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Cal Poly Taps Sam Blakeslee to Launch New Multidisciplinary Institute for Advanced Technology & Public Policy

Institute's nonpartisan advisory board of distinguished public policy advocates includes Lt.Gov. Gavin Newsom, philanthropist Charles Munger, Jr., and statewide education leader Jack Scott.

Three innovative projects already under way

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly President Jeffrey D. Armstrong has announced the creation of the Institute for Advanced Technology & Public Policy, founded and led by former State Sen. Sam Blakeslee.

The interdisciplinary institute, which already has three projects up and running, aims to develop practical solutions to societal issues by informing statewide public policy through advanced technology. The institute has already received a generous gift of \$1 million that will help enable applied research and create new teaching and learning opportunities for faculty and students.

"Cal Poly has long been a recognized leader in the fields of innovation and technology, and this institute is another important way our faculty, staff and students can demonstrate leadership in developing and evaluating technologies to inform public policy," Armstrong said. "Cal Poly's tradition of Learn by Doing and real-world engagement makes us a natural home for this institute. With the help of this distinguished and diverse board of advisors, I am confident that this institute will craft balanced, implementable solutions to pressing problems."

The nonpartisan institute is guided by a diverse advisory board of distinguished state leaders. Among the panel are California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, prominent California philanthropist and reformer Charles Munger, Jr., and former Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and State Senator Jack Scott.

Blakeslee serves as founding director on a volunteer basis. The institute's faculty sponsor is Douglas Piirto, head of the Department of Natural Resource Management and Environmental Sciences within Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

Blakeslee was motivated to lead the institute because of his background as a practicing scientist, successful business owner and California legislator. While in the Assembly and Senate, Blakeslee observed firsthand how public policy often overlooks the potential transformative benefits of emerging technologies. In fact, laws, regulations and standards sometimes impede the application of emerging technologies.

While working at Exxon as a strategic planner and senior research scientist, Blakeslee earned a patent for his innovative work in geologic imaging. Blakeslee, who holds a doctorate in geological sciences, also operates a multi-branch investment and financial planning firm on the Central Coast.

Piirto brings to the institute a well-rounded perspective informed by his experience in

forestry as well as his work as a well-respected professor and student advisor with extensive experience in state organizations.

Members of the institute's advisory board are:

Alissa Black, director of the New America Foundation's California Civic Innovation Project. Black is exploring the use of innovative technologies, policies and practices that engage disadvantaged communities in public decision making throughout California. Black was previously government relations director at Cod for America, a nonprofit that helps governments work better through the use of technology and new practices. She has extensive experience as a leader in local government, having worked in the New York City Mayor's Office and the City of San Francisco's Emerging Technologies team, where she led the development and deployment of Open311, the leading national standard for citizen reporting.

James Boyd, former California Energy Commission member and former deputy secretary and chief of staff of the California Resources Agency. He created and chaired the state's first Joint Agency Climate Change Team and the state's Natural Gas Working Group. Boyd served for 15 years as chief executive officer of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), directing the nation's largest state air pollution control program during a time when CARB led the nation in establishing several new pollution control programs.

Mike Florio, a member of the California Public Utilities Commission since 2011. Prior to this appointment, Florio was a senior attorney at the Utility Reform Network, and served in that capacity since 1978. Florio also served on the board of governors of the California Independent System Operator from 1997 to 2005.

Dian Grueneich, a former California Public Utilities Commission member 2005-11 and nationally recognized expert in energy and environmental issues. Grueneich has served as a board member of the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy and is a past-president of the California League of Conservation Voters.

Delaney Hunter, former director of governmental affairs for the California Public Utilities Commission 2005-08. Hunter was responsible for managing the commission's legislative agenda and political negotiations on key policies relative to energy, telecommunications, water, rail safety and other transportation-related issues. Hunter began her political career in the office of Sen. Bill Leonard and later as legislative director for the government relations firm of Smith & Kempton. Hunter is a principal with the Sacramento firm Gonzalez, Quintana & Hunter, LLC.

Alfred G. Montna, a former chair of USA Rice Federation's Board of Directors and past president of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. Montna, a 1967 graduate of Cal Poly, is a major rice grower, long-time member of the Dean's Advisory Council for Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. He also is a member of the Board of Directors of the Cal Poly Foundation.

Charles Munger Jr., a physicist at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. A leading voice for reforming state government, Munger was the proponent of Propositions 11 and 20, two successful California ballot measures that created the Citizen Redistricting Commission to draw state legislative and congressional district boundaries. Munger has served as a member of California's Curriculum Commission, an advisory commission of the state Board of Education.

Gavin Newsom, current lieutenant governor of California and former San Francisco mayor and member of the city/county board of supervisors. Throughout his 16-year career in public office, Newsom has championed innovative public policies on issues such as equality, the environment, homelessness, education, and health care. Newsom is an early adopter of innovative technologies noted for his trailblazing use of social media. He is dedicated to shifting the principles of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship to the public sector.

Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse Unruh Institute at USC and former chairman of the California Fair Political Practices Commission. Schnur is also an adjunct instructor at UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies. He has held the post of Visiting Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government's Institute of Politics at Harvard and taught an advanced course in political campaign communications at George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management.

Jack Scott, former chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the nation's largest system of higher education. As chancellor from 2008-12, Scott led the 112 colleges through some sweeping reforms. Prior to his selection as chancellor, Scott served two terms in the California State Senate, representing California's 21st Senatorial District. Scott chaired the Senate Education Committee and also was vice chair of the State Allocation Board for Education. He was elected to the California State Assembly in 1996 before moving on to the Senate.

Bob Vilhauer, former vice president for public policy and analysis at The Boeing Co. Vilhauer has 28 years of government relations experience in the aerospace, defense and commercial aviation industry, including business development, Congressional relations and third-party advocacy functions. He has extensive knowledge of federal government budget, acquisition and oversight processes involving the Department of Defense, NASA, the FAA and other government agencies. He serves as a senior associate with the Center for Strategic & International Studies, a Washington, D.C., think tank, advising their International Security Program.

The institute currently has three multidisciplinary projects underway involving students, faculty, and staff:

— **Digital Democracy:** This project will, for the first time in California's history, provide residents access to the troves of video data buried in the legislature's archives. Currently, there exist no transcripts or minutes of the discussions and negotiations that occur in any of the Legislature's 139 committees or floor sessions. Using emerging speech recognition and voice-to-text technology, video recordings of committee and floor sessions will be captured via automated transcription and tagged so they are searchable by keywords, allowing users to perform topical queries. Video clips resulting from these queries can be isolated, extracted and shared using powerful social media tools.

— **California Energy Initiative:** The institute is approaching this issue from an integrated systems perspective that seeks to drive change in how energy is generated, purchased and consumed. The project will focus on developing an integrated and sophisticated set of policies that can rapidly result in a 21st century energy economy with environmental and economic benefits that are both immediate and sustainable. Specific areas of research include clean energy finance, governance integration and accountability, development of a Green Portfolio Standard, distributed generation, alternative fuels, sustainable biofuels and greening the California oil patch.

— **Connect Academy:** This project will explore the potential for advances in tablet technology to help close the achievement gap among Spanish-language students in the Central Coast's migrant farmworker communities. Using a blended learning model that emphasizes the benefits of both classroom instruction and supplemental at-home digital learning, the curriculum will closely align with California's core standards in math and English so that outcomes can be measured using annual statewide tests. Instruction will be geared toward parents and students, giving parents the ability to improve their own educational foundations while directly investing in the educational success of their child. Incentives geared toward parents and redeemable for local goods and services will reward parental involvement and help families provide for their basic needs.

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