

## CONTRIBUTOR BIO

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PATRICK HALE is the President and Chief Executive Officer of PHC Group Inc. and graduated from Cal Poly in 1977 with a degree in Political Science.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*Patrick Hale*

A true forger of new paths, Patrick Hale's insatiable curiosity has driven him to learn and master as much as he possibly can. Such curiosity is clearly evidenced in Patrick's unique, multi-faceted trajectory. Even during his time at Cal Poly, Patrick packed his schedule with six to seven classes a quarter in order to learn as much as he could as quickly as possible. He spent time in professors' offices hours to ensure all his questions were answered. Whilst taking his Political Science courses, Patrick realized that the mere facts he was learning weren't necessarily the important part of his education—rather the important part was learning how to connect all of that information and identify overarching themes. As one of his professors stated, "It appears that you have learned how to think critically. Put it to good use and you'll be surprised what happens." Looking back, Patrick attributes Cal Poly's Political Science courses with honing his critical thinking skills. As Patrick put it, "That ability served me well over the years in the business world. No matter what I did, I always told myself to master the past, analyze the present, and prepare for the future. Political Science helped nurture the tools I needed to enjoy some modicum of success while remaining true to my core beliefs and values."

Speaking of the business world, Patrick has had incredible success, which he

attributes to learning by doing. According to Patrick, his failures outnumber his successes, but he's learned so much more simply because he had to do more in order to overcome those failures. And Patrick sure has done a lot over the years. His career path is not a straight one; he's been the Chief Information Officer for several counties and a city, the lead agency of a consortium that provided nationwide network connectivity for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), a campaign worker, a political candidate, and a legislative aid in addition to many more. However, one of his greatest passions has always been starting and growing companies based on what fascinates him. The first companies he founded were in the computer field. According to Patrick his companies, "provided symmetrical multi-processor capabilities before it was cool." Today, Patrick serves as the Founder and CEO of a 6.4 billion dollar holding company, which has businesses of all types including wineries and companies within the entertainment, computer hardware, cloud services, venture capital, and data encryption sectors. Putting it simply, Patrick's company buys or starts firms and mixes them in with the rest of his company's portfolio of interests.

Patrick's Political Science degree has also helped shape him as a leader; "knowing how politics and political organizations works helps me when I manage others. The same skills of organization, consensus, and vision used in politics help me manage others in both private sector and public sector pursuits."

On top of his entrepreneurial pursuits, Patrick has found the time to write thirteen novels and is currently in the process of writing his fourteenth. He can't get his editors to review them as quickly as he'd like. Taking the advice from a past teacher, who told Patrick that the key to believable writing is writing about what you know, Patrick's novels focus on a variety of politically themed topics including espionage, international intrigue, technology, and abuses of power. As Patrick would say, "between studying government, working in it, and working with it I believe I'm reasonably fluent in themes that revolve around Political Science." Patrick writes for his own enjoyment and the fact that other people read and enjoy his books is "a never-ending source of wonder and humility" for him.

Patrick's advice to Political Science students is to never stop learning. "Learn everything you can, but do so with an eye toward the elements that tie seemingly disparate themes into a coherent whole. Never stop questioning, even yourself, and always learn. Never accept the answer, 'That's the way we've always done things.' Any sentence that starts with, 'You don't understand...' is really telling

you that you do understand, but you're rocking the proverbial boat. When you learn something new, always ask yourself, 'How does this new fact relate with the ones I believe to be true?' Resolve any conflicts and then accept or reject the new data based on your existing and constantly growing knowledge base." Patrick also encourages students to pursue every avenue that seems interesting. "A mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled. Ignite your spark, kindle your fire, and help it to burn as hot as possible. For the rest of your life, your fire's warmth and light will shelter you from the cold and guide your steps through the darkness."