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Cal Poly Announces New Location, Expansion Plans for SLO HotHouse Programs

University Leases 15,000-Square-Foot Location in Downtown San Luis Obispo

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. — Cal Poly has leased a 15,000-square-foot space in downtown San Luis Obispo to relocate and expand its SLO HotHouse — a collaborative effort with the city and local business community aimed at supporting promising innovators, entrepreneurs and building a unique and passionate startup culture in San Luis Obispo.

The university recently signed a 10-year lease on the space along the 800 block of Higuera Street, directly above the Ross Dress for Less store.

"With the help of the City of SLO and the local business community, the SLO HotHouse has become a key player in the economic development of our County," said Judy Mahan, director of the SLO HotHouse, "We are incredibly excited with the opportunity to continue increasing our impact with access to more space for more startups to launch and grow locally."

The SLO HotHouse programs, currently housed in a roughly 6,000-square-foot space on Morro Street in downtown, will be shifted to the new location gradually beginning in June and through early fall.

The SLO HotHouse programs include the Accelerator, a three-month program designed to help startup companies launch successful businesses. Participants are provided with \$10,000 in seed funding, SLO HotHouse office space, hands-on mentoring, and weekly workshops. Throughout the process, they are challenged to adapt their business model and product through customer development. Along the way, they learn valuable communication, leadership, and teamworking skills.

The SLO HotHouse Incubator is the next step. Selected companies are invited to remain at the SLO HotHouse for 24 months and continue working on their business. Programming includes monthly Peer Roundtable Discussions, an Incubator Advisory Board, networking opportunities, and exclusive access to various entrepreneurial events in the community. Companies pay a membership fee, starting at \$50 and increasing every six months until it reaches average market price for a comparable downtown office space.

The Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE) had eight groups in its most recent Accelerator program and has about a dozen companies in the Incubator. The larger space could allow for each program to roughly double in size, as well as allowing space for other CIE programs.

The SLO HotHouse also includes a Coworking program, through which all community entrepreneurs and startups are eligible to take advantage of office space, technological infrastructure and other aspects of the program's synergistic shared-work environment.

And the SLO HotHouse also houses Cal Poly's Small Business Development Center for Innovation — a service center of the UC Merced SBDC Central California Regional Network co-funded by Cal Poly's CIE and the federal Small Business Administration. The center provides assistance for both startups and established companies helping local entrepreneurs launch companies, attract capital investment and create jobs to help contribute to the prosperity of the Central Coast.

"The San Luis Obispo business community has been integral in the success of the CIE and the SLO HotHouse — monetarily, in an advisory capacity, and by working directly with our budding entrepreneurs," said Scott Dawson, dean of Cal Poly's Orfalea College of Business. "The new location will enhance our SLO HotHouse programs, resulting in more and stronger startups leading change in a variety of industries."

For more information on the SLO HotHouse programs and the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, visit cie.calpoly.edu.

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