BETWEEN IMAGINATION AND REALIZATION

Dear friends,

Cal Poly’s newly developed strategic plan – which I encourage you to review here – boils down to this concept:

In “Learn by Doing,” Cal Poly has a great tradition. In our collection of distinctive colleges, we have great parts. And now, in the second decade of Cal Poly’s second century, the real world demands that we bring it all together – that we prepare our graduates not only to master their chosen major but also to function effectively across multiple disciplines.

Already, Cal Poly is putting this concept into practice.

Take, for example, our story on Professor Kevin Taylor’s Adapted Paddling Program. Kinesiology majors from the College of Science and Mathematics are working with students from the College of Engineering in one of Cal Poly’s unique laboratories – the Morro Bay estuary. Together, they are making a real, permanent difference by improving the lives of disabled people through an unlikely medium—kayaking. Through the equipment modifications and mechanical innovations springing from these students’ brains, people who’ve lost the use of their legs are experiencing a new kind of freedom in the Morro Bay harbor. And Taylor has an even more ambitious goal for his students – changing the world’s attitude about people with disabilities.

As any Cal Poly alum can testify, Cal Poly’s learn-by-doing tradition demands that students apply classroom learning to real-world challenges, and it’s a powerful process.

An alumnus who thrived on that process, and who is a classic example of the resourceful and innovative alum we love to brag about, is 1994 computer science grad Aim McKendrick. Before he even left campus with his degree, McKendrick played a part in the development of the PalmPilot handheld computer. Since then, he’s developed crucial pieces of several technologies that are now part of our everyday lives, including TiVo and Netflix, where he is currently helping to bring streaming movies and TV shows, literally, to your fingertips.

Among other inspiring stories we’ve assembled for you:

- An interview with Robert Glidden, our new interim president, who shares his views on Cal Poly’s short-term needs, and his thoughts on the kind of leader the university needs to continue its tradition of excellence.

- A look at an important piece of the university’s past, with the recent on-campus reunion of more than 100 descendants of former Cal Poly President Julian McPhee.

And finally, a chance to meet some extraordinary current students: football player James Chen, who is studying to be a neurosurgeon, and business student Leah Post, whose toffee business is already thriving in Southern California – even though she’s only just starting her sophomore year here.

I hope you enjoy reading these and more stories about what makes Cal Poly special. Our goal in preparing Cal Poly Magazine is to help you stay connected to Cal Poly, and we’d welcome your suggestions. Please tell us what you like – or don’t like – about what we’re doing. You can contact me at mlazier@calpoly.edu.

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(Journalism, 1997)