‘BOOTSTRAPPING’
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AT CAL POLY

The Orfalea College of Business at Cal Poly has selected three strategic themes of entrepreneurship, globalization, and technology to define a distinctive niche in the world of business education that fits Cal Poly’s “polytechnic” character. These three themes constitute the principal driving forces of business today.

The college chose entrepreneurship for its first programmatic salvo in 2000-01, since it could “bootstrap” many exciting and bold initiatives with little expense. At the same time, it would “role-model” entrepreneurship in the development of its own programs, exemplifying Cal Poly’s “learn-by-doing” philosophy.

Entrepreneurship engages students and faculty from throughout the university and provides an excellent bridge to the business community. It provides the Orfalea College of Business an opportunity to play a critical role in leveraging technology-based innovations into the marketplace.

During the 2000-01 academic year, the college launched a suite of activities in rapid succession in the true spirit of entrepreneurship: at little expense but with huge investments of “sweat equity” by supporting faculty, staff, and students.

* The Sun Campus Incubator provides a high-end e-business development environment for graduate and undergraduate students throughout the university. In January 2001, the first three student teams began a six-month project that participated in a global network of eight leading business schools sponsored by Sun Microsystems, where Orfalea College of Business alumnus Marc Loupe (BUS ’76) provides enthusiastic support.

* In March and April, Professor David Peach and business advisers selected five student teams from an initial field of 13 to present to a panel of experienced entrepreneurs and venture capitalists at the first Ray Scherr Business Plan Competition. Ray Scherr founded The Guitar Center, the world’s largest retailer of guitars and guitar accessories, and provided seed funding for the competition. The three winning teams shared cash prizes of $7,000 and received invitations to the Central Coast Venture Forum in Santa Barbara in May.

* The Cal Poly Entrepreneurs Club, formed in April, welcomes students from all colleges at Cal Poly. Its activities include weekly guest speakers and a full-day “Business Plan Workshop” in May. Professors Mike Geringer and Chris Carr from the college, Unny Menon from the College of Engineering, and Associate Vice President for Advancement Rick Ellison are club advisers.

* The Centennial Entrepreneurs Forum hosted presentations by Kinko’s founder Paul J. Orfalea and real estate developer and investor Kenneth Behring, and a half-day workshop on “Winning Ideas” by the Santa Barbara Technology Group.

* The International Journal of Technopreneurship is the world’s first initiative to address the varied issues of entrepreneurship in technology-based environments through
THE ORFALEA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS THROUGH HISTORY

In 1960 Cal Poly created the Department of Business Administration, with six faculty members drawn from the Department of Social Sciences, established in 1947. The curriculum included classes in industrial relations, marketing, typing, and accounting. When the economics faculty left Social Sciences in 1965, economics became part of Business Administration.

In 1970, the School of Business and Social Sciences was initiated with 21 business and eight economics faculty members. At that time, Economics became a separate department within the new school.

The new School of Business Administration emerged in 1980 from yet another restructuring. It included four departments—Accounting, Management, Business Administration (including finance, marketing, and law), and Economics. Under this organization, in 1986 the school achieved its first successful national accreditation by the AACSB (the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business: the International Association for Management Education).

In 1992 Industrial Technology was added, and all schools on campus became colleges. A second successful AACSB accreditation was completed in 1993 with a 10-year approval. A change in college administration brought freestanding “areas” in business administration, accounting, marketing, global strategy and law, finance, and management.

In 2000, Paul Orfalea (founder of Kinko’s) gave the largest gift of cash or securities ever made to the CSU. On Jan. 24, 2001, the CSU board of trustees voted unanimously to approve the naming of the Orfalea College of Business. The official dedication on April 20 was attended by the Orfalea family, Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker, Dean William Pendergast, and approximately 200 current faculty, emeritus faculty, and honored guests.

During the 2000-01 academic year, the college faculty and staff formulated a new mission statement: “To foster a dynamic educational environment where quality students ‘learn by doing’ to create a global business advantage through the integration of business disciplines and technologies with an entrepreneurial spirit.”

Students focus on the real-world business environment through team projects, computer applications, case analyses, internships, and cooperative work assignments. The college enrolls 2,300 students in its undergraduate programs and 100 students in its MBA programs, offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in business administration, economics, and industrial technology, and filling a special niche in business education through its emphasis on entrepreneurship, technology, and globalization—the driving forces of business today.

Publications of an online journal with a distinguished international editorial board. Professor Mike Geringer is leading this initiative.

* The Woman’s Entrepreneur Mentor (WE Mentor) program, launched in May, provides a network of relationships among women entrepreneurs in the business community and students at Cal Poly. Orfalea College of Business Professors Colette Frayne, Lynn Metcalf, and Terri Lituchy have fostered this effort.

* The Mustang Venture Fund will be a student-assisted venture fund to invest in startup and early-stage businesses. The fund will co-invest with experienced venture funders, and students will gain hands-on experience in due diligence and venture investment. OCOB alumnus Tom DeRegt provided seed funding for this activity.

Building on these striking successes in a few short months, the college plans to work toward the creation of a Technopreneurship Center that will provide the infrastructure and staffing to move entrepreneurship education at Cal Poly to a new level of excellence. Like many dynamic entrepreneurial ventures, the college has mined the potential in “bootstrapping” and has reached a juncture when it must institutionalize its programs with a central administrative and financial base.

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1990s

A student at work in the vibrations and rotor dynamics lab, sponsored by Bentley Nevada Corporation and Solar Turbines.

Hoot Gibson (AERO '69) has flown five space shuttle missions, and in 1995 commanded the space shuttle Atlantis to the first U.S. mid-space rendezvous with the Russian space station Mir.