Second time's (hopefully) the charm for presidential candidates

As the search for Cal Poly's president begins again, the presidential candidates are scheduled to visit campus and answer student questions throughout the week.

Russell Peterson
SPECIAL TO THE MUSTANG DAILY

On Dec. 4, about two dozen Cal Poly students will attempt to solve complex problems in the William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition.

The competition is considered one of the most prestigious math contests of the year. More than 500 schools from the United States and Canada participate and about 3,500 students compete every year, said Kevin Lamb, a contestant and mathematics junior.

"The problems are each scored from zero to 10," Sherman said. "To get even roughly 50% of the problems correct, you need to have good visualization skills to do well in the competition."

"Pure math is all about abstract thought and problem solving," Lamb said. "You are not asked to prove theorems, but each problem requires a certain amount of creativity. You need to have good visualization skills to do well in the competition." This kind of thought is not something that comes easily to many students since it is not taught in the general education system, said Casey Kelleher, a contestant and mathematics junior.

"The problems are not the usual problems students are used to," Kelleher said. "They give you no hint on what direction to take, and they are usually across the board in terms of mathematics. This makes the exam very hard to do." The competition is so difficult that about half the competitors get a zero, get together to prepare for the exam," Sze said.

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The challenge the competition poses to the participants is so great that of roughly 500 schools, and had an average score of about six. To prepare for the rigors of the exam, students can take a two-unit course during the fall quarter, MATH 370 — a one-unit course and work as a research assistant, Sze said, associate professor of mathematics.

"It is a chance for them to show their smarts in national math competition," Shapiro said. "It is actually a lot of fun for us." The names of the three presidential candidates were released Nov. 29, providing Cal Poly students with an idea of who their new president might be.

Robert E. Palazzo, Thomas C. Skalak and Jeffrey D. Armstrong will visit campus Nov. 30 through Dec. 2 for forums for students, faculty and others in the Cal Poly community. Each candidate will visit on a separate day. Palazzo will visit Nov. 30, Skalak Dec. 1 and Armstrong Dec. 2.

All of the candidates have differing academic focuses. Palazzo, the provost and chief academic officer at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., received his Bachelor of Science in biology in 1979 and doctorate in biological sciences and biochemistry in 1984 from Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich., according to his biography on the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute website. Palazzo was also a post-doctorate fellow at the University of Virginia.

Skalak, the vice president for research and professor of biomedical engineering at the University of Virginia, received his B.S. in bioengineering from John Hopkins University in 1979, and his doctorate, also in bioengineering, from the University of California, San Diego in 1984, according to his biography on the University of Virginia website.

Armstrong, the dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and professor of animal science at Michigan State University (MSU), received his Bachelor of Science in agriculture in 1981 from North Carolina State University and his doctorate, also in reproduction and endocrinology from North Carolina State University, according to his biography on the MSU website.

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Construction continues to cause 'Big Squeeze' throughout campus

Hope Hanselman
SPECIAL TO THE MUSTANG DAILY

Expect detours on Via Carta, the major pedestrian and vehicle pathway connecting North and South Perimeter roads, for the next three years as construction is completed for the new Center for Science and Mathematics.

Via Carta will remain closed to students to give access to trucking materials in and out of the site. The fences also keep pedestrians safe as the construction team removes hazardous materials from the existing building.

Construction currently occupies most of the College of Science and Mathematics. Phil Bailey, the dean of the college, has had the task of accommodating students, staff and faculty to change the campus will undergo.

"If you were to drag your finger around the entire perimeter of the Spider Building, you will have walked 1 and 1/8 miles," Bailey said.

Bailey calls the accommodations made to classrooms in response to the construction the "Big Squeeze." The college needed to relocate 10 science labs from the previous building to alternative buildings, including the Clyde P. Fischer Science and Graphic Arts buildings. Cal Poly’s decreased enrollment helped make this transition more manageable as the university has fewer students to accommodate, Bailey said.

The college also has the option, if necessary, to offer more lab classes to students. The university, however, has not yet needed to do so, he said.

The building was designed in the 50s when Cal Poly had a student body of around 5,000 students. Today, Cal Poly's student body exceeds 46,200 square feet.

"We said we wanted room for students and we’re going to get it," Bailey said.

Classrooms will be constructed to integrate lecture and lab so that students can experience both in one class period. The "studio classrooms" will reduce the number of hours students are assigned to attend class, Bailey said.

The building will also be fully certificated by the Leadership for Environmental and Energy Design (LEED). Contractors are hoping to achieve Gold LEED Certification, an honor that signifies the building’s design is environmentally sustainable across fields including water, energy, atmosphere, resource and transportation efficiency.

"The construction, led by Zimmerman & Frasca Architects, is currently removing hazardous material from the building and relocating 14 trees," Bailey said.

An upgrade to the Central Plant chiller capacity for the new buildings will also begin this month. The construction team is installing increased chiller capacity for the new buildings.

The team has already completed construction of a fiber-optic building hub, the switchboard for the Center for Science and Math.

"We’re right on schedule right now," said Pamela Timm, project information coordinator for the Center for Science and Math.

The team has already completed the construction of a fiber-optic building hub, the switchboard for the Center for Science and Math's electronic operations that now stands just north of Engineering East.

An upgrade to the Central Plant also began this month. The construction team is installing increased chiller capacity for the new building's air-conditioning unit and completing the campus chilled-water loop.

"We're right on schedule right now," said Pamela Timm, project information coordinator for the Center for Science and Math.

The best individual performers in the competition win cash prizes. The top five scorers — named Putnam Fellows — are awarded $2,500. One of the five received the William Lowell Putnam Prize Scholarship, a $12,000 scholarship and tuition for graduate school at Harvard University, Shapiro said.

The top two performers for Cal Poly receive the Ralph E. Weston Memorial Award at the end of the year. The given amount varies from year to year, but it is usually between $200 and $300, said Cami Renee, administrative coordinator for the mathematics department.

The cash prizes are not the reason most participants from Cal Poly choose to compete, Lamb said.

"I am participating more as a personal challenge than anything, because I enjoy the sheer toughness of the competition," Lamb said. "If I score well, so be it, but I take the test to see how my math maturity stacks up against the best in the nation."

"You get to hang out with a bunch of students who are as geeky as you are."

— Lawrence Sze
Associate professor of mathematics

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Construction continued from page 1

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President

continued from page 2

at corporate clients such as Abbott Laboratories,” according to his biography on the UVa website. Armstrong is “an internationally known researcher in the area of reproductive physiology,” and “is also active in the area of food-animal well-being and sustainability of the food system,” according to his biography on the MSU website.

Sarah Storelli, the Associated Students Inc. president and student representative on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, said each candidate is “the most qualified ... from the applicant pool.” Storelli also said though the opinions of the Cal Poly community will be factored into the president selection, the California State University Chancellor and Board of Trustees will make the final decision.

“The campus visits are a time for all key constituents to see how each candidate interacts with the campus and community and which one is ultimately, the best fit,” Storelli said.

Sarah Pare also contributed to this article.

Jonathan S. Landay
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

The Obama Administration moved Monday to contain potential damage to U.S. national security from the WikiLeaks release of tens of thousands of sensitive U.S. diplomatic documents and said it might take criminal action against the whistle-blowing Internet site.

The White House directed a government-wide review of guidelines for classified information handling, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ordered tighter safeguards for U.S. diplomatic communications.

Meanwhile, the CIA was assessing harm done to U.S. intelligence operations.

“This is a serious violation of the law,” White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said. “This is a serious threat to individuals that both carry out and assist our foreign policy.”

Attorney General Eric Holder said “an active, ongoing criminal investigation” was under way, and he indicated foreign associates with WikiLeaks, including its Australian founder, Julian Assange, could be targeted.

“Let me be very clear. It’s not saber-rattling. To the extent that we can find anybody who was involved in the breaking of American law ... they will be held responsible. They will be held accountable,” Holder said.

“To the extent that there are gaps in our laws, we will move to close those gaps, which is not to say that anybody at this point, because of their citizenship or residence, is not a target or a subject of an investigation that is ongoing.”

Clinton said the release of the cables was not just an attack on America’s foreign policy interests. It is an attack on the international community, the alliances and partnerships, the conversations and negotiations that safeguard global security and advance economic prosperity.

At the same time, senior administration officials began moderating their assessment of the potential harm done by the leaked documents, the first batch of which was released Sunday.

While lives could be at risk and ties with some countries hurt, they said, relationships with key governments would weather the fallout.

“I am confident that the partnerships that the Obama Administration has worked so hard to build will withstand this challenge,” said Clinton, who took pains at a news conference not to confirm the authenticity of the materials, calling them “alleged cables.”

In the latest revelations, a Feb. 3, 2010, cable from the U.S. ambassador to South Korea quoted the country’s vice foreign minister as saying “China would not be able to stop North Korea’s collapse” after the death of its ailing dictator, Kim Jong Il.

The isolated nuclear-armed Stalinist nation has “already collapsed economically and would collapse politically” two or three years after Kim’s death, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Chon Yong-woo was quoted as telling U.S. Ambassador Kathleen Stephens in the secret cable to Washington written by Stephens.

Chun said unidentified “sabotaged Chinese officials” — whose identities were redacted from the cable — believed that the divided Korean peninsula should be reunified under a “benign alliance” with the United States.

Clinton said she had ordered “new security safeguards” to protect State Department information carried on Defense Department computer systems and elsewhere “so that this kind of breach cannot and does not happen ever again.”

CIA officials, meanwhile, were poring over the cables “to assess the extent of any intelligence concerns,” said a senior U.S. intelligence official, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The White House released a letter sent to every U.S. department and agency by Jacob J. Lew, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, ordering each to establish a security assessment team “to review the implementation of procedures for safeguarding classified information against improper disclosures.”

Noting that the Obama Administration has brought charges in recent months in four cases involving leaks of classified information, Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Diane Feinstein said the panel is considering whether legislation is needed to tighten access to classified material.

“We are also looking at strengthening administrative sanctions against individuals who leak,” said Feinstein, D-Calif.

**Government scrambles to head off uproar caused by WikiLeaks release**
President Barack Obama called Monday for a two-year freeze on federal workers’ pay, a symbolic act that kicked off a week of partisan debate over how to contain government spending while stabilizing the economy.

"Going forward, we’re going to have to make some additional very tough decisions that this town has put off for a very long time, and that’s what this upcoming week is really about," Obama said in announcing the freeze plan, which would save $5 billion over two years and affect civilian workers, not the military. Congress must approve the freeze for it to become effective.

The federal budget deficit was about $1.3 trillion in the recently ended fiscal year, and the national debt is estimated at nearly $14 trillion. Paying interest on the debt for it to become effective.

On Wednesday, the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, also known as Obama’s bipartisan deficit commission, is to issue its report on how to bring down the crippling budget deficits and debt.

On other urgent fiscal fronts, some 2 million people stand to lose extended unemployment benefits over the next few weeks unless Congress acts soon; the money runs out Tuesday.

Congress also must act by Friday to authorize money to keep the government functioning; otherwise, most nonessential government services would shut down.

Obama’s pay-freeze proposal drew fast opposition from labor and liberal groups, while many Republicans and some Democrats said it wouldn’t go far enough.

Lawrence Mishel, the president of the liberal Economic Policy Institute, called the plan "another example of the administration’s tendency to bargain with itself rather than with Republicans," and said it reinforced a "conservative myth" that federal workers were paid too much.

Like the ban on earmarks — the local projects that lawmakers dip into legislation — which congressional Republicans endorsed earlier this month, independent budget analysts thought the pay freeze would make little difference to the federal budget but that it did give Obama a head start in this week’s political gamesmanship.

“Freezing federal pay is just getting ahead of the curve. It’s a good talking point,” said Tippy Bird, who was a top aide to former Senate Republican leader Trent Lott of Mississippi and is now an analyst at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research center.

The president indicated his plan is a compromise that acknowledges that millions of Americans have been living with pay cuts and furloughs since the Great Recession of 2007-08 — or have lost their jobs altogether.

His plan arrived against the backdrop of a widening debt crisis in Europe that’s a reminder of what the United States could face someday if it doesn’t get its fiscal house in order.

Still, it’s not clear what hard choices politicians are prepared to make in Washington’s polarized partisan culture. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said Monday that he didn’t expect Tuesday’s meeting between Obama and congressional leaders to be decisive.

Any final recommendations that the deficit commission submits to Congress are to include only proposals that 14 of 18 commission members support, which means they must draw bipartisan backing.

With Bush-era tax cuts set to expire Dec. 31, there’s a lack of consensus on how to proceed on that hot-button issue as well.

The Democrats who are in control of the lame-duck House of Representatives say they’ll vote to extend only those reductions that affect individuals who earn less than $200,000 annually and couples that make less than $250,000. Most Senate Democrats are expected to follow suit.

At least five Senate Democrats have said they want the cuts extended for those who earn more, too, at least temporarily.

Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., said he doesn’t think they ought to be drawing a distinction at $250,000,” while Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., said “raising taxes will lower consumer demand at a time when we want people putting money into the economy.”

Democrats control 58 Senate seats, but they need 60 votes to cut off debate. All 42 Republicans are expected to push to extend all the cuts — and to block anything less.

More immediate issues for Congress are extending unemployment benefits and renewing government funding.

Congress has missed the deadline for jobless aid before this summer, it waited 51 days before extending it.

The debate’s the same this time. Republicans want the $12.5 billion in benefits paid for through cuts in other spending; most Democrats say extending the jobless benefits is an emergency, which makes it OK to add that cost to the budget deficit.
State

LOS ANGELES (MCT) — The federal appeals court panel that will decide the legality of Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage in California, represents a broad ideological spectrum of the judiciary.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals announced Monday that Stephen Reinhardt, the liberal lion of the circuit, will decide the case along with Michael Daly Hawkins, a moderate appointed by President Bill Clinton, and N. Randy Smith, a conservative named to the court by President George W. Bush.

The panel is scheduled to hear arguments Dec. 6 in San Francisco.

SANTA ROSA (MCT) — A light earthquake hit downtown Santa Rosa Monday morning, reported the U.S. Geological Survey, which tracks earthquakes.

The quake was centered in Santa Rosa and was most likely on the Rodgers Creek Fault, said geologist David Schwartz with the U.S.G.S.

According to Google Earth, the epicenter was under the playground at Santa Rosa Middle School on the edge of downtown, if the initial coordinates reported were accurate.

Students felt the quake but were not evacuated.

No damage or injuries were reported, said one emergency dispatcher.

National

FLORIDA (MCT) — News ran wild Monday that Hawthorne Elementary in Seminole County had banned red and green this month because the colors are associated with Christmas.

"The Fox & Friends" program and other conservative media outlets cited the story as another sign of politically correct overkill.

The report was in error, Seminole County school district officials said.

"The banning of red and green is simply not true," said Regina Klaers, district spokeswoman.

SANTA ROSA (MCT) — The federal appeals court panel named to the court by President George W. Bush.

The panel is scheduled to hear arguments Dec. 6 in San Francisco.

WASHINGTON D.C. (MCT) — The feds are again cracking down on websites dealing bootleg goods.

The Department of Justice said Monday it moved to seize 82 websites dealing bootleg goods.

International

UGANDA (MCT) — Uganda on Monday launched a program to circumcise over a million men every year in a bid to stem the increase in HIV infections.

"Uganda still has a big epidemic of HIV, and last year we had 125,000 new infections," Dr. Christopher Oleke, an official with the project under the health ministry told reporters.

"We are launching this program to target over 1 million males aged 14 to 55 years."

Mobile health units will be used to reach outlying areas of the country under the voluntary exercise, which aims to increase the percentage of circumcised people in the country from 20 to 40 percent, Oleke said.

BULGARIA (MCT) — A freighter flying the flag of Sierra Leone sank after a collision with a Dutch tanker in the Black Sea on Monday, leaving five crew members unaccounted for, the Bulgarian Interior Ministry said.

The Karina 1 went down during stormy weather 10 nautical miles off Cape Emine, a headland in Bulgaria.

Five of its 10-member crew were rescued, all but one of them from Syria.

The freighter was on its way to Istanbul. The tanker, which did not have any cargo, was travelling to the Bulgarian port of Varna.

Authorities said there was no danger of an oil leak.

American Tunes

"If You've Got a Gun" by David Cook

"That for Me" by Forever the Sickest Kids

"War Party" by Eddie Grant

"I Like You the Best" by Beast

"Color" by The Maine

"No Love" by Eminem

"No One" by Rihanna

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Looming European financial crisis may be prediction of American economy

Kevin G. Hall

The cost of borrowing rose sharply Monday for many European governments as investors fretted over the possibility of defaults on government bonds in a new round of volatility that was eerily reminiscent of the U.S. financial crisis.

With recommendations expected in two days from a special commission on ways to cut the U.S. federal deficit, the rising borrowing costs in Europe offered a sobering reminder of what could happen here if investors decide that Washington is unwilling or unable to address its mounting debt.

Stocks fell sharply in Europe, shrugging off the $90 billion rescue package prepared by the European Union for Ireland. The deal announced late Sunday would provide low interest loans to Ireland to cover its financial obligations in exchange for budget-austerity measures.

The EU deal also extended the payback time for some loans to Greece, whose fiscal problems stand the European debt crisis last spring.

Worried that several European governments will eventually default on their debts, investors demanded much higher interest rates on government bonds from those countries. For example, the yield on a 10-year bond from Spain was almost 2.73 percentage points higher than one issued by fiscally stable Germany. Investors demanded an interest rate 4.49 percentage points higher than Germany's for a bond issued by Portugal and 9.28 percentage points higher for one issued by Greece.

Jitters about Europe's debt problems upset U.S. markets in early trading, with the Dow Jones industrial average down more than 100 points for most of the day before recovering in late trading to finish the day off 39.51 points at 11,092.49.

U.S. banks have relatively little exposure to government debt of troubled European nations, but average Americans face unexpected risks from the European debt crisis. Here are some answers to questions about that:

Q: Could the United States find itself in a debt crisis like Greece or Ireland?
A: Right now U.S. government bonds are viewed as a safe haven, a refuge from the global financial storm. But interest on the national debt eats about 6 percent of all federal spending and that is projected to rise to 17 percent in 2020. If the United States cannot bring down its ratio of debt to the size of its economy, investors could worry that we cannot pay our government debt and demand a higher return. This would make managing the debt even more costly and difficult to resolve. Already the state of California and many municipalities around the nation are facing investor demand for higher returns in exchange for purchase of their bonds.

Q: Are there other ways that the European crisis affects the United States?
A: The United States is trying to export more. The dollar had been weakening in recent months, giving U.S. exporters a competitive advantage. But now Europe's currency, the euro, is weakening against the dollar. If the bailout of Ireland fails to calm markets, the euro could fall further, making U.S. exports more expensive in one of our biggest markets.
Perfect your Christmas caroling with a little help from the leek

THE FOOD FACTOR

Heather Rockwood is a food science junior and the Mustang Daily food columnist.

The holidays are just around the corner and the winter wind rings with the high-pitched squeals of carolers young and old singing all around town. It is a well-known fact that honey can soothe the throat for melody making, but Roman Emperor Nero once swore by the power of leeks to perfect his singing voice. As caroling season approaches, leeks are conveniently reaching the peak of their season and offer the prime opportunity for the hungry and musically inept to register this old ruler’s words with reality.

Leeks have been cultivated for more than 3,000 years with a myriad of benefits acclaimed to their name. The Egyptians believed leeks provided strength for those building the pyramids. Hippocrates prescribed leeks to cure nosebleeds and the soldiers of Wales used leeks in their hats to identify themselves from their Saxon enemies. Today the health benefits of leeks are still widely celebrated across the continents.

Leeks are close relatives to both garlic and onions (all part of the Allium family), and share many of the common health benefits associated with the Allium family. Vegetables of this family are commonly recognized as agents that lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and increase HDL (“good” cholesterol). This family boasts high levels of vitamin C, folate, iron and magnesium, which all play an important role in stabilizing one’s blood sugar.

Everyday families respect the traditional rule of hierarchy among members. For example, a grandfather is much wiser than his beloved cousin, the onion. Although the flavor of the leek is similar to the onion, it is much more subtle, delicate and sweet. These flavors characterize make leeks the perfect addition to a variety of soups and any meal prepared for a picky eater.

Whether or not leeks grant you the ability to sing an angelic melody from heaven is still debatable, but surely this down-to-earth, family-oriented vegetable can make at least one note resound in harmony – “yummmm.”

CLUE: Vering, shukuga, arebere, simnkah, celebradino, first!

Leek Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 1 pound leeks, drained, and dark green sections removed, approximately 3 in medium size
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Heavy pinch leek salt plus additional for seasoning
- 14 ounces premium white pepper
- 1 tablespoon oregano

Directions

Chop the leeks into small bit. In a soup saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the leeks and a heavy pinch of salt and sweat for five minutes. Decrease the heat to medium-low and cook until the leeks are tender, approximately 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the potatoes, the vegetable broth, increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and gently simmer until the potatoes are soft, approximately 45 minutes. Turn off the heat and pour the mixture into a food processor or blender. Mix until smooth, returning potatoes to saucepan. Taste and adjust seasoning if desired. Sprinkle with chives just before serving, immediately, or chill and serve cold.

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John McCullough
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Imagine Barry Bonds, Casey Blake or Michael Yang, arguably three of the MLB's greatest hitters, coming to Cal Poly to teach the baseball team how to hit. Imagine Thom Mayer — the well known Los Angeles-based architect — coming to teach Cal Poly's architecture students about designing buildings.

This is an analogy that music department chair Thomas Davies used to describe the importance of the music department's upcoming visitor, because that's what it will be like for Cal Poly music students to be in the presence of professional music Paul Harris, who is coming to campus to teach them how to perform musically.

The Cal Poly Music Department will host Harris, a professional opera singer, today to teach and critique some of Cal Poly's music majors with emphases in voice.

The class — known as a vocal master class — will be open to anyone who wants to observe some of Cal Poly's music students to be in the presence of professional musicians. Harris, who is coming to campus to teach them how to perform musically.

Harris will work with Cal Poly's music students on many of the same things he coaches professional opera singers about, and he hopes his comments will be helpful to the students, he said.

"They will sing an aria or song and I will tell them what I think," he said. "I've been doing this for a long time and have accompanied many rehearsals. I would like the students to know what they're singing about. I'll focus on language, phrasing, vocal line and their interpretation on the whole so that it sounds beautiful."

There are many key elements to performing a piece and it will be good to have the knowledge and advice of a professional who understands what a good performance entails, Davies said.

"Music is kind of a building block thing," he said. "We build at different points in our lives. What it is to create a piece and perform a piece of music. It's the same with every major on campus. This is a foundation. The more you learn, the more the building goes up. Here we're talking about music. It's the same as architecture or carp science."

"This is really important for us," he said. "He's worked with professionals all over the world. I hope he's not too harsh."

De Bruijn has worked on her piece all quarter. She sees her vocal teacher Jacalyn Kreitzer every week and spends hours trying to perfect every element of the song, de Bruijn said.

"She has been working on creating beautiful vocal technique for three years, and then, in order to sing in a prepared manner for a professional coach, she had to make certain she knew the translation word for word, do research on the opera source, acting, character, diction, stage deportment and subtext," Kreitzer said. "Only then is she ready to sing, and she is."

It's different than simply singing through a song, de Bruijn said. De Bruijn won't be alone on Tuesday. Music senior Katie Dugan will also perform for Harris and said it's important for people to realize how important an art-form opera is.

In addition to the musical element, opera tells stories as well as contain some of the world's best stage decor, Dugan said.

"Back when operas first started being performed that was how people were entertained," Dugan said. "The composers and performers of opera were the celebrities of their day."

Although Hurd won't perform alongside Dugan and de Bruijn, he shares the same sentiments about opera.

"We have three or four weeks of rehearsal, we play piano for the stage rehearsals, we advise on balance and many other issues that come up," Harris said.

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Franco and Hathaway to host Academy Awards

Nicole Sperling
LOS ANGELES TIMES

If it's good enough for "Saturday Night Live," it's good enough for the Academy Awards?

That's the hope anyway of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, which announced Monday that James Franco and Anne Hathaway will co-host the 83rd Academy Awards.

With respective ages of 32 and 28, the two actors are among the youngest hosts for the iconic awards show. While both are accomplished, adventurous and well-regarded actors, their primary job qualification for hosting a live variety show is their experience toplining "SNL."

"It's a little younger in its approach," Mischer said. "They are both attractive and young. They can be playful at times and it felt good to us as the direction we wanted to go with the show." (Franco and Hathaway declined to comment for this story.)

"We're not going to require them to perform six to eight skits playing different characters live in front of an audience — and Franco and Hathaway are a key part of that plan.

"It has always been a thing that happens on the show where people see that people are more than what they thought they were," said "SNL" producer Lorrie Michaels. "Whenever people get to see something they never saw before, it has another level to it."

Still, the move to hire Hathaway and Franco is clearly a departure from Oscar hosts in the past. While Hathaway scored high marks for her brief song-and-dance number with Hugh Jackman on the 81st award show and recently played Viola in New York's Shakespeare in the Park's "Twelfth Night," her experience on live television is limited. Jackman himself was considered a surprise choice two years ago, but the Australian had hosted the Tonys three times and won a Tony for his role in "The Boy From Oz."

Franco, meanwhile, has an eclectic — some would say oddball — resume, including performance art pieces and a recurring part on the television soap opera "General Hospital." But he's not known for live stage performances and only recently moved into the ranks of leading actors. Contrast that with last year's, hosts, Alec Baldwin and Steve Martin (ages 52 and 65 respectively), both longtime movie and comedy stars.

"It's a positive choice to go see Franco, page 11

Actor James Franco was selected to co-host the 83rd Academy Awards along with actress Anne Hathaway in an attempt to lure a younger audience.
Franco continued from page 10

younger and break the mold,” said Gil Cates, who has produced numerous Oscar telecasts. “With this show, sometimes you have to do something to learn how effective it will be. When I first chose Billy Crystal to host, some people thought it was a mistake. At the end of the day, if it works it’s a great choice.”

Mischer spins the news this way: He and Cohen were interested in hiring movie stars, rather than comedians, to headline the show.

“Bruce and I talked a lot about what it should feel like when our hosts walk out on that stage at the top of the show. People should feel that they deserve to be there, that they want to be there and they are comfortable there. It contributes to a familial feeling in the room, and that translates into television.”

Franco is already likely to have a reason to be at the show, as he’s practically guaranteed a best actor nomination for his commanding role as Aron Ralston, the hiker who cut off his lower right arm in Danny Boyle’s “127 Hours.”

Hathaway is more of a long shot for her part in the recent dramedy “Love & Other Drugs,” which opened this past holiday weekend to mixed reviews and $14 million at the box office. But Hathaway has already been nominated for an Oscar and is widely considered to be one of the most talented of the younger generation of actors.

It wouldn’t be the first time an Oscar nominee is a host of the Academy Awards, though you have to go back close to 40 years to find an example. In 1973, Michael Caine was a co-host of the show and was nominated for his role in “Sleuth,” while in 1999 David Niven hosted the show, and received the lead actor prize for “Separate Tables” that night. But that was prior to Oscar campaigning becoming a full-time job for potential nominees, and some within the industry wonder if Franco is not hurting his chances for the Oscar by playing MC.

In the past, the academy has used such movie stars as Jane Fonda, Warren Beatty and Frank Sinatra as hosts. But while Franco and Hathaway are clearly emerging talents, they don’t yet have the worldwide box office appeal of stars such as Johnny Depp or Angelina Jolie.

Hathaway has practically grown up on the big screen from her early starring roles in the family-friendly “Princess Diaries” franchise. She’s graduated to more adult fare in the R-rated “Love & Other Drugs” and 2008’s darker indie drama “Rachel Getting Married,” for which the actress won a nomination. She’s also made more commercial choices, co-starring in mainstream fare such as “Alice in Wonderland” and “Get Smart.”

Prior to “127 Hours,” Franco was best known as villain Harry Osborn in “Spider-Man,” as a stoner dude in “Pineapple Express” or as Scott Smith in 2008’s Oscar-nominee “Milk.”

Taking on the Oscar hosting gig though is in line with Franco’s recent quest to turn his career into a performance artist package. From his live art installation in New York City, to his book of poetry, Franco’s career has not been conventional by any measure.
Everything is a religion today

It may seem that government is restricted to making non-funda­mental decisions, but in decisions, we are still consistent with its fundamen­tals, and it will seek us defend those fundamentals, whatever they may be. In a sense, government is the most powerful religious entity of all.

While the separation of church and state may seem to be a meta-val­ue that precedes religious decisions, remember that meta-values are reli­gion — the fundamentals that give structure to all else. There is no sepa­ration between the religious and the secular because the secular is itself a religious concept.

The separation of church and state as it is used today seems to offer a compromise between gov­ernment and religion where each is promised to be undisturbed so long as it remains inside its proper sphere. But if everything is religion, all motives and decisions are ultimately the product of fundamental values, then it is meaningless to speak of a limited sphere for religion; religion encompasses everything. The separa­tion of church and state, as we use it today, does not refer to a conflict be­tween the religious and the secular, but between religion and religion. It refers according to one simple rule: one side is excused from being challenged by the other.

What does the separation of church and state promise the "church" and what does it mean to those of other beliefs? What are the limits of the protection of religion, and what is the role of state? Wherever decisions are made, there is no separation of values and decisions. However, if separation of church and state is instead interpreted to mean a separation of organization (government organizations shall not unite with religious organizations) rather than a separation of function (government decisions shall not be made in accordance with values), then it is impossible to divide anything — whether culture, or government, or personal life — into religious and secular dichotomies. All non-compulsory actions proceed from and are consistent with one's fundamental set of values, however harmonious or con­flicted those values may be.

The separation of church and state is often used to construct a di­chotomy between religion and gov­ernment, and with good reason: the combination of moral authority and physical coercion is an irresistible instrument of control. But if all decisions are made in accordance with the decision-maker's religion — the decision-maker's system of values — then there really is no separation of religion and government, because there is no separation of values and decisions.

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Colombia 'drifting away' from U.S. causes concern

Andrea Oppenheimer is a Latin America correspondent for the Miami Herald.

Colombia's right-of-center President Juan Manuel Santos may have been kidding when he recently referred to him as his "best friend," but few in Washington are laughing.

There is a growing feeling in the U.S. capital — especially in Congress — that Santos is moving farther away from Colombia's close alliance with the United States over the last eight years.

Since Santos took office in August, he has taken several steps to distance himself from former president Alvaro Uribe's policies. Consider:

Santos' first official trip as president was to Brazil. Since then, he has toured several Latin American countries, but has yet to set foot on Washington soil.

Santos has met several times with Chavez, and both have vowed to dramatically improve Colombi­an-Venezuelan ties. Relations were previously hostile under Uribe, in part because the former Colombian president repeatedly demanded Venezuela's clandestine support for Colombia's FARC guerrillas.

Complying with Chavez's wishes, the Colombian president recently announced that he will extradite suspected Venezuelan drug kingpin Walid Makled to Venezuela, rather than to the United States. Both Venezuela and the United States had requested Makled, who has testified that top Venezuelan government officials were protecting his drug trafficking operations. Chavez wants Makled at home, to keep him silent, or press him to recant his testimony.

The Santos government has no immediate plans to submit to the Colombian Congress a new bill authorizing the presence of U.S. troops in several Colombian military bases. Colombian officials say a much more likely scenario is a new bilateral agreement.

U.S.-Colombian military agreements to that effect were recently invalidated by a Colombian court. Santos is scheduled to launch a free trade agreement with Canada and the European Union in coming months. The 2004 U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement has yet to be ratified by the U.S. Congress.

Carl Meacham, a senior staffer for Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Richard Lugar, says that the U.S. failure to ratify the trade deal "has led Colombia to look at other options. They are definitely drifting away: their orientation is now as weighted toward the United States as it was before."

Rep. Connie Mack, a conservative Republican who is scheduled to become chair of the House Western Hemisphere subcommit­tee next year, conceded to me that "there are a lot of concerns" about Colombia in Congress, but added that "I'm not ready to say that he is drifting away from the United States."

Curious about what's in Santos' mind, I talked with several Colombians who are very close to the new president.

Most told me that, indeed, there is a deliberate foreign policy shift in Colombia. It was prompted by the U.S. failure to deliver on its trade deal with Colombia despite major diplomatic overtures from Colombia.

In recent years, Colombia has accepted U.S. troops in Colombian military bases, has sent Colombian police and anti-drug agents to Afghanistan in support of U.S. troops, and has voted with the United States on most issues at the United Nations.

Despite these and other gestures, there has been no positive response on the free-trade deal from Washington. President Barack Obama's close ties with anti-terrorist U.S. labor unions has kept him from pushing more aggressively for ratification of the trade deal, they said.

"Colombians are somewhat disillusioned with the United States," says Enrique Santos Calderon, until recently managing editor and columnist of El Tiempo, Columbia's most influential newspa­per, and the president's brother. "There is a feeling that we need to take some distance, and stop mak­ing those kind of favors that are not reciprocated."

My opinion: The new Colombian president is moving closer to Chavez mainly for economic rea­sons. Venezuela is one of Colombia's biggest export markets, and previous tensions between the two countries had hurt Colombian exports badly.

In addition, Santos is also using his temporary honeymoon with Chavez as a negotiating strategy to move Washington into action on the north-south drug trade. Despite the pre­vious policy didn't work, he's try­ing something else.

The Santos government has also been trying to rekindle what few ties it has with the European Union in coming months.

According to my sources, there has been no positive response on the free-trade deal from Brussels.

At Wake Forest University, last year told the FDA that the combination of alcohol and caffeine was dangerous. She said drinking a shot of vodka and an energy drink is "like playing poker. As a good poker player, he is keeping everybody guessing, including his friends in the U.S. capital.

FDA takes strong stance against alcoholic drinks with caffeine

The following editorial appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Wednesday, Nov. 24.

Food and Drug Administration officials have begun a long overdue crackdown on alcoholic drinks that contain caffeine. The FDA has concluded, correctly, that adding caffeine to alcohol is unsafe and hasn't been approved by federal officials. Four companies that make the drinks were given 15 days to take action; the FDA could seek a court order barring the products if they don't.

The FDA's decision comes after a series of disturbing reports involving underage drinking. The two products involved are Four Loko, a caffeine-infused fruity malt beverage that contains 12 percent alcohol, and Bush's, which were identical to the U.S.-Colombian military agreements.

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Volleyball

picking apart Oakland's secondary.
Campbell has been very good and very bad — and subjected to a very quick hook.
Gradkowski has been very good and very bad — and prone to injury.
Campbell has made seven starts, with the team winning four. Gradkowski has made four starts, with the team winning one.
Though each has come off the bench to manage a victory in a game started by the other, neither has truly distinguished himself.
This is not a recipe for reaching the playoffs.
Truth is, Cable and offensive coordinator Hue Jackson both have said, Gradkowski is better suited to this particular offensive unit. It implies that Gradkowski's improvisational skills are particularly valuable behind Oakland's offensive line and the absence of play-making wide receivers.
Gradkowski is a better bet to create something out of nothing.
Then there is the likelihood Cable is loyal to Gradkowski after his inspiring work last season possibly helped save the coach's job.
But as we've seen in the past, and on Sunday, Gradkowski is not the long-term answer.
"I apologized to my team," he said after completing 17 of 32 passes for 252 yards but throwing two interceptions.
Meanwhile, there is reason to believe owner Al Davis, who during the offseason traded for Campbell, would like to have seen Campbell get a chance. Didn't happen.
What now, with a crucial game Sunday at AFC West rival San Diego?
"I'll go look at it," Cable said, "I don't know that Bruce is going to be healthy, based on what I was just told."
The great likelihood is that Campbell will be the starter, mostly out of necessity — Gradkowski banged his troublesome throwing shoulder late in the game.
"It's not easy," Campbell said of the quarterback controversy. "It's not an easy thing by (any) means. You're a competitor, you like to compete. But by no means are you understanding or anything. It's kind of tough being caught right in between something and you don't know what's going on."
The Cal Poly women's volleyball team finished the season 22-7 overall and did not receive a bid to the NCAA tournament.

Volleyball ends season without NCAA bid

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The Cal Poly women's volleyball team season officially ended on Sunday, after the Mustangs did not receive an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament. It marks the third-straight year the Mustangs will not play in the NCAA Tournament.

Senior middle hitter Dominique Olowolafe said the team was devastated.

"Everyone is pretty heartbroken. We were pretty excited about competing against some of the top teams in the nation," she said. "I'm so blessed to be a part of this program. I want everyone to keep their heads high, because I'm really proud of what we accomplished this year."

The team battled through injuries to post a 22-7 overall record, going 12-4 in conference. A big win over Arizona opened the Mustang season, but two losses to Cal State Fullerton on what head coach Jon Stevenson characterized as "off nights" probably knocked the team out of postseason contention.

"It's obviously disappointing and not the way we wanted our season to end, but I feel we played great and had a good time. We did what we did and it was left up to (the selection committee)," freshman outside hitter Kristina Graven said.

Fullerton, the winner of the Big West, earned an automatic bid while Long Beach State, which lost twice to the Mustangs, was the only other Big West team to make the tournament.

"More than anything," Stevenson said at Monday's press conference. "I just want to focus on the fact that this team I believe was playing at a level — at the end of the season — that was equal to one of the top 25 teams in the country. I was disappointed that the girls couldn't keep playing and especially for (Dominique Olowolafe) and (Allison Mort), who were just so great for this program that they didn't get a chance to keep competing."

The Mustangs lost two seniors in the offseason, Olowolafe and libero Allison Mort. Olowolafe, who broke her finger early in the season, returned to her usual form midway through the season as she still managed to rack up 213 kills and was awarded her third first-team all conference honor. Her .342 hitting percentage was second on the team, only outdone by sophomore Jennifer Kedly who hit .364.

Olowolafe's injury was just one of many for the team this season and as the season neared its end, the Mustangs were just finally getting healthy. It's something, Stevenson said, that would have helped the Mustangs come tournament time.

"We would have been healthy for the NCAA Tournament," Stevenson said. "Who knows what would have happened."

Next season, the Mustangs will be in search of a new libero with the departure of Mort, who walked on to the team her freshman year earning her way onto the court. She accumulated 558 digs, nearly a third of the team's total.

Senior outside hitter Cade Smith ranked second on the team with 2.93 kills per set. She was also runner up for the Dig King Award. Senior middle hitter Tjesca Stevenson, who hit .364, was named the Mustangs MVP.

Senior setter Jennifer Kedly was named first-team all conference.

"I'm so blessed," she said at Monday's press conference. "I'm really proud of what we accomplished this year."

Senior middle hitter Tjesca Stevenson who hit .364.

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