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Spring 2009 Grads Embark on Careers in the State, National and Global Economy

SAN LUIS OBISPO – As Cal Poly prepares for spring commencement ceremonies June 13-14, companies in California and around the world are preparing to welcome the university's talented graduates into their workforce.

"What distinguishes Cal Poly graduates from others is their ability to dive into work on their first day with little training," says Cornel Morton, Cal Poly's vice president for Student Affairs. "Executives from a wide range of industries tell us all the time that they seek out our graduates because they are well-trained, work-ready professionals in scientific and technical fields. The common quote we hear from industry leaders is, 'Cal Poly graduates are ready to contribute on Day One.'"

Although the Class of 2009 faces an unwelcoming economy, many Cal Poly graduates are landing highly sought after positions in diverse fields – from construction project managers to software developers, from ice cream makers to agricultural professionals.

Meet five Cal Poly students who will be tackling demanding jobs following commencement ceremonies June 14-15:



As you might expect from one of the nation's top business colleges, senior Kirsten Peterson of Cal Poly's Orfalea College of Business has landed a job with one of the country's premier entertainment companies – Pixar Animation Studios. For Peterson, "it's a dream come true."

She will be working at Pixar in San Francisco as a production management intern. A native of California's East Bay, Peterson hopes her three-month internship will result in the job of her dreams. "I'm ecstatic. I've wanted to work at Pixar since I was 15 years old," says Peterson, now 22. "My first Pixar toy was a Woody doll from the movie Toy Story. Now I'm going to be working for the company."

A business administration major, Peterson took classes in Cal Poly's parks, recreation and tourism program



to cultivate the skills she needed to land the Pixar job. “I took an independent course of study within my major and wound up taking a lot of event planning and management classes.” She says it worked to her advantage. “I was able to demonstrate exactly what I was capable of doing because of the hands-on projects I completed at Cal Poly.”

Maci DePaoli and Alex Lehman will both graduate from Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. The college is the fourth largest agriculture school in the country and produces more agriculture professionals than any other California university.

DePaoli, a dairy science major in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences will begin a nine-month training program with Dreyer’s Ice Cream in Bakersfield after she graduates. “I grew up with dairy cows and I love them.”

DePaoli thought she would work on the production side of dairy industry. “When I got to Cal Poly, I was able to do internships at processing plants in the Central Valley processing milk, butter and cheese. I began to love dairy processing because of those experiences.”

The 22-year-old Strathmore, Calif., native is looking forward to working for the nation’s largest ice cream producer. “I will complete different training sessions in various divisions of the processing plant, all of which will provide me with exposure to all areas of the business. After my training, I’ll be assigned a role within the plant.”

She’s also been getting a lot of ideas from family and friends about types of ice cream she should develop. “The best ideas I’ve heard so far have been apple crisp ice cream and root beer float ice cream - both ideas are my brother’s.”



Lehman, an environmental horticulture major, will join Vaccarino & Associates, Inc. in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands just two days after graduating.

Lehman, 23, grew up in Ojai, Calif. gardening with his parents and grandparents. He will take over the native plant collections area for the one of the Caribbean’s largest landscape architecture companies. The group specializes in sustainable landscapes for homes, businesses and government, as well as restoration of native plants throughout the region.

Lehman, who minored in plant biology, will travel throughout Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands collecting native plants that will be used in the company’s various landscape restoration projects. “I’ll oversee ground installation and restoration work. The company works specifically to restore sites formerly degraded by sugar



cane and other cash crops. We also rehabilitate waterfront property that has experienced overdevelopment, erosion and years of compounded abuse.”

Manager of Cal Poly’s Plant Conservatory for the past two years, Lehman says he’s looking forward to his job. “My new job requires me to travel all over the Virgin Islands collecting plants, to get my scuba certification and spend all my time focusing on what I love to do. Not bad.”

Klay Adair and Max Brandt are both construction management graduates of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design which was recently ranked the third best architecture school in the nation behind Cornell University and Virginia Tech by the journal DesignIntelligence.

Adair, 22, will work at the university that landed him his upcoming job. Adair, a construction management student in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, will hit the ground running when he joins Sundt Construction in San Diego as a project engineer on the Cal Poly Rec Center renovation project. “I’m going to be working on project budget and scheduling, as well as quality control, site safety and processing submittals and transmittals,” he says.

The San Luis Obispo native got the job with Sundt after attending an information session provided by the Construction Management Department.

Adair says Cal Poly prepared him for real world experiences through classes, internships and extracurricular activities. “The Construction Management Department does a great job of relating everything we do to what we will encounter after graduation. The internships gave me first-hand experiences of what I would actually be doing in my career.”



Brandt will head to Tanzania after he completes a six-month paid internship with Clark Construction following graduation. He will move to Tanzania to complete a senior project he began two years ago. The construction management major will spend a year completing design work on a self-sustaining, LEED-certified technical university for the Catholic Diocese of Same, Tanzania. He and his friend intend to open a nonprofit corporation that will aid in developing Same using sustainable practices.

Born in St. Louis, Brandt calls Davis, Calif., home. He attributes his love of construction management to his family environment. “I grew up remodeling homes with my mom and dad. We remodeled every house we lived in,” he says.

Brandt, 23, was also recognized for work he did while at Cal Poly. This year, he received an award for outstanding service to the off-campus community, as well as an award for outstanding leadership from the Construction Management Department.



Our featured grads all agree that the hands-on experience they had as part of Cal Poly's learn by doing education helped land them the jobs they wanted and provided them the skills to begin work on day one of their careers.

Cal Poly's class of 2009 includes more than 3,900 graduates eligible to participate in commencement ceremonies Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14.

To schedule an interview with these or any other Cal Poly graduates, contact Stacia Momburg at 805-756-6260.

California Polytechnic State University is located in San Luis Obispo, Calif., and has an enrollment of 19,400. With its emphasis on agriculture, architecture, business, engineering, and science and mathematics, Cal Poly is one of the nation's top producers of well-trained, work-ready professionals in scientific and technical fields.

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