Cal Poly Announces Great Grads from Class of 2008

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly's class of 2008 includes some 3,600 graduates who will participate in commencement ceremonies in Alex G. Spanos Stadium on Saturday and Sunday, June 14 and 15.

All the graduates are exceptional. However, if you're looking for interesting grads to profile for a good feature story, consider these "great grads" from the class of 2008:

Daniel Ramos will receive an undergraduate degree in architectural engineering. Ramos came to Cal Poly on a Gates Millennium Scholarship. Ramos was one of 1,000 awarded the scholarship out of a field of about 13,000 applicants. "The scholarship helped pay for nearly all of my fees and living expenses while at Cal Poly," he says.

The son of migrant field workers, Ramos will report to Ben C. Gerwick, Inc. - an internationally known civil/structural consulting firm based in San Francisco specializing in the design and construction of major marine structures – where he will begin project work on the Panama Canal expansion if the company is awarded the project.

Ramos' experience working on two internship projects, including structural work on three buildings in Las Vegas, Nev. at Mendenhall Smith, helped him land his future job.

Francisco Marvilla will receive a bachelor's degree in architecture. Marvilla migrated to the United States from Mexico when he was 10. He might have been a professional soccer player in Mexico if not for a promise he made to his mother and the help of a California Academic Bill.

Marvilla was scouted to play professional soccer for one of five Mexican teams. The paperwork and all plans were in place for him to move back to Mexico. Marvilla planned to apply to UC Berkeley Cal Poly, Cal Poly Pomona and a few other universities until he found out that he was being recruited to play soccer. He withdrew applications from all universities except Cal Poly and Cal Poly Pomona – "honestly, to lessen my chances of being admitted because I promised my mother I would go to university only if I got accepted to the schools I applied to," he says.

Marvilla came to Cal Poly under California Academic Bill 540. AB 540 allows non-resident aliens to pay in-state tuition rates if they
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attend a California high school for at least three years, graduate from a California high school or receive the equivalent general education diploma, are registered or currently enrolled in a California Community College, California State University, or a University of California, and sign a statement with the college or university stating that they will apply for legal residency as soon as he/she is eligible to do so.

Marvilla graduated high school in the top 10 percent of his class and his residency was already in process. His family paid for his entire education since non-resident aliens are not eligible for state or federal financial aid.

He will graduate and begin work with PCR Design and Consulting in Santa Maria. Soccer is now a hobby but he hopes to coach in the future.

Marvilla plans to save enough money to accomplish his goals of pursuing a Master's degree at an ivy league school, a Ph.D. in Europe, and going on to teach at the university level.

Zach Tabb will graduate with an undergraduate degree in psychology, with not just one minor, but two – anthropology and biology. Tabb, who hails from Los Gatos, came to Cal Poly on a scholarship from KRON-TV in San Francisco to pursue a career in health and medicine.

He has been active locally, working at the Red Cross and the AIDS support network. He also worked at a local clinical psychology office.

Tabb is the current president of Psi Chi - the National Honor Society in Psychology, as well as the co-chair of the College of Liberal Arts Student Council. He also co-founded the Cal Poly Neuroscience Undergraduate Society, which is Cal Poly's first and only neuroscience club.

Following graduation, he will serve in the Peace Corps in Uganda where he will implement and develop educational and fund-raising programs for HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. After his Peace Corps tour, Tabb plans to pursue a career in medicine.

Jared Hollows will receive an undergraduate degree in biochemistry. Hollows came to Cal Poly by way of the Army. Originally from Placerville, Calif., he joined the Army immediately after high school.

He became an animal care specialist and qualified as an expert field medic. During seven years of active service he traveled to Africa where he treated sick and starving villagers and brought herd animals back to health for use as livestock. He and his unit also built schools for local children.

He served two tours in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom in the Iraq war. While in Iraq, he trained dogs to sniff out explosive devices in the field and dolphins to find sea mines. Using the dolphins' natural biological sonar system,
he assisted in training the animals to locate, identify and notify army personnel of undersea mines. Hollows also helped train the dolphins to send sonic pings to search and locate large objects underwater. After locating the large object, the dolphins could visually identify an explosive and drop a transmitter to mark the location of the mine.

Hollows will graduate in the top three of his class. After graduating he will move to Fort Benning, Ga. to enter Officer Candidate School. He’ll likely serve another tour in Afghanistan or Iraq. “My ultimate goal is to get a Ph.D. in biochemistry and forensics and get into military intelligence.”

Josh Davis will receive a graduate degree in mechanical engineering. Davis, a long-time roller coaster enthusiast, hopes to become a roller coaster designer.

Davis came to Cal Poly to work with College of Engineering Dean, Mohammed Noori. While here he developed Cali Kids, a program that creates a platform for children to showcase their abilities. With the help of Guadalupe Elementary School teacher, and Cal Poly Alumnus, Jaime Cuello, he developed a program that exposes children to careers and activities that encourage children to pursue higher education.

Davis is an amateur ballroom dancer who loves sports and believes that a strong work ethic and following one’s dreams are keys to ultimate success.

Kyle O’Connor will receive his undergraduate degree in architecture. O’Connor, deaf since birth, came to Cal Poly four years ago. The only deaf student on campus, he won the respect and admiration of many people in the campus community. A seemingly mean feat for a hearing person but of no consequence for O’Connor – he says being the only deaf person on campus actually helped him with his voicing skills and other communication techniques.

Raised in an environmentally conscious home, he hopes to get his architecture license and also become LEED certified. “Re-use was an important family value. I learned a lot more about sustainability at Cal Poly and I want to carry what I’ve learned into my career.”

O’Connor will work as a technical designer for LPA, Inc., an Orange County based architectural firm that designs “green” buildings.

Paradise Osorio will receive an undergraduate degree in fine art. Osorio came to Cal Poly by way of Sacramento.
Melissa Larson will receive an undergraduate degree in finance. Larson is Cal Poly's youngest graduate this year at just 19 years old. She graduated from Saugus High School in Saugus, Calif. at age 16 and came to Cal Poly with seven advanced placement tests under her belt.

Larson, an only child, skipped the third grade. She says she has been interested in finance since she was small. "I used to help my dad with his investment business. I learned a lot." She served as her father's in-home office manager filing paperwork and asking a lot of questions about investing.

Larson will stay in San Luis Obispo working odd jobs until she finds the job she wants in the finance industry. "I like researching companies, investing and getting big returns."

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Note to Editors: Contact Stacia Momburg to obtain contact telephone numbers and photographs of the graduates.

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