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Contact: Jay Thompson  
805-756-5186; [jthomp04@calpoly.edu](mailto:jthomp04@calpoly.edu)

## Cal Poly Rose Parade Float Taking Shape in Pasadena

***'Soaring Stories' to be Honored as California-Grown Certified for the fourth year in row***

SAN LUIS OBISPO — The clock is ticking for a dedicated group of Cal Poly students and their supporters in Pasadena where they are rushing to decorate an animated float for the Tournament of Roses Parade on New Year's Day.

Millions of viewers — in person and throughout the world — are counting on them, said Josh D'Acquisto, Cal Poly's Rose Parade float advisor.

"The creativity, the animation of the Cal Poly float are something we've become known for," he said. "We were the first ones to animate the float, way back in the 1960s. We were the first to use computerized animation. So many different firsts over the years can be chalked up to Cal Poly."

This year's entry, "Soaring Stories," is no exception.

It celebrates the 126th Tournament of Roses Parade theme, "Inspiring Stories," with books coming to life within a fantasy world. An ornate castle sprouts from one page as a waterfall cascades back into the book. A majestic griffin bursts out of another page, its wings flapping, about to take flight.

The Cal Poly float is the only student-built entry that has been invited to the parade each year since Cal Poly and California State Polytechnic University in Pomona teamed up in 1949. The universities' "Learn By Doing" approach to education is exemplified in all facets of the float program, as students gain hands-on experience turning concepts into creations.

Students of all majors and backgrounds tackle welding, metal shaping, machining, foam carving, woodworking, painting and flower harvesting. It's a unique experience, as students compete against professional float builders to win prestigious awards while showcasing their work to an international television audience.

Teams of students at both Cal Polys chose "Soaring Stories" earlier this year from more than 100 ideas.

Starting Friday, more than 100 students from both universities will be assisted by an army of volunteers — 150 an hour — who will work almost around the clock in Brookside Park, near the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, to decorate the entry.

The float's dual V-8 engines will help power the griffin's animated wings. Other animated elements include the castle's drawbridge, a fish jumping out of a moat, the flame on a flickering candle and a quill that will move as if someone is writing.

Flags on the castle's 30-foot spires will undulate but will be powered by a sunny alternative — a first for the Cal Poly team, although not for the parade.

"The flags are built with a mechanism powered by electric motors designed to run

off 12-volt power," D'Acquisto said. "It was a last-minute change to use solar-power. We've installed solar panels on the top of the castle and run those mechanisms by solar — provided there's enough sunlight on parade morning."

In another first, the rear portion of the 18- by 55-foot float will have a wall of living flowers that uses the entire plant instead of cut flowers that traditionally adorn Rose Parade floats.

In addition to technological innovations, this year's float will be recognized as "California-Grown Certified" for using at least 85 percent Golden State-sourced fresh-cut flowers and greens for decorative material. It's the fourth consecutive year Cal Poly has earned the distinction.

The universities grow approximately 5 percent of the flowers needed, including statice on the Pomona campus, and marigold and straw flowers in San Luis Obispo. The remaining flora are donated, D'Acquisto said.

On Dec. 31, Cal Poly universities will be honored for this commitment to the state's flower farmers by California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross, Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-Santa Barbara) and Assembly Majority Leader Chris Holden of Pasadena.

"I'm excited to once again be honoring our Cal Poly students for their hard work and commitment to building a California-Grown Certified float for this year's Tournament of Roses Parade," Ross said.

Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, President Jeffrey D. Armstrong said the honor is a salute to the state's heritage, its agriculturalists and the impact that the universities have on both.

"We are proud to be certified California Grown again this year," Armstrong said. "Our universities are dedicated to educating the next generation of farmers and ranchers in California, so it's only natural that we are committed to supporting the hard-working flower farmers in California today, many of whom are alumni."

D'Acquisto, who has guided float crews for more than a decade, had high praise for the students and the lessons they learn from the effort.

"I have said, and President Armstrong has repeated, that the Rose Float program may be Cal Poly's best example of Learn by Doing, especially when you consider its interdisciplinary nature," he said. "Talk to the students. It's their labor of love. It's their passion."

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Volunteers sought in Pasadena

To volunteer to decorate the "Soaring Stories," sign up online:  
<http://www.eventbrite.com/o/cal-poly-rose-float-7536540057>

More online

To see photos and videos of the float under construction, visit the Cal Poly Rose Float Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/rosefloat>

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