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California Polytechnic State University

Cal Poly Grad Features Tipsheet

Cal Poly has many students about to graduate June 15 who would make excellent feature stories.

Contact [Teresa Hendrix](#) in the Cal Poly Public Affairs Office at (805) 756-7266 for more information, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of grads listed below.

Arnold Alvarado. Arnold is graduating from Cal Poly with a bachelor's degree in Manufacturing Engineering, two years after his older sister, Yesenia, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering. The family is from the Visalia area, but both children grew up in a migrant farm worker family -- traveling with their parents all over California up through Montana, picking crops and going to school in many towns. Their father's (and mother's) dream was that the two would receive an education and never have to work in the fields; now it's coming true. "School was my dad's big thing. He is the oldest of five siblings, and my mother was the oldest too. They were never able to go to school, because they had to take care of the other kids." The Alvarado family will be at Cal Poly for Arnold's graduation.

Andrew Asplund. Asplund will graduate June 15 with a double major in statistics and math, and three minors: philosophy, physics and psychology. He's completed classes for the double major and triple minor in 4 years. A graduate of a local Central Coast high school, Asplund will be going into the Navy as an officer to work on a nuclear submarine after graduation. He says all of his majors and minors are interrelated.

Joel Conn. Defying a statewide trend seeing college students stay in school for 5 years to earn a bachelor's degree, Joel made it through Cal Poly in 3 years flat, while being active in the student ambassador group Poly Reps and other activities including the university's annual Open House. Joel, who graduated from high school on the Central Coast, is off to the UC Davis veterinary school after graduation.

Charlene Elliot. Elliot, a young mother from Lompoc, is completing her Liberal Studies bachelor's degree and teaching credential. She commutes 75 minutes one way each day from Lompoc to Cal Poly, usually starting out before sunrise to take her two young children to day care before heading to San Luis Obispo. She's currently completing her student teaching, and is known around the University Center for Teacher Education for helping fellow students and attending additional teacher training workshops. She is a recipient of one of California's recent Governor's \$20,000 Fellowships for students training to be teachers.

David Henry. David is headed to France to play professional basketball. David, who will graduate with a journalism degree, recently completed his four-year basketball playing career at Cal Poly and will continue lacing up his high-tops after signing with a professional team in Europe. He will play for the CLSD Basketball Club of Dijon, France. He was selected after a workouts in Salt Lake City and Chicago last May and will report to the team in early August. David will be the first Cal Poly player to continue a basketball career after graduation since Damien Levesque ('96) and his two-year stint in Australia. (For More information on David, contact Sports Information Media Relations Officer Jason Sullivan at 805-756-6550 or visit the Athletics web site at: <http://www.gopoly.com/basketball/men/20012002/news/henrypro.html>.)

Jim Neilson. Neilson, of Los Osos, has been married for 15 years and is the father of three kids, ages 11, 8

and 7. He coaches his daughter's softball team, is an avid cyclist...and decided to go back to school and get his bachelor's degree in Materials Engineering. "My family is the driving force for me to return to school; without the support of y wife I never would have finished. SHE is the interesting one," he says. Neilson worked in a university co-op position at PG&E's Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant for six months, and just interviewed and was hired for a full-time entry level engineering position at Diablo -- meaning the family will not have to relocate -- something Neilson was worried about.

Scott Profeta. Scott has a 45 percent hearing loss. Originally from Whittier, he attended "mainstream" schools all his life, lip reading and wearing hearing aids. "As long as I sit in the front in class, I'm OK," he says. He's graduating with a bachelor's degree in architecture, a 5-year degree program. As his senior project, he researched and designed a K-12 school for the deaf to work with CSU Northridge's National Center on Deafness (Northridge has one of the largest programs for deaf students in the state, with some 300 deaf students attending there). To do the research for his project, Scott traveled to the two California Schools for the Deaf run by the state, one in Fremont and the other in Riverside. Both are residential programs. While there, he had to communicate with the staff and students on paper because he wasn't fluent in sign language. When he returned to Poly, Scott took sign language to work on his fluency, and designed a residential K-12 school for the deaf based on what he wished he'd had in school -- blending the worlds of deaf and "mainstream" education. He plans to share his design and research with the Fremont and Riverside schools for the deaf as well as CSU Northridge after polishing them into book format after graduation. |

Francisco Soto. Soto was 14 when his family fled El Salvador, first to Mexico and then to the United States, settling in Fresno. Francisco knew no English when he came to the country, struggled in high school and college, met Mary, and has gone on to become a successful teacher. Now living in Arroyo Grande, he is completing his M.A. in Education with specialization in curriculum and instruction at Cal Poly's University Center for Teacher Education. He and his wife are both finishing their M.A.s at Cal Poly and expecting their first child soon. Francisco is currently a teacher at Battles Elementary School in Santa Maria, and has shared his stories with his students at Battles Elementary, and is writing the story of his journey from El Salvador to his classroom teacher's desk. He is the first in his family to finish high school -- let alone a master's degree. But he remains modest about his accomplishments. "I didn't have it any rougher than anyone else growing up in El Salvador," he says.

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