

CAL POLY  
SAN LUIS OBISPO

CAL POLY  
COMMENCEMENT

*Mustangs Forever*



# Cal Poly Commencement: *Focused on the Student Experience*



## *Commencement Policy Committee*

*University Standing Committee*

### *Scope:*

• Makes recommendations and advises President and Vice President on commencement policy relating to:

- Invited keynote speakers
- Student commencement fees
- Operational policy on posthumous degrees
- Student's eligibility to graduate
- Petition request process
- Parking and traffic impacts
- Guest accommodations (including ADA)
- Official academic regalia
- College pairings at Fall and Spring ceremonies
- Cultural commencement ceremonies
- Honorary degrees
- Ticketing requirements

• Meets twice yearly

• Consists of 16 members



***Commencement Policy Committee, Cont...***  
***University Standing Committee***

***Policy Committee members:***

- Chair – Vice President for Student Affairs
- Two Faculty Grand Marshals
- President's Chief of Staff
- Two ASI student representatives
- Provost nominee for Academic Affairs
- Assistant Vice President, Alumni Relations
- Faculty representative, CAFES
- Faculty representative, CAED
- Faculty representative, OCOB
- Faculty representative, CENG
- Faculty representative, CLA
- Faculty representative, CSM
- Director of Commencement

***Current members:***

- Keith Humphrey
- Andrew Schaffner & Chip Appel
- Rachel Fernflores (Jessica Darin – May '16)
- Cyrus Ebadat & Emilie Morse
- Dean for CAED, Christine Theodoropoulos
- Ellen Cohune
- Ann De Lay
- Cornelius Nuworsoo
- Eric Olsen
- Dean Arakaki
- Michael Latner
- Tom Gutierrez
- Tessa Espinoza

## ***Commencement Operations Committee***

*University Standing Committee*

### ***Scope:***

- Executes all commencement events throughout the year.
- A collaborative working committee focused on all operations and logistics related to commencement.
- Meets monthly during academic year
- Consists of 26 members

### ***Responsibilities include:***

- Comprehensive marketing and communication strategy
- Electronic and hard copy ticketing for over 40,000 people
- Campus-wide facility operations
- Security, safety and campus-wide parking
- Presidential events and stewardship of VIP guests
- Campus-wide signage, traffic, and crowd control
- ADA compliancy
- Collaboration with all internal and external vendors
- Collaboration with city of San Luis Obispo, including promotional banners downtown, communication with hotels

## *Commencement Operations Committee, Cont...*

### *University Standing Committee*

#### ***Operations Committee members:***

- Two Faculty Grand Marshals → Andrew Schaffner & Chip Appel
- ASI student representative → Seth Borges
- Two Office of the President representatives → Diane Haupt & Dana Matteson
- Provost nominee for Academic Affairs → Staci Shoals
- University Marketing & Communications → Royaa Silver & Sasha Palazzo
- Asst. Vice President of Alumni Relations & Alumni staff → Ellen Cohune & Maureen O'Connor
- Facilities Manager → Donald Popham
- Athletics → Stacia Momburg
- University Bookstore → Preston Sirois & Annette Bly
- Faculty from Music Department → Andrew McMahan & Thomas Davies
- UPD Commander and Parking Manager → Brenda Trobaugh & Gwen Nielsen
- Commencement Staff → Katie Stubberfield & Tessa Espinoza
- Director of Disability Resources → Debi Hill & Vanessa Dominguez

#### ***Current members:***





## External Vendors

### **Freestyle Event Services**

*Audio and Staging*

### **Central Coast Industries**

*Portable Toilets*

### **Got You Cover'd**

*Chairs, Tents & Staircases*

### **RideOn**

*Shuttles*

### **Central Coast Printing**

*Postcards & Name badges*

### **CRS**

*Posters, Pamphlets & Signage*

### **Michael Jones**

*Doves*

### **Epic Entertainment**

*Photo Booth*

### **PolyTix**

*Tickets and Scanning*

### **Left Coast T-shirts**

*Usher Vests*

### **San Luis Ambulance**

*Ambulance Service*

### **Robert Cooper**

*Big Screen Conductor*

### **Vino Vice**

*Security Service*

### **BestCare Pharmacy**

*Wheelchairs*

### **Mr. Pickles**

*Volunteer and Staff lunch*

***Additional groups that are regularly consulted:***

(Part of our collaborative and inclusive decision-making process)

- Various Student Groups and Committees
- ASI Student Government Leaders
- ASI Workshop
- Parent Advisory Council
- Dean's Council
- President's Cabinet
- City of San Luis Obispo Elected Officials
- University Housing (relating to concurrent move-out traffic)
- Student Affairs Senior Leadership Team
- Survey feedback from students, parents/supporters and faculty/staff





### *Spring Commencement Snapshot*

#### **Monthly**

- Hold monthly Commencement Operations Committee meetings

#### **9-12 months prior**

- Review survey feedback
- Finalize keynote speaker(s)
- Finalize date/time/structure

#### **8 months prior**

- Develop Mar/Comm Plan to grads and families
- Facilitate Open Forums for college coordinators
- Create checklists for colleges
- Hold Commencement Policy Committee Meeting

#### **7 months prior**

- Finalize Honorary Degree Recipients

#### **6 months prior**

- Contact and reserve all vendors/services
- Develop interactive mobile app
- Initiate communication to grads
- Facilitate outstanding Senior Award nominees

#### **5 months prior**

- Finalize college/department event details
- Confirm all spaces are secure/scheduled
- Confirm Chancellor's Office attendees
- Process all petition requests

#### **4 months prior**

- Manage/author Commencement Program
- Mail materials to all parents of eligible graduates
- Finalize keynote speaker details/requests
- Finalize Cultural Commencement ceremonies

#### **3 months prior**

- Organize/coordinate Commencement Fair
- Design/coordinate commencement ticketing
- Author/finalize commencement scripts
- Hold Commencement Policy Committee Meeting
- Coordinate all accessibility services, shuttle routes, wheelchair rentals and closed captioning services
- Finalize processional and seating charts for platform
- Request final remarks from all ceremony speakers

### 2 months prior

- Disseminate comprehensive grad instruction pamphlet
- Collaborate with Grand Marshals to organize Marshals
- Hire over 100 student employees and volunteers

### 1 month prior

- Walk-through facilities/conduct vendor dry-runs
- Conduct several detailed training sessions for volunteers
- Support College Marshal trainings
- Disseminate certificates to colleges
- Deploy instructions/materials to Platform Party
- Deploy instructions to college marshals
- Finalize all VIP and Presidential events
- Conduct Presidential briefing

### 1 week prior

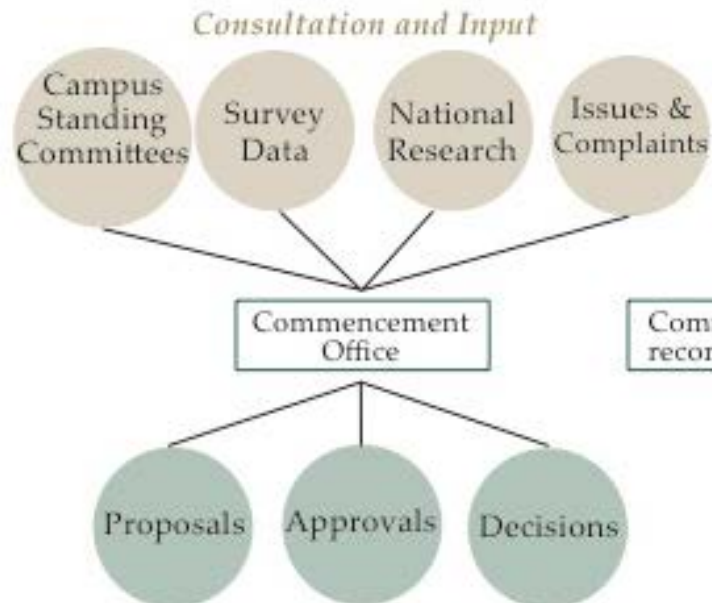
- Grad Week events
- Assemble over 5,000 Cal Poly Proud bags for grads and faculty
- Finalize stadium set-up
- Deliver scripts to all platform party members
- Host walk-through rehearsal in stadium



## *Our Current Process for Addressing Change*



## HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE



### *Constituent Groups Providing Input:*

Commencement Operations Committee  
Commencement Policy Committee  
President's Cabinet  
College Deans  
College Departments Heads/Chairs  
Graduate/Parents/Faculty Survey Data  
ASI Student Government

Commencement Office receives and funnels information, seeks recommendations/approval, and implements change.

### *Constituent Groups Approving Change:*

President's Cabinet  
College Deans





Commencement Office along with Commencement Operations and Policy Committees have addressed and successfully resolved several concerns over the years including:

- Overall duration of the ceremony
  - Total ceremony length trimmed to 90 min
- Ceremony timing due to sun/heat of the day
  - Moved morning ceremonies to 9am
- Ceremony structure
  - Changed to a 3-ceremony model
- ADA Compliancy at all commencement events
  - Achieved full compliancy at all 45 events
- Signage and traffic flow throughout campus
  - Created a task force, routed traffic exclusively on Highland
- Duration of graduate and faculty processional
  - Trimmed graduate and faculty processional to 13 minutes
- Accessibility for guests with a mobility impairment
  - Increased and re-routed shuttles, rented 75 wheelchairs
- Shortage of tickets distributed per graduates
  - Increased number of tickets per grad from 7 to 10

# ADA Compliancy: a Recent Issue Resolved

## *A Deeper Look at a Recent Issue that was successfully resolved:*

In Spring 2014, 46% of post-commencement college/departments ceremonies were not ADA compliant (21 out of 45)

## *Our Process toward Resolution:*

- Worked with Facilities Planning to determine all ADA compliant locations on campus **(July 2014)**
- Presented 3 well-developed scenarios to the Deans **(Aug 2014)**
- Upon request by the Deans, presented 3 well-developed scenarios to the Dept Heads and Chairs **(Sept 2014)**
- Consulted with Commencement Policy Committee **(Oct 2014)**
- Support from Commencement Operations Committee **(Sept 2014 – June 2015)**

## *Once a decision was reached:*

- Held 2 Open Forums for the college coordinators **(December 2014)**
- Provided a detailed checklist to all college coordinators **(January 2015)**
- All 45 College/Department events were fully ADA-compliant **(June 2015)**





## *Additional Positive Changes:*

- Established timeless brand – ***Mustangs Forever***
- Customized commencement **mobile app**
- **Live streaming** (YouTube) and closed captioning
- Advanced **ticket scanning** technology
- Interactive **customized map** online
- New and improved commencement **website**
- Enhanced **social media** campaign
- Hand **fans and water** for all grads, guests, and faculty
- Implemented and increased **streamers** each year for 'Big Finish'!
- Implemented **Cal Poly Proud pinning** ceremony
- Incorporated recognition of **alumni guests** during ceremonies
- **Commencement fair** expansion



## *Proposed Change for Spring 2016*



## *Key Issue Addressed with College Deans:*

### **Opportunity for Improvement with the College and Department Events**

- Survey responses identified frustration with college/department events and the lack of organization.
- The overall positive rating for the college/department events dropped from 70% to 65% this year.
- 54% of grads felt college/department communication was poor
- Parents rated college/department events poorly
- Anecdotal feedback from President and others

2014



2015



## *Research and Data Collected to Address this Issue:*

- 18 of the 23 CSU campuses conduct name reading at their main university-wide ceremonies.
- The CSU average ceremony duration is 2 hours, 10 minutes (including name reading and processional).
- 4 CSU campuses conduct separate departmental ceremonies (3 of these 4 conduct name reading at their department events).
- Cal Poly processional duration has decreased from 40 down to 15 minutes.
- Each graduate name would require 3-5 seconds (utilizing professional name readers)
- “Name reading & walking across the stage” listed as most important to include in the university-wide ceremony (Graduate survey)



## *Recommendation from President's Cabinet:*

(After consultation with various constituent groups, including College Deans and Department Heads/Chairs)

- The main university ceremonies in Spanos stadium to include individual name reading for each graduate
- Following* each university ceremony, colleges and departments may host receptions or events
- Colleges and departments determine level of formality and structure for their event or reception
  - Formal staging, A/V, seating, name reading and event ticketing are optional and could be eliminated (decreased cost to colleges and departments)
- The university will continue to host 3 main commencement ceremonies in Spanos Stadium
  - 2 colleges represented at each
- The main university ceremonies will last approximately 2 hours
  - Some historical ceremony elements will be abbreviated or eliminated
- Professional name readers will be utilized
  - Total time added for name reading = approximately 1 hour
- Staging changes will accommodate two lines for graduate path of travel
- Commencement photography and faculty/student congratulatory exchanges will be conducted on the field