



RECORD TREE DISCOVERED IN POLY CANYON

BIOLOGY PROFESSOR MATT RITTER and three of his students recently discovered what is thought to be the tallest Karri Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) tree in North America.

Ritter, a biology professor and head of the Cal Poly Plant Conservatory, spotted the massive tree in Poly Canyon in 2005. But it wasn't until late November 2007 that he and graduate students Jenn Yost and Chris Wassenberg, along with undergraduate Justin Bence, were able to climb to the top of the giant tree to measure it.

Using ropes and harnesses, the four researchers were able to get an accurate measurement of the tree's height by dropping a line to the ground from the upper canopy.

They recorded the tree at a height of 154 feet, a diameter of seven feet, and a 75-foot wide crown.

Ritter submitted the data to the California Registry of Big Trees, part of a national forestry database. The Poly Canyon Karri Eucalyptus has been accepted as the tallest tree of its type on record – almost 100 feet taller than the previous North American record holder, a San Clemente tree at 59 feet.

In his research on California eucalyptus ecology, Ritter has looked for all the specimens of *E. diversicolor* and other species planted throughout the state, Arizona, Hawaii and Florida. This is by far the oldest and largest specimen, he said.

Like other types of eucalyptus trees, the Karri is native to Australia, where it is found only in the towering forests south of Perth, on the southwestern tip of the continent. It is relatively uncommon in the United States, according to Ritter.

The record tree, estimated to be between 80 and 100 years old, can be found in the bottom of Brizzolara Creek in Poly Canyon, the only Karri in a stand of Blue Gums. □

ALUM SCHEDULED TO RESIDE ON INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

CAL POLY ALUM **GREGORY CHAMITOFF (EE '84)** will soon have quite a view out of the closest window. The electrical engineering graduate has been selected to work and live onboard the International Space Station as a flight engineer, another remarkable step in what has proven to be an incredible professional career.

Chamitoff will begin his journey in late April on Space Shuttle mission STS-124. He will stay on the ISS until September, returning to Earth with Shuttle mission STS-126.

As an undergraduate student at Cal Poly, Chamitoff taught lab courses in circuit design and worked summer internships at Atari Computers and IBM. He fondly remembers Cal Poly Mathematics Professor James Mueller, whom he contacted recently about his upcoming Space Station trip. "My experience is proof that Cal Poly's learn-by-doing philosophy is one that really works for just about anything



one chooses to do," said Chamitoff. "As much as I've learned since, my foundation was built right there – just like every other Cal Poly engineer."

From Cal Poly, Chamitoff went on to earn master's degrees from the California Institute of Technology and University of Houston Clear Lake, and a Ph.D. in aeronautics and astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While at MIT, Chamitoff worked on the Hubble Space Telescope, flight control upgrades for the Space Shuttle autopilot, and the altitude control system for the Space Station. □

STUDENTS VOTE ONLINE FOR CAMPUS ISSUES

CAL POLY STUDENTS can now vote on ASI issues from home, the library, or anywhere else they can connect to the Internet.

The new voting procedure allows Cal Poly students to conveniently vote from any location, on or off campus, by logging into the *my.calpoly.edu* portal. Students unable to vote on campus, such as those studying abroad, are now provided the opportunity to vote using the new procedure. The system also minimizes the logistical demands on Information Technology Services (ITS), Student Affairs and Facility Services staff.

ASI President Brandon Souza is excited about the new system and is hopeful that students will embrace this new method of voting. "In a time when students are busier than ever, a new voting system like this really helps," said Souza. "Students can vote at their convenience and not worry about making a run to the polls between classes or extracurricular activities."

On Jan. 16, ASI Student Government passed a resolution to support the use of electronic voting from any location with Internet accessibility for all campus wide elections and referendums.

ASI first tested electronic voting in the 2007 campus wide ASI Presidential and Board of Directors election. Several laptop polling locations were set up on campus, and students were able to vote electronically via the *my.calpoly.edu* portal.

Students and ASI called the online voting method a success, and voter turnout was the highest it had ever been. The success of the May 2007 elections affirmed the value for electronic voting for future elections and referendums. □

CAMPUS ALERT SYSTEM IN PLACE

IN THE WAKE OF LAST YEAR'S Virginia Tech tragedy, Cal Poly officials immediately began researching new ways to communicate with the campus community during emergencies. In January 2008, Cal Poly adopted a new text message notification system that enables the university to send urgent information to students, faculty and staff.

With the new system, powered by e2Campus, university officials can send instant alerts directly to registered subscribers' e-mail accounts and mobile phones via SMS text messages. Subscribers can also receive alerts via RSS, wireless PDA, My Yahoo, My AOL, and personalized iGoogle home pages.

Current students, faculty and staff may sign up through the Cal Poly portal at <http://my.calpoly.edu>. □



HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE HAS NEW NAME, NEW BUILDING

CAL POLY'S OFFICE of Housing and Residential Life has a new name – University Housing – and a new building.

The 8,300-square foot, two-story Housing Administration Building replaces the old housing office and will accommodate the growing campus housing operations, soon to include the approximately 2,700-bed Poly Canyon Village complex.

Architects specifically designed the new building to encourage interaction between housing departments and the campus community, blending programs, academics and administrative activities. □

PASSINGS

Dean and Professor Emeritus Carl Cummins

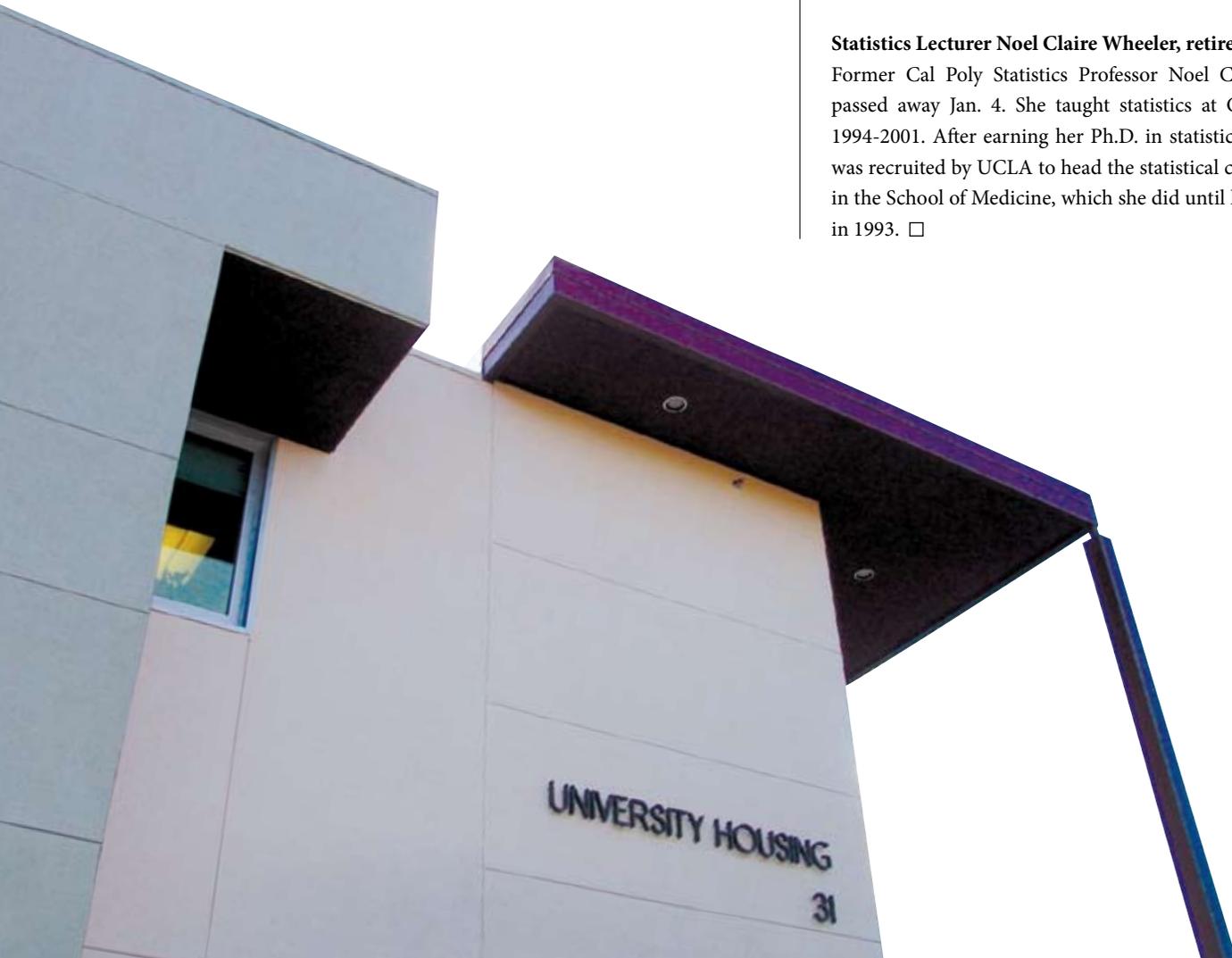
Former industrial technology Professor Carl C. Cummins of San Luis Obispo passed away Thursday, Jan. 3. Cummins came to Cal Poly in 1958 to head up the newly formed Industrial Technology Department. In 1961 he was appointed as dean of the College of Applied Arts and served for 25 years until his retirement. He continued to teach part time in the College of Engineering until 1998.

Business Professor Emeritus Walter Rice

Longtime Cal Poly business Professor Walter Rice passed away Dec. 12, 2007, after a brief illness. Rice was 69 years old. During his 36-year career at Cal Poly he taught economics, headed the MBA program, and served as associate dean in the Orfalea College of Business before his retirement in 2000. Rice was an expert on transportation economics, especially California rail and trucking issues.

Statistics Lecturer Noel Claire Wheeler, retired

Former Cal Poly Statistics Professor Noel Claire Wheeler passed away Jan. 4. She taught statistics at Cal Poly from 1994-2001. After earning her Ph.D. in statistics in 1979, she was recruited by UCLA to head the statistical consulting unit in the School of Medicine, which she did until her retirement in 1993. □





KERBO RECOGNIZED FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

SOCIAL SCIENCES PROFESSOR Harold R. Kerbo is the recipient of the 2007 Cal Poly International Educator Award.

The annual honor, sponsored by International Education and Programs, recognizes a faculty member who has significantly contributed to international education at Cal Poly.

Kerbo has been a faculty member at Cal Poly since 1977 and has a distinguished record of teaching, service and scholarship activities within international education. Founder of the Cal Poly Thailand Study Program, Kerbo has overseen approximately 350 students and 12 faculty members who have participated in the program since 1998. He has served as resident director, has taught in the study program for many years, and has taken an active role in program development, faculty and student selection, advising, and logistics.

In addition, Kerbo has received Fulbright awards to teach and conduct research in Japan, Thailand and Austria. He serves as a discipline reviewer for Fulbright applicants to European programs, and he has been visiting professor and visiting fellow at universities in Japan, Germany, Switzerland and Wales.

Reflecting on Kerbo's contributions to international education and scholarship, President Warren Baker observed that Kerbo "is a leading advocate for global understanding who has created extraordinary opportunities for our students to participate in life-changing study-abroad experiences and, with his writings, has promoted greater understanding of comparative social and political realities around the world. This award is a fitting recognition of his many achievements through a long and distinguished career." □

IRRIGATION CLASSES OFFERED, THANKS TO \$500,000 DONATION

CAL POLY WILL SOON OFFER students and professionals across California and the West a chance to earn university credit for irrigation classes – without leaving their jobs or their hometowns.

Cal Poly alumni **Fred Hamisch (AE '63)** and his wife, Virginia, jump-started the online irrigation classes with a donation of \$500,000 in December to the BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department (BRAE) in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAFES).

Cal Poly's Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) is currently seeking additional matching funding for the online courses from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from industry supporters. The funding will be used to create a large assortment of high-quality online irrigation courses and continual updating of those courses.

"This program will allow people who cannot physically move to San Luis Obispo to take state-of-the-art irrigation classes for professional development, or for university credit applicable here at Cal Poly or at other universities," said BRAE Professor and ITRC Chairman Charles Burt.

There is a growing lack of trained irrigation specialists, said CAFES Dean David Wehner. "California is the largest agricultural region in the United States, and we're facing a catastrophic lack of people capable of designing and installing the complex irrigation systems the industry relies on," Wehner said.

The shortage is partly due to the fact that most of the major agricultural universities in the West have reduced or eliminated irrigation classes over the past 20 years.

In contrast, Cal Poly offers extensive irrigation training. Cal Poly currently offers a bachelor's degree in bioresource and agricultural engineering that includes a specialty in irrigation, as well as a water science (irrigation) minor for non-BRAE students. The department also offers an M.S. degree in agriculture with a focus on irrigation.

Students in those programs get hands-on experience in Cal Poly's outdoor irrigation laboratories. The campus irrigation training labs are funded by industry and by ITRC contracts with irrigation districts, the California Energy Commission, California Department of Water Resources, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, manufacturers, and others. □