

In This Edition:

The Finest of First Impressions
Editors Note
Budget Update
Around Campus
Freedom in Flight
Alumni in the News
University News
Something to Chew On
Poly Days
Looking Ahead

THE FINEST OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

SOAR Leaders Welcome New Students to the Cal Poly Family

By Matt Lazier

When it comes to new-student orientation at Cal Poly, Week of Welcome and Open House get most of the attention.

But after new students choose to come to Cal Poly and before they arrive on campus ready to move in, make new friends, get to know their community and start their college experience, they are introduced to the inner workings of the university through SOAR.

Held throughout the summer, SOAR gives new students and their parents an overnight visit to Cal Poly and the chance to tour the campus and find out about various programs and support services. And it gives them the tools and information they need as the soon-to-be freshmen prepare to undertake a major transition in their lives.

Open House in the spring is the time when potential new students visit and we figure out whether we're a good fit for each other, said Stephan Lamb, Cal Poly's interim director of Student Life and Leadership (which includes the Orientation Programs office). But SOAR that's really the first chance we get say to these new students, Welcome to the Cal Poly family.

And appropriately, the people charged with making this first impression on new students are Cal Poly students themselves.

There are about 70 undergraduate student leaders in SOAR who welcome incoming students and families, give tours around campus and downtown San Luis Obispo, make presentations on important issues, and try to answer any and all questions these new Cal Poly community members might pose.

Our student leaders embody the model of the bright, driven Cal Poly student, Lamb said. They come from a variety of majors and campus backgrounds. They train hard to become as familiar as they can with as much of the campus as they can, so they can give these new families the information they need.

And most importantly for SOAR, our student leaders share an enthusiasm about the Cal Poly experience and an eagerness to impart that excitement to our new students.

A Delicate Time

SOAR student leaders train for three weeks to get ready for the experience and then take part in nearly a dozen two-day SOAR events throughout the summer. With hundreds of new freshmen, transfer students and family members coming to campus for each two-day SOAR event, Lamb said, student leaders are essential to the program's success.

We depend on our undergraduate leaders, Lamb said. They have to be professional, punctual and prepared. They need to be ready to answer as many questions about Cal Poly as they can. And when they don't know the answer, they have to know how to help steer our new freshmen and their family members to someone who does.

Nonny Okoye, a fourth-year biomedical engineering student, said she and her fellow SOAR leaders are talking to new Cal Poly students and parents at a particularly delicate time.

They're getting ready to make a huge transition in their lives, Okoye said. Plus, Cal Poly starts later than a lot of other universities. So for a lot of these students, their friends have already left and they're just in a kind of limbo, waiting for their turn.

New students are largely concerned with getting oriented to campus, getting out of high-school mode and learning how to live independently.

With the students, you get some serious questions, said Parisa Crane, a fourth-year nutrition major. Mostly, they want to know about classes, campus activities, sports. With parents, it's mostly about safety. They want to make sure their child is going to be safe here.



SOAR leaders Scott Kjorlien and Justin Bautista gather their groups for a tour of downtown.



SOAR leader Parisa Crane talks with incoming freshmen. (Photos by Laura Dickinson)



SOAR leader Scott Kjorlien speaks with a parent on the bus trip to explore downtown San Luis Obispo

Added fellow SOAR leader and fifth-year geography/anthropology major Scott Kjorlien, They want to make sure their student can come here, be happy and find their niche.

To that end, SOAR leaders help give presentations to parents and students on matters such as academics, time management, alcohol and hazing. And new this year, SOAR leaders are presenting new students with The Mustang Way, an ideology developed by Athletics and embraced by the university overall that details the character traits expected of a Cal Poly student.

Cal Poly Pride

Orientation Programs administrators and their student leaders agree on what it takes to be an effective SOAR leader and make that good first impression.

You need to be friendly and easy to get along with, Crane said, and you need to be able to show your enthusiasm for Cal Poly. That Cal Poly Pride can be contagious.

It also helps to draw out the sometimes-shy new students and get them participating and asking questions. That's important, said Kjorlien; where WOW leaders spend several days with new students and keep in touch with them throughout their first year, SOAR leaders have only two days to make an impression.

SOAR leaders must be mentally agile and prepared for all sorts of questions from new students and parents. And if they don't know the answer to a question, a good SOAR leader will know who to ask to find it.

Every student and every family is different, said Justin Bautista, a fourth-year mechanical engineering major. We just need to give them the tools to solve whatever problems they might encounter and introduce them to the resources they have on campus.

Most importantly, he added, we just need to be honest. Students and parents want to hear about our experiences at Cal Poly.

That willingness and desire to share their own stories and help ease the transition of newer students draws many SOAR leaders to the job.

Crane who transferred to Cal Poly two years ago said SOAR and WOW played a huge part in helping her settle in to campus. She tries to make sure other new students reap the same benefits.

Bautista, though, said he failed to take full advantage of the orientation process. I didn't give WOW my all when I started, and I regretted it later, he said. I missed out on the fun of it.

So I like to be involved and help newer students to not make the same mistake to make sure that they get everything out of the experience they can.

Find out more about the SOAR program online at [here](#).

THE MUSTANG WAY

Pride Responsibility Character

WE ARE FOCUSED ON EXCELLENCE

Learn by Doing is the foundation of our engaged pursuit of knowledge and scholarly achievement.

WE EMBRACE ONE ANOTHER

Mustangs strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, celebrating the positive differences that make us unique.

WE ARE ONE COMMUNITY

Personal commitment and participation in the Cal Poly community is the cornerstone of the Mustang experience.

WE ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

Mustangs support one another while also taking pride in accepting personal responsibility, thus strengthening the Cal Poly family.

WE LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Mustangs face all actions and decisions with perseverance, honor, and character. As Mustangs, we are united under these principles, honoring those who came before us and inspiring the Mustangs who follow. The privilege of being a Cal Poly Mustang is celebrated for a lifetime.



A SOAR group explores downtown.



SOAR leader Parisa Crane gathers her group during a campus tour.