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Cal Poly's New Athletics Director Is Donald Oberhelman

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Donald J. Oberhelman will become Cal Poly's new director of athletics effective April 4, Cal Poly President Jeffrey D. Armstrong announced Monday.

"Don Oberhelman brings great personal integrity and genuine respect for Cal Poly's traditions and values," Armstrong said. "Don believes in Cal Poly's focus on academic excellence, and sees athletics as consistent with and complementary to our Learn by Doing philosophy.

Oberhelman, 40, is the chief operating officer and senior associate athletic director at San Diego State University. In that role, he is responsible for the daily operations of SDSU intercollegiate athletics program – among them budget planning, hiring and evaluation of coaches, facilities and event management. He also works closely with the fundraising team.

"Don has been successful in a variety of positions as he has worked his way through the ranks," Armstrong said. "He is a proven leader and skilled administrator. His energy and enthusiasm are contagious, and that's why he's an excellent friend raiser as well as a fundraiser.

"Don's goal is for all of our student-athletes to leave Cal Poly with a diploma and a championship ring. That's a great goal for our student-athletes and our Mustang fans, and Don will have my full support," Armstrong added. Oberhelman will report directly to Armstrong.

Oberhelman, who has spent nearly all of his professional career in intercollegiate athletics administration, said, "Cal Poly has a great tradition of academic excellence and we want to continue to build on that tradition in everything we do in athletics.

"For many people, athletics is the first impression they have of the university. We must make sure these impressions are great ones," Oberhelman added.

"We know our primary obligation is to develop our student-athletes. I want us to be leaders in graduation rates as well as in championships," Oberhelman said. "But the receipt of a degree is not enough. It must be in a field of strong interest to the student-athlete, and it must lead to a rewarding career.

"We will not compromise and place student-athletes on the perceived shortest path to a degree. Here's the bottom line for Cal Poly Athletics: We are in the business of developing citizens and leaders," Oberhelman said. "Along the way, we can also win championships. Experiencing what it takes to be a champion is a great education in and of itself."

Oberhelman succeeds Alison Cone, who retired in December. He comes to Cal Poly after four years at San Diego State. Before that, he was senior associate athletic director at the University of Southern Mississippi (2002-07); education coordinator for athletics at Texas A&M University (1998-2002), and compliance assistant at Florida State University (1995-1998). He earned his bachelor's in business administration at Kansas State University and his master's in athletic administration at Florida State University.

Oberhelman is married to D.D. Oberhelman, who has worked for Frito-Lay the past 14 years and will continue to do so from San Luis Obispo County.

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