Where Art Meets Technology and Science

Introducing the new Cal Poly Center for Expressive Technologies

Inside 3: Faculty and students make their mark / 10: Documenting ‘Lives Well Lived’ / 12: Cal Poly alumna thrives as Dwell Media president / 14: Then-and-now glimpses around campus
Dear CLA Alumni and Friends:

Since arriving at Cal Poly, I have been impressed by the close-knit community that comprises the College of Liberal Arts — both on and off campus. The College of Liberal Arts’ alumni and friends that I have met are just as passionate about Cal Poly now, if not more so, as when they first stepped on campus.

This is a testament to our outstanding faculty and staff, who truly care about students’ academic, professional and personal success. Your achievements have established the high value of a liberal arts degree at Cal Poly. The college’s respect for you and our continuing commitment to students require that we sustain across future generations of students the excellence for which we are known. By striving to innovate and expand opportunities for students, we position them and us at the forefront of our traditional disciplines and emerging interdisciplinary fields.

Collectively, our CLA community is doing amazing things on campus, in the community, and in the world. Our community’s accomplishments exceed the pages of this publication, but we hope to provide you with a sense of the depth and breadth of the CLA story of excellence.

With this publication and our quarterly e-newsletter, The Link, we reaffirm our commitment to staying connected with our ever-increasing network of alumni and friends. I hope you join me in this commitment. Please keep us updated on your activities, support the college through your time and philanthropic gifts, and most important, help tell the Cal Poly CLA story.

Thank you for all your support. Together, we can raise the level of excellence and recognition of the College of Liberal Arts exponentially.

Best regards,
Douglas Epperson
Dean, College of Liberal Arts
AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Cal Poly faculty and students are making a difference — on campus and beyond.

STUDENTS

In recognition of their work last year on “A Year with Frog and Toad,” Ian Billings and Cadence Mitchell (Theatre & Dance) received Meritorious Achievement Awards from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. / Mariah Cochiolo (Graphic Communication) was selected as the Scholar Athlete of the Year for the Big West Conference. / Kevin DeBoer’s (Art & Design) project, “American Forests,” won an Applied Arts magazine award and was published in the November/December 2013 issue. / Mustang News, the Journalism Department’s student-run integrated newsroom, received 20 national and state awards in March from the Associated Collegiate Press and California College Media Association, including first in Best of Show – Website Large School category and first in Best of Show – Multimedia Package. / Bryan Pride (Master of Public Policy) and Nicola Williams (History) were two of 10 students selected to represent Cal Poly in the statewide CSU Research Competition. Pride’s project is based on his independent research titled “Taking Back the Farm: How Corporate Farms Create Food Insecure Communities.” Williams’ research is titled “Fashion, Feminism and Morality: A New Look at the New Woman.”

FACULTY

Ryan Alaniz (Social Sciences) was accepted as a World Social Science Fellow. Additionally, he was selected as one of the San Luis Obispo Tribune’s 2014 “Top 20 under 40” award winners. / Richard Besel and Jnan Blau (Communication Studies) are the editors of a new book, “Performance on Behalf of the Environment” (2013). / Bernard Duffy (Communication Studies) was the 2013 recipient of the university’s Distinguished Scholarship Award. / Two of the three Cal Poly professors accepted into the Coleman Foundation Faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows program are from CLA — Mary Glick (Journalism) and Lorraine Donegan (Graphic Communication). The Coleman Foundation is committing nearly $500,000 for fellowship grants and program support at involved campuses. / Jasna Jovanovic (Psychology & Child Development) and a colleague were awarded a $100,000 National Science Foundation grant to study women in STEM fields. The study examines factors that promote the entry, retention and success of underrepresented women. / Jane Lehr (Ethnic Studies) and colleagues Helene Finger and Beverley Kwang received the American Society of Engineering Education 2013 Best Zone Paper Award for their paper titled “When, Why, How, Who — Lessons from First-Year Female Engineering Students at Cal Poly for Efforts to Increase Recruitment.” / Charmaine Martinez (Art & Design) was awarded a 2013 American Graphic Design Award from Graphic Design USA for her project “Visualizing a Healthy Food System” — a comprehensive branding campaign for Central Coast Grown. / Kathleen S. Murphy (History) received a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies for the 2013-14 academic year. The award supports research in the humanities and humanistic social sciences that the council considers to be particularly promising. Murphy received the fellowship to support her research into the history of science of the slave trade. / Todd Pierce’s (English) short story “Rockman 1951” appeared in The Harvard Review. / Univisión (the Spanish-language TV conglomerate and most-watched TV channel in the world) featured Craig Russell (Music) in a fall news segment. In the segment, Russell was filmed in the Santa Barbara Mission, discussing (in Spanish) California mission music. / Tom Trice (History and Women’s & Gender Studies) taught at the Padma Kanya campus in Kathmandu, Nepal, as part of his Fulbright Scholar award. / Gloria Velásquez (Modern Languages & Literatures) published her ninth novel in the Roosevelt High School series, “Tommy Stands Tall.”

Juana Villa (Graphic Communication) was awarded the 2013 California State University (CSU) Trustees’ Award for Outstanding Achievement, one of the highest student distinctions within the CSU system.

Patrick Lin (Philosophy) received a grant of nearly $500,000 from the National Science Foundation for “Safeguarding Cyberspace with Ethical Rules for Cyberwarfare,” a collaborative project with the Naval Postgraduate School and Western Michigan University.
CLASS ACTS

Get to know these faculty members outside of the classroom. Each outstanding educator represents one of the four sectors of the college — communications, humanities, performing arts and social sciences.

BERNARD DUFFY / Communication Studies Department
Specialty Area: Rhetoric and Public Address / Years at Cal Poly: 26

Why did you choose to work at Cal Poly? I was a tenured professor at Clemson in South Carolina, where we had lived for nine years. I wanted to get back to California, where I had family.

What is your guilty pleasure? Every spring I find more Japanese maples to buy. There are more than 200 cultivars. I have planted, in the ground or in pots, about 20 different types of Japanese maples and about 50 in total.

W. TERRENCE (TERRY) SPILLER / Music Department
Specialty Area: Piano / Years at Cal Poly: 23

Why did you choose to work at Cal Poly? I was offered the job just as I was finishing my doctoral work at the University of Southern California (USC). I was thrilled to be able to start working right away in one of the most beautiful parts of California.

What is a fact about you that few know? I started college as a fisheries major at the University of Washington.

ROBERT (LARRY) INCHAUSTI / English Department
Specialty Area: Literary Theory and the History of Ideas / Years at Cal Poly: 30

Why did you choose to work at Cal Poly? I wanted to get back to California. When Cal Poly offered me a tenure-track position teaching English to undergraduates, it felt like coming home. To be honest, it felt like winning the lottery.

Are there any scholars or individuals who have inspired you? Way too many to list! Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, of course. I am particularly drawn to working-class thinkers who shake up the world — people like James Baldwin, Dorothy Day, Vaclav Havel, Jack Kerouac and Pablo Neruda.

DAWN NEILL / Social Sciences Department
Specialty Area: Anthropology / Years at Cal Poly: 6

Why did you choose to work at Cal Poly? Primarily, I was drawn to the interdisciplinary nature of the Social Sciences Department. Additionally, the position I applied for at Cal Poly was specifically oriented to my areas of expertise — nutritional and evolutionary anthropology.

If you were stranded on a desert island and could bring one book, what would it be? Since I do fieldwork on the tropical island of Fiji, often outside the range of Internet access, I ask myself this question frequently. If I had to choose only one book, it would be “Cat’s Cradle” by Kurt Vonnegut.
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2,927 total 2013 CLA undergraduates

70% women
30% men

52% four-year graduation rate
Average CLA graduation rates rank second among all the colleges at Cal Poly

83% six-year graduation rate

Affordable Colleges Online has ranked Cal Poly the fifth best college in the nation for return on investment (ROI) for its English and humanities programs. Affordable Colleges Online determines ROI rankings based on total weighted cost and a 30-year net ROI. Cal Poly ranked in the top five among institutions including Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, UC Berkeley, and James Madison University.

Enrolled First-Time Freshmen

3.75 average weighted GPA
614 average SAT Reading
607 average SAT Math
91% one-year retention rate*

* 2011 cohort

Cal Poly Named Top College for Return on Investment for English and Humanities Majors

Music Groups Perform in Chinese New Year Parade and Carnegie Hall

The Cal Poly Mustang Band was invited to participate in the Feb. 15 Southwest Airlines Chinese New Year Parade in San Francisco, named one of the top 10 parades in the world by the International Festivals and Events Association. Cal Poly was one of only two university bands invited. Parade judges awarded the Mustang Band first place in the Adult Marching Band category.

PolyPhonics, Cal Poly’s premier chamber choral ensemble, and the Cal Poly Arab Music Ensemble traveled to New York to give the showcase performance at the World Projects 2014 New York Choral Festival at Carnegie Hall March 16-18. The ensembles also performed at the Graduate Center in New York City and at St. Peter’s Church in Philadelphia.

Homecoming for the Mind

The College of Liberal Arts held its third annual Homecoming for the Mind event following the Homecoming game on Saturday, Nov. 16. Alumni, students, faculty and staff were able to discover what CLA has to offer and catch up on all of the cutting-edge disciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavors of students and faculty. The event featured an intimate and cozy “coffeehouse” setting, with live music performed by Cal Poly’s Jazz Ensemble, a poetry reading, and student project displays.

Mark your calendars — Homecoming for the Mind 2014 will be held Saturday, Nov. 1. Watch your inbox for more information!
From the Re/Collecting Project: detail of the love letters documenting the courtship of Santiago “Jimmie” Salutan and Mary Olvera Salutan.
New Center Bridges the Divide Between Technology and the Arts

The Center for Expressive Technologies tells the story of Cal Poly’s excellence — using everything from a digital app to communitywide exhibitions to showcase students’ creativity.

At the intersection of science, technology and the arts lies the Cal Poly Center for Expressive Technologies (CET). Established at the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year, the CET focuses on the creation of stories that reimagine the relationship between communication and technology.

“For me, it’s more story making and sharing rather than storytelling. It allows us to connect to the globally rich traditions of story while figuring out how we can innovate,” says Elizabeth Lowham, CET director.

With projects such as the Re/Collecting Project, PolyXpress, and the Mini Maker Faire, the CET is working to bridge the divide between science and technology and the liberal arts. Ranging from a digitalization project to a communitywide exhibition showcasing Cal Poly creative talent, the following are a few projects with which the CET is currently involved.

**RE/COLLECTING PROJECT**
As of last year, the CET has been supporting the work of ethnic studies Professor Grace Yeh and her students on the Re/Collecting Project. Yeh’s body of work digitally captures and makes accessible the history of Japanese-, Filipino- and African-American communities from the region.

So far, the project has consisted mostly of digitizing interviews and archive materials into searchable databases. In May, stories and materials from the Re/Collecting Project were the basis of an exhibit at Kennedy Library titled “Objects of Affection.”

Seeking to expand the scope of the project, the CET is looking to incorporate work from English Professor David Gillette’s engaging PolyXpress app project.

The PolyXpress app focuses on geo-location-based events that give users access to information about their environment. PolyXpress users are also able to...
upload their own images, text and video, allowing them to create and share their own stories of place and meaning while encouraging interaction with physical locations.

Collaborating with the Creative Industries Division at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, Australia, Gillette is preparing a series of workshops that will help QUT students interact with the PolyXpress mobile storytelling system and help the Australian aboriginal communities present their traditions, stories and culture, including the hidden stories of the land beneath modern Brisbane.

The CET and the Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies (LAES) Program will work with Gillette to produce lectures, facilitate joint training sessions, and discuss storytelling ideas through live video sessions.

POLYXPRESS FOR THE CAL POLY ARBORETUM

Expanding the scope of how and where the PolyXpress app could potentially be used, the center is hoping to use the app to enhance appreciation of Cal Poly’s campus.

Lowham and Michael Haungs, LAES co-director and associate professor of computer science, are applying for a grant to create a PolyXpress story about the Cal Poly Arboretum. Working with Chris Wassenberg, the Horticulture & Crop Sciences Department, and students in the colleges of Liberal Arts; Engineering; and Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences, this PolyXpress story would allow visitors to learn the history and facts connected to individual locations within the arboretum, as well as the rich resources and history of the Leaning Pine Arboretum. Visitors would also be able to use their mobile phones to upload images and text for other app users to view.

Though both PolyXpress-related projects are still developing, Lowham hopes these projects will serve as examples of the possibilities that new technology and science can open up for storytelling. “Technology has expanded the art of story making — it has expanded access to sharing stories, expanded mediums through which we construct stories, expanded the creation of story, and expanded what we mean by story.”
stories, expanded mediums through which we construct stories, expanded the creation of story, and expanded what we mean by story,” Lowham says.

MINI MAKER FAIRE AND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
The CET is focused on not only exploring the technology-liberal arts relationship but also helping to build community based on the actual sharing of stories. A visual representation of this idea was realized at this year’s Mini Maker Faire.

Lovingly described as the “Greatest Show (and Tell) on Earth,” the annual Mini Maker Faire places emphasis on the creative process rather than on the finished product. The event creates a time and space for local inventors, artists, scientists, thinkers, storytellers, engineers and learners to share their passions and ideas.

The May 10 fair featured a student-designed centerpiece called “Plug-in Pavilion,” which included geometric shapes that changed as the event progressed. “The students who conceptualized the structure wanted to create ‘a space that is literally created by the stories people share,’” Lowham says.

The CET has also collaborated with different entities to help bring new opportunities to students on campus. Opportunities included a screening in collaboration with the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival and assistance with the 2014 Cal Poly Design & Dev Hackathon — an event that encourages students to pool their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to develop projects within a 12-hour period.

“With the CET, we’re working to forge new internal and external relationships that benefit students, faculty and the broader community,” Lowham says.

As the CET nears its one-year anniversary, plans are already in the works to round up new projects, finalize new partnerships, and solidify the center’s image. Even with the emerging push to connect technology with the liberal arts, there are still some things that will always remain the same: creating value through meaning and forming relationships.

“Making stories has remained integral to our vision — with story as a process of creating meaning and community,” Lowham says. “In the end, the CET is trying to tell the broader story of the kind of excellence that Cal Poly can create at the intersection of science, technology and the liberal arts.”
‘Lives Well Lived’

How do we see ourselves going through the aging process? What are our preconceived notions on aging?

It turns out that getting older doesn’t have to be a time of slowing down and settling in; instead, it can be the time you really begin living the best way possible. There are individuals in their golden years leading by example and showing the potential that late adulthood really holds.

Cal Poly photography Professor Sky Bergman is working to document such stories of people who are testaments to a life well lived. She has been working on a film and photography venture that captures the images and ideas of senior individuals, who, with their passion for life, inspire younger generations.

Titled “Lives Well Lived,” the project showcases how technology and the ancient art of storytelling can work together to represent a generation that is “aging with dignity, grace, energy and purpose,” according to Bergman.

Though the “Lives Well Lived” body of work focuses on the successful and fulfilling lives of others, the project was inspired by events very personal to Bergman. “I always tell my students, the more personal a project, sometimes the more universal it becomes. And that’s really what happened with this project — it really started with my grandmother,” Bergman says.

Bergman’s spark of inspiration for the project came while she was in Florida celebrating her grandmother’s 99th birthday. “She was at the gym, and she was on the bicycle, and she was lifting weights. Just as a throwaway comment, I said, ‘Grandma, can you give me some words of wisdom?’ And she said, ‘Words of wisdom from an old lady: be kind, live life to the limits,’ and she just went on from there,” Bergman says.

“I thought, there is a project here because here is a woman who has lived all these years, who still has so many friends, is still so active and engaged. That’s what I want to be like, and there are more people out there like that, and I want to know their stories.”

Since the project’s inception, Bergman has interviewed men and women over the age of 75 and has recorded their experiences and taken still photographs of each.

Eventually Bergman plans to create a documentary film that joins the different interviews together into a cohesive story about strength and a consistently positive attitude throughout a lifetime.

This project “shows people who are still active and engaged, people who we can aspire to be when we age,” Bergman says.

“Lives Well Lived” is intended to encourage viewers to see late adulthood as a positive life experience in which people can still find meaning and purpose. “I’ve always been curious, and I’ve always asked a lot of questions, but I’m 48, and I’m getting older, and I want a role model of what I want to become when I’m older,” Bergman says.

Below: Sky Bergman (far left) with student assistant Ellen Williams (center) photographing Evy Justesen.
The participants included in the “Lives Well Lived” project, recruited through a process of nominations, have illuminated Bergman’s own endeavor with a versatility of lifestyles and tips for younger generations.

Among the interviewees are Evelyn Ricciuti, Bergman’s grandmother; Botso Korisheli, who was originally from the Republic of Georgia and fled the country at the start of Josef Stalin’s regime; and Jessie Stone, who lived through the Civil Rights Movement.

“Whether it be paving the way for women’s rights or suffering in Russia under Stalin, they all have stories that have inspired me to try to achieve at least a portion of what they have accomplished,” says Brittany Martha Bratcher, Bergman's student assistant and history junior.

The video interviews illustrate a few key traits, among them optimism and perseverance. “There are really two things that have been a common thread. One, they all have something they are passionate about doing every day. There’s this thirst for knowledge. The other thing is, they all have a good support system. They really are surrounded by a number of people who care about them,” Bergman says.

Many of the interviewees, despite experiencing daunting obstacles throughout their lives, have simply chosen to be happy.

“It’s that old adage, ‘Is the glass half full or half empty?’ In the case of the people I’ve interviewed, they’re half-full people,” Bergman says.

Stories from elders who have lived and experienced common and extraordinary hardships but have maintained upbeat, positive attitudes can be both empowering and instructive.

“There’s a whole generation of people who are just incredible and aren’t getting the kind of support they really should have,” Bergman says. “You can’t imagine how much those people have to give until you sit down and talk to them.”

“Everybody has a story, if you just take the time to listen.”

For You

Leader in publishing and partner in Journalism Department’s innovations
A 21st-century publication is about making connections, sharing ideas, and eventually going beyond itself to make an impact on the world. Dwell magazine, a modern architecture and design-focused publication, is undertaking the task of reinvigorating the design world with fresh perspectives and giving new character to modern architecture.

At Dwell Media, Journalism Department alumna Michela O’Connor Abrams and her team consistently aim not only to tell stories about design and architecture but also to tell these stories in ways that will enlighten and motivate their audience.

As president of Dwell Media, O’Connor Abrams centers her efforts on Dwell magazine’s audience and the success of her team. Recently working to expand the company’s digital presence and grow the business, O’Connor Abrams has helped create several new platforms to connect with Dwell consumers.

Among these new platforms are interactive events that show how design influences and shapes our modern world. The multiple-day programs include Dwell on Design; home tours across Los Angeles; and Modern City, co-hosted with New York magazine.

O’Connor Abrams describes her personal philosophy as a practice of “taking risks, being willing to morph your strategy as needed, and making sure that you’re listening to your audience.”

It has been this attentiveness and connection to its audience that has made the Dwell Media story a successful one. Dwell has weathered multiple industry transitions, such as the move to digital formats. The company currently boasts a total audience reach of more than 1 million and a paid circulation of more than 300,000.

As for O’Connor Abrams, despite her position as president of the large media company, her roots are firmly grounded in journalism. And she believes that Cal Poly helped her hone the skills that have carried her through her career.

After enrolling in Cal Poly’s Journalism Department in 1977, she began writing for the Mustang Daily student newspaper. “We took on tough subjects,” O’Connor Abrams says. “I was completely immersed in what it is to investigate, develop and create a story, as well as to understand how to be responsible for creating a different story vis-à-vis marketing.”

Her time at Cal Poly fostered O’Connor Abrams’ desire to become a journalist. However, after graduation, she found herself beginning to move into the sales and marketing industry instead.

Beginning as an intern at an advertising agency in Los Angeles, she eventually worked as a sales assistant for TV Guide. From TV Guide, O’Connor Abrams moved on to manage the Los Angeles office of The New Yorker.

By 1988, O’Connor Abrams was serving as vice president of the Western United States region for Computerworld, a computer newspaper. “I was managing a number of people, many much older than I. So I very quickly had to understand how to be responsible for a multimillion-dollar goal, but also be humble enough to learn from the people I was managing,” O’Connor Abrams says. “You learn a lot about yourself, and in that process I learned that I loved leading people. I think that at the core of any good leader is humility of spirit, and you run out to find people smarter than yourself and are comfortable with that.”

She believes that this humble and resourceful attitude has helped Dwell become what it is today — an authority on modern architecture and design, as well as an innovative publishing company that explores audience connection across platforms.

With similar goals in mind, O’Connor Abrams recently visited Cal Poly to share her experience and knowledge with the Journalism Department. The department and O’Connor Abrams are collaborating on yet-to-be-revealed projects that will work with Cal Poly’s strengths to place the journalism program at the forefront of innovation.

“I think that a number of people on campus realize the opportunity to have a world-class media program with a core of great journalism,” O’Connor Abrams says. “Therefore, if we think about it in a much larger sense, we have a living lab here at Cal Poly, and we’ve got the opportunity to be leaders in print, online and live. No other higher learning institution I know of has the opportunity to do what Cal Poly can do because of Learn by Doing.”
Then & Now

SHARE YOUR CAMPUS PICS
Send us photos or tag us in photos on Facebook from your years at Cal Poly! Selected photos will appear in the next issue of Impact or on the college’s Facebook page.

# calpolycla
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/Historical Photos: University Archives, California Polytechnic State University.

/Left to right: Times change, but Cal Poly’s campus still fosters strong friendships and a close-knit community of scholars.

/Left to right: Decades later, Cal Poly’s students remain committed to displaying school spirit at athletic events.

/Left to right: The greeting signs may have changed, but the promise of a top-tier education endures.

/Left to right: From spinning platters on the wheels of steel to queuing up MP3s, student-run radio station KCPR continues to send out alternative content on the airwaves.

14 impact / Cal Poly College of Liberal Arts
Did you know?

The Art & Design Department has more than 17,000 square feet dedicated to making art, including 9,500 square feet of studio area, 5,000 square feet of photography space, and 2,500 square feet of design rooms.

In a single year, students across both psychology and child development programs provide approximately 20,000 community service hours through internship opportunities.

Audiences for the Theatre & Dance Department’s three annual main stage productions range from 750 to 1,000 patrons — approximately 85 percent students and 15 percent faculty and community.

Here to Help You

Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do to provide College of Liberal Arts students and faculty with opportunities to achieve excellence. Private support is critical for the college to recruit and retain top students and faculty in our increasingly competitive global world. To continue providing the outstanding educational experiences for which Cal Poly is known, we need your continued support.

Your generous assistance provides our students with opportunities that might otherwise not be available, such as scholarships and Earn by Doing opportunities (e.g., paid assistantships); state-of-the-art labs, technology and equipment; and experiences beyond the classroom (support for student organizations, conferences, competitions and performances).

As CLA’s assistant dean for advancement, David Cohune (B.S., Social Sciences, 1987) can answer any questions and match your interests with opportunities to invest your time and/or philanthropic gifts.

Support College of Liberal Arts students — give online today, www.giving.calpoly.edu.

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It’s always a great time to give a Cal Poly Proud gift! Order your exclusive Cal Poly gear today. A portion of the proceeds from every item purchased goes to support Learn by Doing.

Learn more and shop now at CalPolyProud.com.