

# TIMBER...

## OUT ON A LIMB



(Photos courtesy of natural resources management Professor Chris Dicus and Cal Poly Logging Team President Steve Oriol)

### BY TERESA HENDRIX

what your results are, and where the chips fall is where the chips fall," Noel says.

Sometimes those chips settle onto a public policy or regulatory debate that's already highly charged – emotionally as well as economically. Timber policies in particular fall into that category, Noel notes.

"We're studying issues where the stakes are high. You're talking about millions of dollars, in some cases, billions of dollars," Noel says. "What we're trying to do is to add information that's useful and relevant to the public policy debate."

The bulk of research funded by the institute is done by Cal Poly professors. A small number of UC Davis professors have also received CISSC funding for their projects, and the institute has funded master's thesis research by Cal Poly students, as well as a few senior projects. ■

The double buck, choker race and caber toss. Sounds like games in a prehistoric Olympiad. Then there's birling, axe throwing and chain sawing.

Definitely not for the faint at heart, these activities are just some of the traditional events that Cal Poly's Logging Team competes in during a typical three-day conclave.

The intercollegiate team consists of 12 men and eight women who take great pleasure in the heart-pounding excitement of forestry field skills – demanding skills that require not only the physical attributes of strength, balance and technique, but also the mental acuity to read a compass, identify dozens of plants and trees by both their common and Latin names, and employ the laws of trigonometry in estimating tree height and diameter, no tools allowed.

Students compete in both technical events, like those just mentioned, and lumber jack events, including the more-physically challenging water sports, such as birling (log running) and the limber pole.

For the limber pole event, a debarked, slippery log is suspended over a pond, supported only at the base and extending about 25 to 30 feet at a 45-degree angle. Contestants start at the base, trying to get as close to the end as possible as the log moves and wiggles. "It's like running on jelly," says Steve Oriol, team president. "It feels like you're dancing all over the planet."

The conclaves also include several events on land and limb. The land-based contests include sawing, chopping, pole climbing, ax throwing, log tossing and running an obstacle course, while towing a large steel cable, of course. All in a day's work.

In addition to the three conclaves the students compete in annually, the team puts on several exhibitions a year. Last spring they were filmed entertaining the crew of the Discovery Channel's "Monster Garage," showing off their skills in axe throwing and single and double bucking. ■