

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

LOOKING AHEAD WITH  
PRESIDENT JEFFREY D. ARMSTRONG

Strong Momentum as We Launch a New Academic Year

The indomitable spirit of the Cal Poly family is one of this university’s most striking qualities.

Elsewhere in this edition, Larry Kelley, our talented vice president for Administration and Finance, has written about the steep cutbacks in state funding that Cal Poly has been weathering the past five years – and the benefits to Cal Poly if California voters approve Proposition 30 this fall.

Despite the harsh impact of a nearly 45 percent reduction in state funds, our faculty and staff have maintained an unwavering focus on our students’ success and an equally strong commitment to our Learn by Doing approach.

It wasn’t surprising at all, then, when the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) this summer formally extended our accreditation another 10 years, the most allowed under the commission’s guidelines. In so doing, WASC praised the entire campus community “for maintaining strong faculty, staff, and student morale given the major reductions in state funding.”

But here’s what I find even more remarkable: As good as Cal Poly is, our faculty and staff believe we can make Cal Poly even better. That’s what we heard time and again this past spring when our new provost, Kathleen Enz Finken, and I met with a broad array of faculty and staff members, students and alumni.

I’m very grateful for that attitude, because the times we live in are imposing new realities on us. California’s ability to support public higher education is going to continue to be a stiff challenge. To maintain our edge, we’ll need to embrace the ideals of Learn by Doing – carefully examine what’s working and what isn’t; make adjustments; constantly refine; and move forward. Excellence requires continuous improvement.

And that’s why at the beginning of this academic year, at our annual Fall Conference, I urged the faculty and staff to embrace a recommitment to the ideals of Learn by Doing. You can read the full text of my remarks at [here](#).

In my remarks, I outlined a series of actions for addressing our future in a constructive manner, to ensure that we energetically re-examine all that we do and carefully consider what we will change to ensure that Learn by Doing not only survives but thrives in the decade to come.

You will be pleased to know that the WASC re-accreditation affirming Cal Poly’s reputation was but one of a series of good-news items providing us with considerable momentum as we enter a new academic year.

- This fall, we welcome another outstanding class of first-year students. They arrive with the highest collective set of grade-point averages and ACT scores in Cal Poly’s history.
- Last spring, our students approved a new Student Success Fee, providing us with resources to support several hundred classes and labs this year that were otherwise threatened by state budget cuts.
- Thanks to the generosity of our many supporters, we just closed the books on the 2011-12 fiscal year with a 15-percent increase in philanthropic contributions over the prior year.
- And last but not least, U.S. News and World Report, for the 20th consecutive year, declared Cal Poly the best public undergraduate university in the West.

Each of these is a testament to the enduring resiliency, resourcefulness and generosity of the Cal Poly family, and each serves as a reminder that with unity of purpose, Cal Poly has a very bright future indeed.



Grinds

Buisness grads Matt Canepa and Pat Pezet have a new kind of chew for Major League Baseball players.

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WOW slideshow

See images from this year's Week of Welcome, as new students got to know their university and their community.

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Alumni in the News

A pair of Cal Poly Engineering grads helped build separate components of the Curiosity rover that landed on Mars in August and is currently exploring the red planet. Read about these and other accomplishments by our alumni.

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Looking ahead

President Jeffrey D. Armstrong talks about the indomitable spirit of the Cal Poly family and the positive momentum that has the university starting the new academic year strong.

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