The Harringtons have three children: daughter Josclyn Reed (now an engineering grad), daughter Rhiena and son Chase.

On campus, Diane Harrington was the quintessential enterprise project student. She worked with geraniums and begonias, horses, sheep and goats. Like so many others, these projects were her life. “You felt you could do almost anything,” she remembered.

She came to Cal Poly to study horticulture with the dream of becoming a high school horticulture teacher. After bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Cal Poly, she lectured briefly at Cal Poly, then taught for seven years at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, and became the first woman to be elected an officer in the California Agricultural Teachers’ Association.

For young professionals today, who face a job market like the one he first entered, Harrington said: “Follow your dreams, be aggressive and let the rest play out.”
What Is LEARN by DOING?

KNOWLEDGE AT THEIR FINGERTIPS

Practically speaking, the true value of a Cal Poly degree can’t be found in tests and term papers. It’s found in the barns and paddocks, fields and forests, laboratories and test-kitchens unique to a Cal Poly education.

The hands that hold a Cal Poly diploma have held a baby chick. Grapes fresh from the vine. Pipettes, microscopes and DNA samples. The latest in food-processing equipment.

Cal Poly students aren’t just fed information. They are required to dig for answers. To grasp and grapple with the serious challenges our world now faces, from the safety of our food supply to global warming and a deteriorating environment. They know how to take the “learn-by-doing” philosophy and apply it to the real world because they have gotten their hands dirty, trying out new ideas and kneading problems until they become solutions.

There’s hope for all of us because the future is in their hands.
"We are fully committed to learn by doing," said Dean David J. Wehner. "It is at the heart of everything we do, and we must do everything we can to keep it that way."

The Learn By Doing Endowments Campaign will be launched with 10 Founding Partners, nine of whom have joined to date, each committing $100,000 to this initiative. Their collective $1-million Challenge Fund will be used to match other donors, dollar-for-dollar. It's as simple as this:

Pledge $12,500 ($2,500 per year for five years) or more to support learn-by-doing. The Founding Partners match that commitment. You have created a permanent endowment valued at $25,000 or more that can be in your name or that of a loved one, mentor or company.

Each year, the college will benefit from income produced by these endowments and will use that resource to improve hands-on opportunities.
"We know that the state budget will continue to be unstable, and we know that fuel, feed and equipment costs will always fluctuate, but learn by doing cannot," Wehner said. "This project is more important than ever."

It is the learn-by-doing philosophy that puts Cal Poly ahead of other universities, said Founding Partner John Salmonson ('67 CRSC), president of Monterey AgResources. "Cal Poly graduates enter the workforce a good year or two ahead of their peers," he said, "Learn by doing works, and my wife and I are very pleased to support it."

For more information, contact Adam Jarman, associate director of advancement, at ajarman@calpoly.edu or (805) 756-6776.

FOUNDING PARTNERS TO DATE:

Rick and Tonya Antle
The James G. Boswell Foundation
Ed and Rosa Boutonnet
John and Sheila Lake
Mission Produce, Inc.
Al and Gail Montna
RCO Ag Credit, Inc., in memory of Glen N. Janzen
John and Carol Salmonson
Richard and Kathleen Zacky

The Oreggia Family Foundation is generously helping the college enhance its alumni and donor outreach efforts by supporting a new position in the advancement and external relations office. Adam Jarman joined CAFES as its associate director of advancement in July 2008.

"There are so many wonderful things happening in this college, and I am thrilled that Adam is going to help us create a very bright future for our students and the industries we support," said Tanya Kiani, assistant dean of advancement and external relations.

Aside from supporting all the college’s efforts to garner private support and enhance its academic programs, Jarman is managing the Learn by Doing Endowments Campaign, which will create broad-based support for hands-on educational opportunities.

Jarman previously served as the university’s assistant director of planned giving. He earned his bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s in public policy from Cal Poly.

"I am delighted to be a part of this wonderful college," he said, "and I look forward to getting to know the many dedicated alumni who are so passionate about Cal Poly."
Long-recognized as a dairy science leader in the United States, Cal Poly is taking its expertise global.

Cal Poly's Dairy Products Technology Center (DPTC) and Food Science Australia recently signed an agreement to host student and staff exchanges and to collaborate on research, subcontracting and workshops.

The deal with Australia's leading food, health and nutrition research organization "is consistent with our efforts to reach out to the world and provide our students and staff with more global experiences and perspectives," said Phil Tong, director of the DPTC.

This agreement follows an announcement that the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences will also begin hosting Chinese students in fall 2009, as part of a joint master's degree program with Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China.

The first two Jiao Tong students will come to Cal Poly for the second half of a two-and-a-half year master's degree program. They will have completed mostly classroom courses at Jiao Tong, to be followed by 12 to 14 months focused largely on research at Cal Poly.

"The food industry in China is quite advanced overall, and consumers are seeking more value-added foods. So the potential is there for dairy," Tong said. "Cal Poly has a chance to play a role in helping China ensure a safe and healthy food supply."

Sheng Yi, a director's assistant at the Chinese university's S. Luh Food Safety Center, recently spent seven months at Cal Poly as a visiting scholar in the DPTC. Working with Tong, Yi's goals were to gain familiarity with the California dairy industry and to educate Cal Poly on China's dairy and food sectors. She also became familiar with Cal Poly programs and the university environment so she could interest Chinese students in the value of the dual master's degree program.

"Dairy science is new at Jiao Tong," Yi said. "And our students will find Cal Poly's learn-by-doing education to be very helpful."

In addition to international collaboration, the Dairy Science Department is seeking to expand its expertise in global markets through a new faculty position supported with charitable gifts from the industry and alumni, a first for the department.

The endowed professorship in dairy foods science and technologies would increase global markets for U.S. products by providing technical expertise, advocacy, and vision to the California and U.S. dairy industry to ensure long-term viability of export markets.
ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP TO INCREASE INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

"As our industry increases its international presence, this is a natural evolution of our program. We will add to our nationally recognized technical capability for production in domestic markets by adding an essential global component," said Dr. Bruce Golden, head of the Dairy Science Department.

California’s dairy industry is the largest in the nation and is in the best position to capitalize on increasing export opportunities of dairy foods. The Dairy Products Technology Center (DPTC) has created a legacy of leadership by providing world-class scientific solutions and training. The DPTC is the only national dairy center on the West Coast and is a key component in the U.S. dairy industry’s growth strategy.

This new position will be held by a faculty member who is an expert in international products and technologies and, working with the talented DPTC faculty and staff and organizations such as the American Dairy Association, the National Dairy Council, and the U.S. Dairy Export Council, will provide the industry with expertise that is urgently needed.

ADDING FOCUS TO THE ENVIRONMENT

As part of its strategic goals, the Dairy Science Department will also seek funding for a second endowed professorship which would focus on best dairy practices for the environment and water quality. For the long-term health of dairy producers, and the state’s economy and all Californians, it is becoming increasingly crucial to find solutions to the impact on water quality and the global environment.

Cal Poly dairy science has an essential and unique role to play in addressing this already substantial effort by continuing its research in alternative methods of wastewater treatment and electrical power generation from dairy lagoon-produced methane.

"We are very proud that this department has been a leader in California’s dairy industry for many, many decades," Golden said, "and we look forward to continuing that legacy and reaching out to the international marketplace. Cal Poly Dairy Science will lead this industry into the future."

Phil Tong received the 2008 Cargill Flavor Systems Food Specialties Award from the American Dairy Science Association. He was also elected vice president of the association and will serve as next year’s president.
SERVING CALIFORNIA’S DIVERSE STUDENTS

By Pat Broering

CAFES is proud to be the recipient of a Higher Education Multicultural Scholars program grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This program is designed to meet the increasingly advanced technological needs of the food and agricultural sciences workforce and increase the number of new and outstanding students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in food and agricultural sciences.

Students selected for the program are first-generation college students who demonstrate high academic achievement in high school. Current recipients include Vanessa Nunez, nutrition, sophomore; Brianna Montoya, animal science, sophomore; Jesse Garcia, agribusiness, sophomore; Kiettiporn Phuangpolchai, animal science, sophomore; and Thomas Gomes, bioresource and agriculture engineering, junior.

Participants are paired with faculty and student peer advisors for outreach and recruitment efforts for the college, as well as various enterprise projects, internships, work experience and club and leadership activities. They are also given the opportunity to participate in research projects and other career-related experiences.

"This program is making a difference in the college because even the small increase in the number of culturally diverse students helps to support the other diverse students that are part of our program," said Mary Pedersen, associate dean of undergraduate programs. "In our recruitment efforts, these students are great role models for our prospective students as well."

CAFES’ Multicultural Agriculture Program (MAP) Student Center is integral to student success. The center opened in 1993 to help students make connections with fellow students and to provide academic and personal support to students of all cultural backgrounds in the college.

"I believe the activities that take place in the MAP Center greatly enhance student success," said Dean David Wehner. "Cal Poly annually graduates the second or third highest number of Latino students in agriculture of all universities in the United States."

The current Peer Advisors include: Nicole Ghidinelli, agribusiness, sophomore, Ferndale; Megan Giacomazzi, crop science, senior, Hanford; Jennifer Potterton, animal science, senior, Santa Ynez; James Rietkerk, crop science, graduate student, Corcoran; Amanda Rosa, environmental horticultural science, senior, Santa Maria; and Kristina Wolf, animal science, senior, Portland, Ore. The MAP Student Center is under the direction of Brad Kyker, the college’s advising resource specialist.

Bradley Kyker serves as the advising resource specialist in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. In this role, Kyker, along with directing the MAP Student Center, lends academic support to CAFES’ faculty and about 4,000 students. Since 2003, he has trained faculty and peer advisers while counseling students with more complex issues.

Kyker earned a bachelor’s degree at Cal Poly in human development and psychology in 1992 and a master’s degree in counseling for student development in higher education at Cal State Long Beach in 2003.

A San Luis Obispo native, Kyker was named one of the “Top 20 under 40” young leaders by The San Luis Obispo County Tribune.
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IT’S YOUR LEGACY. EXPLORE IT.
Two recent wine and viticulture program graduates, Andrew Macaluso and Nicole Chamberlain, are traveling around California to test-market and sell their senior project invention: a bottled beverage designed to help wine tasters cleanse palates.

The duo named their drink “SanTasti,” and developed it to help winemakers more accurately evaluate their wines, and to help tasting rooms better represent their wines to often overwhelmed consumers. Macaluso and Chamberlain received venture financial and legal backing for their product as the first-place winners of Cal Poly’s Innovation Quest contest.

“We wanted something that worked better than water alone,” Macaluso said, noting their goal was to make a palate cleanser superior to the usual sparkling water and crackers. SanTasti is being stocked at winery tasting rooms and wine stores throughout the state.