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UNIVERSITY NEWS

IN Poly Canyon

BIOLoGY PROFESSOR MATT RITTER and three of his stu-
dents recently discovered what is thought to be the tallest Karri
(Eucalyptus diversicolor) tree in North America.
Ritter, a biology professor and head of the Cal Poly Plant
Conservatory, spotted the massive tree in Poly Canyon in
2005. But it wasn’t until late November 2007 that he and grad-
uate students Jenn Yost and Chris Wassenberg, along with un-
dergraduate Justin Bence, were able to climb to the top of the
giant tree to measure it.
Using ropes and harnesses, the four researchers were able to
get an accurate measurement of the tree’s height by dropping a
line to the ground from the upper canopy.
They recorded the tree at a height of 154 feet, a diameter of
seven feet, and a 75-foot-wide crown.
Ritter submitted the data to the California Registry of Big
Trees, part of a national forestry database. The Poly Canyon
Karri Eucalyptus has been accepted as the tallest tree of its
type on record – almost 100 feet taller than the previous north
american record holder, a San Clemente tree at 59 feet.

ALUM SCHEDULED TO RESIDE ON INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

CAL POLY ALUM GREGORY CHAMITOFF (EE ’94) will
soon have quite a view out of the closest window. The electric-
cal engineering graduate has been selected to work and live
onboard the International Space Station as a flight engineer, an-
other remarkable step in what has proven to be an incredi-
ble professional career.
Chamitoff will begin his journey in late April on Space
Shuttle mission STS-124. He will stay on the ISS until Septem-
ber, returning to Earth with Shuttle mission STS-126.
As an undergraduate student at Cal Poly, Chamitoff taught
lab courses in circuit design and worked summer internships at
Amati Computers and IBM. He fondly remembers Cal Poly
Mathematics Professor James Mueller, whom he contacted re-
cently about his upcoming Space Station trip. “My experience is
proof that Cal Poly’s learn-by-
doing philosophy is one that re-
ally works for just about anything
one chooses to do,” said Chamitoff.
From Cal Poly, Chamitoff went on to earn master’s degrees
from the California Institute of Technology and University of
Houston Clear Lake, and a Ph.D. in aeronautics and astronom-
ics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While at
MIT, Chamitoff worked on the Hubble Space Telescope, flight
control upgrades for the Space Shuttle autopilot, and the alti-

tude control system for the Space Station.

IN PlAcE

Students vote online for campus issues

Cal Poly students can now vote on ASI issues from home,
the library, or anywhere else they can connect to the Internet.

The new voting procedure allows Cal Poly students to
conveniently vote from any location, on or off campus, by logging
into the my.calpoly.edu portal. Students unable to vote on campus,
such as those studying abroad, are now provided the opportunity
to vote using the new procedure. The system also minimizes the
logistical demands on Information Technology Services (ITS),
Student Affairs and Facility Services staff.

ASI President Brandon Souza is excited about the new system
and is hopeful that students will embrace this new method of
voting. “In a time when students are busier than ever, a new voting
system like this really helps,” said Souza. “Students can vote at
their convenience and not worry about making a run to the polls
between classes or extracurricular activities.”

On Jan. 16, ASI Student Government passed a resolution to
support the use of electronic voting from any location with Internet
accessibility for all campus wide elections and referendums.

ASI first tested electronic voting in the 2007 campus wide ASI
Presidential and Board of Directors election. Several laptop polling
locations were set up on campus, and students were able to vote
electronically via the my.calpoly.edu portal.

Students and ASI called the online voting method a success,
and voter turnout was the highest it had ever been. The success of
the May 2007 elections affirmed the value for electronic voting for
future elections and referendums.

Campus Alert System in place

In the wake of last year's Virginia Tech tragedy, Cal Poly of-
icials immediately began researching new ways to com-
municate with the campus community during emergencies. In
January 2008, Cal Poly adopted a new text message notification
system that enables the university to send urgent information to
students, faculty and staff.

With the new system, powered by ecampus, university of-

cials can send instant alerts directly to registered subscribers’

e-mail accounts and mobile phones via SMS text messages. Sub-

scribers can also receive alerts via RSS, wireless PDA, My Yahoo,
My AOL, and personalized iGoogle home pages.

Current students, faculty and staff may sign up through the Cal
HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE HAS NEW NAME, NEW BUILDING

CAL POLY’S OFFICE of Housing and Residential Life has a new name – University Housing – and a new building.

The 8,300-square foot, two-story Housing Administration Building replaces the old housing office and will accommodate the growing campus housing operations, soon to include the approximately 2,700-bed Poly Canyon Village complex.

Architects specifically designed the new building to encourage interaction between housing departments and the campus community, blending programs, academics and administrative activities.

NEW BUILDING HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE

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Business Professor Emeritus Walter Rice

Longtime Cal Poly business Professor Walter Rice passed away Dec. 12, 2007, after a brief illness. Rice was 69 years old. During his 36-year career at Cal Poly, he taught economics, headed the MBA program, and served as associate dean in the Orfalea College of Business before his retirement in 2000. Rice was an expert on transportation economics, especially California rail and trucking issues.

Statistics Lecturer Noel Claire Wheeler, retired

Former Cal Poly Statistics Professor Noel Claire Wheeler passed away Jan. 4. She taught statistics at Cal Poly from 1994-2001. After earning her Ph.D. in statistics in 1979, she was recruited by UCLA to head the statistical consulting unit in the School of Medicine, which she did until her retirement in 1993.

Statistics Professor Harold R. Kerbo is the recipient of the 2007 Cal Poly International Educator Award.

The annual honor, sponsored by International Education and Programs, recognizes a faculty member who has significantly contributed to international education at Cal Poly.

Kerbo has been a faculty member at Cal Poly since 1977 and has a distinguished record of teaching, service and scholarship within international education. Founder of the Cal Poly Thailand Study Program, Kerbo has overseen approximately 350 students and 12 faculty members who have participated in the program since 1998. He has served as resident director, has taught in the study program for many years, and has taken an active role in program development, faculty and student selection, advising, and logistics.

In addition, Kerbo has received Fulbright awards to teach and conduct research in Japan, Thailand and Austria. He serves as a discipline reviewer for Fulbright applicants to European programs, and he has been visiting professor and visiting fellow at universities in Japan, Germany, Switzerland and Wales.

Reflecting on Kerbo’s contributions to international education and scholarship, President Warren Baker observed that Kerbo “is a leading advocate for global understanding who has created extraordinary opportunities for our students to participate in life-changing study-abroad experiences and, with his writings, has promoted greater understanding of comparative social and political realities around the world. This award is a fitting recognition of his many achievements through a long and distinguished career.”

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PASSINGS

Dean and Professor Emeritus Carl Cummins

Former industrial technology Professor Carl C. Cummins of San Luis Obispo passed away Thursday, Jan. 3. Cummins came to Cal Poly in 1958 to head up the newly formed Industrial Technology Department. In 1961 he was appointed as dean of the College of Applied Arts and served for 25 years until his retirement. He continued to teach part time in the College of Engineering until 1998.

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IRRIGATION CLASSES OFFERED, THANKS TO $500,000 DONATION

CAL POLY WILL SOON OFFER students and professionals across California and the West a chance to earn university credit for irrigation classes – without leaving their jobs or their hometowns.

Cal Poly alumni Fred Hamisch (AE ‘63) and his wife, Virginia, jump-started the online irrigation classes with a donation of $500,000 in December to the Bioresource and Agricultural Engineering Department (BRAE) in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAFES).

Cal Poly’s Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) is currently seeking additional matching funding for the online courses from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from industry supporters. The funding will be used to create a large assortment of high-quality online irrigation courses and continual updating of those courses.

“This program will allow people who cannot physically move to San Luis Obispo to take state-of-the-art irrigation classes for professional development, or for university credit applicable here at Cal Poly or at other universities,” said BRAE Professor and ITRC Chairman Charles Burt.

There is a growing lack of trained irrigation specialists, said CAFES Dean David Wehner. “California is the largest agricultural region in the United States, and we’re facing a catastrophic lack of people capable of designing and installing the complex irrigation systems the industry relies on,” Wehner said.

The shortage is partly due to the fact that most of the major agricultural universities in the West have reduced or eliminated irrigation classes over the past 20 years.

In contrast, Cal Poly offers extensive irrigation training. Cal Poly currently offers a bachelor’s degree in bioresource and agricultural engineering that includes a specialty in irrigation, as well as a water science (irrigation) minor for non-BRAE students. The department also offers an M.S. degree in agriculture with a focus on irrigation.

Students in those programs get hands-on experience in Cal Poly’s outdoor irrigation laboratories. The campus irrigation training labs are funded by industry and by ITRC contracts with irrigation districts, the California Energy Commission, California Department of Water Resources, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, manufacturers, and others.
ALUMNI, SIGN IN TO POLYLINK NOW AND YOU COULD WIN AN iPOD NANO

Here is your chance to win an iPod Nano. Sign in to Polylink and you could win one of six free iPods.

To get started, look for the orange button or similar buttons on your favorite Web sites.

If you use Internet Explorer 7.0 or the Mozilla Firefox Web browsers, just clicking on these orange buttons will show you the latest RSS news headlines.

IE 7.0 and Firefox will both let you "bookmark" those headline "feeds," or add them to your existing "Favorite Feeds" list.

Or, you can also download a free "feed reader" program to your computer to compile your RSS feeds for you. Search engines like MyYahoo, MyGoogle, MyMSN and others offer personalized RSS sections. Users can sign in and create a personalized area pulling in headlines from multiple news Web sites - from the Discovery Channel to E! to Cal Poly News.

Soon, Polylink will also offer personal page RSS feed sections and displays, where members will be able to gather all their favorite RSS feeds from across the Web for easy, one-stop reading. The feeds will also let other alumni see members' favorite feeds - and YouTube videos. Watch for the next Cal Poly Magazine for details.

Right now on Polylink, alumni, parents and friends can sign up for alumni-oriented RSS news feeds at www.calpolylink.com/news - and for information on the latest alumni travel offerings, gatherings and outings at www.calpolylink.com/alumnirecords. No sign-in is required to read or subscribe to RSS feeds from either page.

For more details about RSS, visit the "Internet for Beginners" section on About.com: http://netforbeginners.about.com/od/rssandlivewebfeeds/f/rss.htm.

Some 40,000 alumni, parents and friends receive Cal Poly Update e-newsletter every month. Are you getting Update in your e-mail in-box?

Yahoo! mail users complain that Update and other campus e-newsletters are winding up in their bulk mail folders. Don't let it happen to you! For details on how to receive Update directly in your e-mail in-box visit: http://www.calpolynews.calpoly.edu/update/mail.html.

MAKING SURE YOU'RE GETTING CAL POLY E-NEWSLETTERS

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IN 1995, RAUL CANO sparked quite a brouhaha when he reported in Science magazine that he’d extracted living bacterium from a bee entombed in amber 25–45 million years ago.

More than a decade later, the amber research of the renowned microbiologist and director of Cal Poly’s Environmental Biotechnology Institute (eBi) is more likely to cause a brew-haha.

Cano has discovered that prehistoric yeast plucked from his ancient amber samples produces surprisingly tasty beer—a frothy pint so good it’s headed to the “Olympics of Beer,” the 2008 World Beer Cup held in San Diego in mid-April.

The fungus, originally considered a nuisance in Cano’s lab oratory, is now the star athlete of his new venture, Fossil Fuels Brewing Co. Touting the motto “Bringing Good Things Back to Life,” the business is a way for the avid environmentalist and beer lover to “have my beer and drink it too.”

“Why waste good waste? I’m hoping to use profits from beer sales to fund biofuels research at Cal Poly’s eBi. The wastewater from beer production has a great deal of energy, therefore, potential to be reclaimed as biofuel,” said Cano.

Cano’s journey from microbiologist to brewer began shortly after his pioneering research was published in 1995, thrusting him concurrently into the scientific, limelight and the Hollywood spotlight.
Cano’s peers weren’t as impressed as the crew. Scientific scrutiny followed the publication of Cano’s discovery in Science magazine. As expected, there were challenges to his claims, but “scientific method” smiled on him. There have been at least three independent verifications of the isolation of a living microorganism from amber, said Cano.

One of the scientists who confirmed the validity of Cano’s research was Lewis “Chip” Lambert. At the time, he was director of pre-clinical research at a Bay Area biotech company; now he’s Cano’s closest friend and partner in Fossil Fuels Brewing Co.

Both Cano and Lambert loved the idea of brewing beer with the prehistoric yeast and using profits for biofuels research, but they needed a commercial brewer. They found exactly what they needed on a Northern California ski slope in 2006.

Lambert was giving skiing lessons to a woman who turned out to be the wife of an award-winning brewery owner. Her husband, brewer Peter Hackett of Guerneville’s Stumptown, admits he was skeptical at first about brewing beer with patented 35-million-year-old yeast. But his adventurous spirit triumphed and he hatched the first commercial batch of Tyrannosaurus-Rat beer a few months later.

“How could I know I was dealing with the rock stars of the microbiology world?” In addition to serving as research and development for two amazing scientists, I get to brew a remarkably unique beer that tastes like nothing I’ve ever had before,” said Hackett.

Stumptown offered the first public tasting of Tyrannosaurus-Rat beer at its Russian River Beer Revival last summer, coincidentally timed with the release of the movie “Jurassic Park,” Cano’s work attracting the attention of producers plotting a sequel to the blockbuster hit. Most of the scenes filmed on campus fell to the cutting room floor, but they needed a commercial brewer. They found exactly what they needed on a Northern California ski slope in 2006.

Using the 25-40 million-year-old yeast, Cano and a team of amateur brewers whipped up the inaugural batches of T-Rex Lager, Stegosaurus Stout, Jurassic Amber Ale, and Ancient Ale, and tautipped them at the cast party for “Jurassic Park: The Lost World.”

As housing markets continue to soften, select buyers are finding a small housing complex on California’s Central Coast very attractive.

“Cal Poly’s Housing Corp. pays one point toward the buyers’ loans.”

Preferred lender, Rabobank, reduced interest rates on the buyers’ loans by .125 percent below the published rates and offers buyers 100 percent financing with no private mortgage insurance.

“Initial buyers may realize additional appreciation at the time of resale by offering their homes at 80% of appraised value.”

Reinhart says he is happy with the way sales are going. “We’re well over the halfway mark and continue to see strong interest.” Lower interest rates are helping more buyers realize the long-term financial benefits of owning a home versus paying rent. Only 25 homes are left, which are available to current employees as well as new faculty that will be teaching at Cal Poly in September.
CHRISTINE AGUILERA, GWEN STEFANI, Salma Hayek and Heidi Klum all have one. Oprah Winfrey presented one to Julia Roberts during an Oprah show. Even Sheryl Crow sings its praises.

New moms and dads no longer need to suffer the embarrassment of schlepping around baby's dull drab diaper bag. At Petunia Pickle Bottom headquarters in Ventura, two Cal Poly alumni – and one CSU Chico alumna – are creating diaper bags elegant enough to call works of art. DeNai Jones (LS ’97; CREED ’98), her husband, Braden Jones (BUS ’99), and Korie Conant, a Chico public relations grad, are bringing style and high fashion to the diaper bag industry.

It all started while on an extended trip to Alaska, where the couple had time to explore their career options. “We had no mortgage, no children. It was the right time to take a risk, to pursue our goals of building a business,” Braden said. His first challenge was to convince a “totally risk-averse” DeNai, who thought a teaching career would offer security, a regular paycheck and summers off.

When the couple returned to Ventura, they got right down to it. DeNai did everything by hand. In a room above her parents’ garage, she traced the patterns and cut them out. She soon found a store in Santa Barbara that she knew would be a good fit for the high-end diaper bags she was designing.

DeNai and Braden launched the Petunia Pickle Bottom line in 2000. Until then diaper bags were just functional, portable changing stations. There were no fashionable, functional diaper bags. Everything was geared toward the baby, not the mother, DeNai said.

“We started out slowly, from scratch. Soon our bags were appearing in celebrity magazines,” DeNai said. “It got to the point where I couldn’t cut them fast enough.

So we risked it … we took out a personal loan for $30,000 and had a few hundred units made.”

As business grew, they realized they needed someone to help market their product. They brought Korie on board as vice president and director of brand development. The three of them worked for years with no pay. “Korie worked as a waitress at night. We were totally boot-strapping this thing,” DeNai said.

The company now employs nearly 20 and distributes to more than 1,200 retail outlets nationally and internationally. Their bags, ranging in price from $150 to $325, are sold in high-end baby boutiques and stores such as Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue.

But DeNai and Braden recall more humbling days. “In the beginning, we had to create a façade larger than we were. We didn’t want people to know we were working out of a room above our parents’ garages. We had one phone with nine extensions, and family members who would answer, ‘This is John in Shipping.' We subscribed to the theory: ‘Fake it til you make it.’”

After five years, DeNai is finally getting to do what she loves – designing. “I always wanted to focus on just the design aspect of the job, but I was busy packing boxes, putting out fires, making phone calls. Their creative line includes a masculine bag designed for dads, several styles of bags for moms, and a smaller clutch bag.

They recently launched the Cake line, an upper-end line described as “deliciously decadent, a moveable feast in rich Euro­pean cut velvets and wool tweeds, sculpted antique brass hardware and timeless, func­tional design.” They also sell the Fawn line of high-end baby bedding.

Petunia Pickle Bottom headquarters is the kind of place that nurtures creativity. A large loft-like space with wood floors, high ceilings, huge windows and a view of the Pacific, the offices are open and airy and light. “Well pay a little extra for a good working environment,” Braden said. “We want it to feel like family.”

And no wonder. Both DeNai and Braden have nothing but the highest praise for their families, especially their parents. “Our parents supported us all the way,” Braden said. “They gave us strong foundations. You can’t jump far without a good foundation.”

What’s next? “We want to expand the brand, make it more noteworthy,” Braden said. “We want to grow the company, too. We’re on the next five-year plan, which includes multi-prod­uct launches in the baby industry.”

And multi-baby launches, as well. DeNai and Braden are the proud parents of two-year-old Sutton and are awaiting the arrival of a second son in March. Korie had a boy last October.
Imagine a line of flames several miles long roaring swiftly up mountains and down valleys, incinerating an area more than five times the size of the District of Columbia. The fiery wave leaves behind a quiet landscape of charred brush, trees and horizons.

Peggy Hernandez (SNR '82), the newly appointed supervisor of the Los Padres National Forest, surveys the landscape once blackened by the Zaca Fire, the second largest in California’s recorded history. Fire season is now officially over. January rains have saturated the burn area more than five months after the inferno was contained. Most of the 240,000 affected acres were in the Los Padres National Forest.

“This fire was a devastating event, but in some ways a blessing since this is such a remote area,” said Hernandez as she eyes a once-blackened hillside. Fire can be a natural management tool for cleaning out dead vegetation and debris. For a typical wildfire, the main challenge is recovery – the landscape needs time to heal.

Overseeing fire recovery is just one of many supervisor duties for Hernandez, a California native and first-generation college graduate. She is responsible for the operations of the entire 1.76-million acre Los Padres National Forest, extending approximately 220 miles from Big Sur to the Ventura/Los Angeles county line. She oversees a staff of nearly 500 and a $20-million budget.
In the case of the Zaca Fire, rehabilitation efforts are a significant challenge because of the steepness of the slope and remoteness of the area. In addition, Forest Service officials believe much of the land will recover on its own over the years, since the chaparral ecosystems are fire-adapted.

As Hernandez settles into her new position, once an unimaginable responsibility to that apprehensive student who was the first in her family to go to college, she fondly remembers the sense of camaraderie among EOAP students. "I was very fortunate to be in that program – it was such an important part of my life on campus," she said.

Hernandez strongly encourages other first-generation students to pursue their academic and professional goals. "First, always remember that you can do this. The only person standing in your way is yourself," she said. "When things get tough, find someone to talk to. You might feel you're the only one in your situation, but believe me, there are many others. You're not alone."
ALTHOUGH MANY SUNS RISE on distant worlds in all corners of the universe, we have discovered no other life forms. So far.

If other planets like ours do exist, people like Leslie Livesay (MATH ’85) and her colleagues are going to find them.

Deputy director for astronomy and physics at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Livesay is spearheading the NASA Kepler mission, a space telescope designed to survey distant stars in a search of a planet similar to Earth.

To date, 273 planets orbiting a total of 234 stars have been discovered outside our solar system. All of these new worlds have proven to be nothing like Earth. Many are “gas giants” similar to Jupiter. Others are located extremely close or extremely far from their suns, leaving doubt whether life could survive due to temperature extremes. No trace of the telltale signs of potential life – the simultaneous presence of carbon dioxide, ozone or water – have been found. Current instruments lack the sensitivity needed to detect this chemical evidence.

Livesay hopes to change that. “Only a tiny fraction of our own galaxy has been searched for other planets and solar systems, and look what has been found so far,” Livesay said. “We are focused on finding planets in the so-called ‘Goldilocks Zone’ around stars – not too close, not too far, leaving the temperature just right for potential life. Much like where Earth is now.”
The longtime Southern California resident had her eye on the sky early on, beginning a professional ascent as a Cal Poly summer student working with Martin Marietta (nowLockheed Martin), where she was introduced to the manned space program. Livesay had been interested in math and science since high school. "When Voyager flew by Saturn in 1981, that did it," said Livesay. "I began to focus on robotic space exploration."

A career of discovery followed. On July 4, 1997, the first images of the arid, alien landscape began trickling in from the historic Mars Pathfinder mission. Livesay was one of the project engineers. "It was amazing to be a part of that Mars landing, the first in more than 20 years, and bringing a rover to another planet for the first time in history."

"WHEN VOYAGER FLEW BY SATURN IN 1981, THAT DID IT, I BEGAN TO FOCUS ON ROBOTIC SPACE EXPLORATION."

Still, she considers the Deep Space 1 mission her proudest accomplishment. Livesay and her team developed an entirely new navigation and ion propulsion system for the probe, which flew by the comet Borrelly in 2001. At that time, the fly-by resulted in the best images ever taken of a comet's nucleus.

Livesay also currently oversees other JPL spacecraft, such as the still-operating Voyager space probes, which orbit the Moon's ten outer edges of their solar system, but still reliably transmitting data.

Another spacecraft under Livesay's direction is the infrared Spitzer Space Telescope, currently in orbit, studying stars, galaxies and disks around stars where planets form. Spitzer is observing processes that create planets and learning more about planets already found. Kepler will look for new planets.

In Kepler's case, direct observation is a challenge because of vast distances in space. Many stars, potential suns to other worlds, are thousands of light-years away. "To put things in perspective, a light-year is the distance light can travel in a vacuum during one Julian calendar year, just under 5.9 trillion miles. The distance would only get you one-quarter of the way to Proxima Centauri, the nearest star other than our own sun.

If a planet orbited Proxima Centauri, which is 4.2 light-years away, it would be 7,000 times farther than the distance from Earth to Pluto. Trying to observe this planet would be like standing in Boston and looking for a moth near a spotlight in San Diego, according to Livesay. Many discovered planets outside our solar system range from 15 to more than 1,000 light years away.

Because of the distance, Kepler will detect planets indirectly, using the "transit" method. A transit occurs each time a planet crosses the line-of-sight between the planet's parent star that it is orbiting and the observer. When this happens, the planet blocks some of the light from its star, resulting in a periodic dimming. Think of a grain of sand passing in front of a lighted flashlight.

If another potential Earth was found, it will be the discovery of many lifetimes. In addition, many new technologies emerge from these efforts," said Livesay. "Our eyes are on the future."

A CHAMPION OF STUDENTS, a giving scholar, a beloved wife and a friend to many—few of many words to describe the late Cal Poly associate dean Susan Currier. Her service to students continues in the form of the Susan Currier Memorial Scholarship and the Susan Currier Visiting Professorship for Teaching Excellence in the Liberal Arts. These generous endowments will allow her commitment to the liberal arts to flourish, according to College of Liberal Arts Dean Linda Halisky.

"She was a champion of the students she advised, giving counsel wisely and compassionately, and an intellect who was never afraid to right a wrong," said Halisky. "She never lost her sense of humor about life."

Currier was 58-years-old when she passed away after a battle with cancer. She worked closely with her husband, Professor Emeritus Max Willis, in the final days to establish the two endowments.

Her memorial scholarship was awarded for the first time last year in the amount of $1,000. The scholarship aims to help Cal Poly students who have a disadvantaged background, have overcome significant adversity and/or have made a valuable contribution to community service. Students must have a minimum 3.0 GPA to qualify.

Details are still being addressed for the visiting professorship, which allows CLA to host a faculty member from another institution to teach at Cal Poly for an entire quarter. Recruitment for this position is scheduled to begin next winter or spring for fall quarter 2009.

Currier’s sincere interest in students and their success led her to establish the CLA Career Forum in 1994, held during the annual Open House. According to former colleagues and friends, it was her favorite event.

She would invite CLA alumni with interesting career paths back to campus to speak to current and prospective students and their parents. Alumni shared stories about their experiences while at Cal Poly – the courses they took, the professors who mentored them, and the extracurricular activities the college provided – which helped shape their career choices.

Currier collaborated with Housing and Residential Life in establishing the CLA Living and Learning program in 1996, which encouraged academic excellence of both freshmen and transfer students by connecting them with others in the same majors and with CLA faculty.

Currier also worked closely with alum Angie Hacker (PSY ’04) to establish the Afghanistan Children’s Center at Kabul University. Currier began teaching in the Cal Poly English Department in 1980, where her specialization was women’s and modern British literature.
ERIN MCCOY STRAPS HERSELF SECURELY into the seat of the small plane alongside friend and fellow Cal Poly student KRISTY LOGAN. Both women put on headsets and give a thumbs-up to the pilot, who throttles the single engine up to a deafening volume, moving the plane swiftly down the runway before it’s airborne over the Peruvian desert. It’s a clear day, perfect for sightseeing.

The plane circles slowly over the arid plateau, giving a prime vantage point for the women to see an amazing sight—figures of monkeys, fishes and lizards carved into the desert floor, the famous series of geoglyphs known as the Nazca Lines.

“A very memorable experience, to say the least,” recalls McCoy, an environmental horticultural science major who had just completed the Cal Poly study abroad Program.

Both women had been in Peru for six weeks as part of the Study Abroad Program, living with a local family and going to class as regular college students. They shared their meals with their Peruvian hosts and attended many local festivals—even visiting Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca.

“It makes the world seem smaller and more tangible,” said McCoy. “This was the first time I was immersed into a Spanish-speaking culture. It’s humbling to be the outsider. You understand what immigrants to a new country must feel like.”

McCoy’s experience and changing perspective is typical for students in the Study Abroad Program, according to International Education and Programs Director John Battenburg.

In fact, so many students take advantage of it that Cal Poly ranked second in its category in a 2005-06 national study, based on the number of students (817) who have learned and lived on foreign soil.

According to the ranking organization, more American students than ever are recognizing the importance of studying abroad in a globally interdependent world. The number of U.S. college and university students receiving credit for study abroad increased 8.5 percent from the previous year, totaling more than 223,500 students.

Today there is consensus that globally fluent graduates are essential to American competitiveness, said Battenburg. International exposure, whether through study, volunteer work or internship, has become a “must-have” credential.

Cal Poly’s Study Abroad Program has expanded significantly over the last 10 years, adding such destinations as Thailand and Australia, along with “Cal Poly at Sea,” which allows students to spend an entire quarter on a ship, sailing the high seas of the Pacific. The ship stops at multiple ports of call. “It’s very popular with the marine biology majors, as you can imagine,” said Battenburg.

Although students can go where they choose, certain destinations are naturally more attractive to specific majors. Denmark and Italy are popular with architecture students, while Australia is popular with students in agriculture programs.

There are three popular misconceptions about the Cal Poly Study Abroad Program, said Battenburg. The first is that students have to know a foreign language, which is not true. Many destinations are English-speaking. In other areas, students have the opportunity to learn the language. McCoy, for example, spent the first two weeks in Peru attending Spanish classes two to four hours a day.

The second misconception is the cost. People think the entire program is expensive. Again, not true. It may be cheaper to spend a quarter in Thailand than to stay on campus, Battenburg said. The third is that it delays graduation. But completing courses abroad is the same as completing courses on campus.

As for McCoy, she calls her time in Peru one of the best experiences of her life. “The more I travel, the more I realize that the perceptions I had of a country beforehand are usually wrong,” she said. “People are more alike than different.”
ATHLETIC STARS SHINE BRIGHT
BY ERIC BURDICK

CHAD MENDES GRAPPLES. Sharon Day jumps. Phillip Reid runs.

They are the epitome of athletic success at Cal Poly.

They also have overcome serious injuries that occurred midway through their Mustang careers.

Mendes injured a knee early in his junior wrestling season after competing in just seven matches. He was forced to sit out the rest of the 2006-07 campaign.

Day fractured her foot prior to the 2006 track and field season. She was one of Cal Poly’s most outstanding players in the 16-year history of the university’s women’s soccer program. Twice she earned All-Big West first-team honors, and she was a second-team selection in her other two seasons. Day scored 27 goals in four seasons, including 11 as a sophomore in 2004, adding 14 assists for 68 total points. She was third-team All-West Region as a sophomore and Big West Freshman of the Year in 2003, leading the Mustangs into the NCAA playoffs both seasons.

Reid suffered a stress fracture in his right femur in the spring of 2005 and missed much of that year’s track and field season.

But all three have returned to the level of success enjoyed prior to their injuries, particularly on the national scene and, for Day, perhaps a shot at competing in the 2008 summer Olympics in Beijing, China.

She has a pair of Big West titles to her credit in the high jump, and, as a freshman in 2004, finished second in both the Big West and NCAA championships. During her final season of track and field this spring, Day needs to post a mark of 6-4 3/4 to qualify for the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Eugene, Ore.

“Sharon has been a great role model for all Cal Poly athletes by being a committed team player and having been the top athlete on the soccer and track team while overcoming a serious injury,” said track and field Director Terry Crawford.

“She is a quiet leader who leads by example, but is a ferocious competitor who hates to lose.”

Day was one of Cal Poly’s most outstanding players in the 16-year history of the university’s women’s soccer program. Twice she earned All-Big West first-team honors, and she was a second-team selection in her other two seasons. Day scored 27 goals in four seasons, including 11 as a sophomore in 2004, adding 14 assists for 68 total points. She was third-team All-West Region as a sophomore and Big West Freshman of the Year in 2003, leading the Mustangs into the NCAA playoffs both seasons.

Reid, also a senior kinesiology major from Oxnard, Calif., has made his mark in distance running events. In cross country, he is a two-time NCAA All-American, placing 21st in the 2006 nationals and 33rd last fall. Reid led the Mustangs to a 13th-place national finish as a junior and 11th place as a senior. In 2004 Reid placed 60th as a freshman and helped Cal Poly to a 10th-place team finish, its highest ever at the nationals. He won back-to-back Big West individual titles in 2006 and 2007, leading the Mustangs to their fourth and fifth consecutive conference team championships. Twice he was named Big West Conference Cross Country Athlete of the Year.

In track and field, Reid advanced to the NCAA National Championships in both 2005 and missed much of that year’s track and field season.

He is Cal Poly’s first top-ranked wrestler since 2000 and, at the NCAA Championships in March at St. Louis, will attempt to become the third Mustang ever to capture a Division I national title, following in the footsteps of Tom Kline (191 pounds, 1969) and Mark DiGirolamo (118 pounds, 1976).

Reid also has made his mark in track and field. Last spring he shattered a 28-year-old Big West Conference record in the 1,500-meter run with a winning time of 3 minutes, 42.54 seconds. No. 3 all-time at Cal Poly and surpassing the “B” standard for the U.S. Olympic Trials. He also holds the No. 2 mark in the two-mile (8:41.99) and No. 4 in the 5,000 (14:01.58).

Reid advanced to the NCAA National Championships in the 1,500 last spring, but did not advance beyond the prelims. He also won the Big West 1,500 in 2006, but didn’t reach the nationals.

“Phillip has been extremely coachable,” said cross country Head Coach Mark Conover. “He has put in his complete faith and trust in his coaching, allowing him to focus on managing his own life and daily routine without wondering how he will develop as a runner. He understands progression and delayed gratification when it comes to his training and racing. That means he is able to persevere through injuries, good workouts and bad workouts – he is able to keep his focus on what lies ahead. He ran faster each year and now is embarking on his post-collegiate career.”

Mendes started his sophomore season by winning his first eight matches, posted a 21-5 overall record, won a Pacific-10 Conference title, and finished sixth in the NCAA Championships, earning All-American honors. His junior year is something he’d rather forget, but it apparently has only made him stronger.

The senior kinesiology major from Hanford, Calif., won his first 21 matches this season with six falls and, by the middle of February, was ranked No. 1 in the nation at 141 pounds by InterMat.com for four consecutive weeks.

“I believe the key to Chad’s success has been his great attitude and hard work,” said wrestling Head Coach John Azevedo. “During his first couple years at Cal Poly, Chad struggled academically and wasn’t sure if he wanted to keep going to school and wrestling.”

“Chad decided to give it another year and began to work harder and smarter on his academics,” Azevedo added. “With the extra effort, Chad began to have success academically and grow in confidence and maturity. Chad’s great attitude and hard work have helped him be on the honor roll and an NCAA All-American.”

He is Cal Poly’s first top-ranked wrestler since 1980 and, at the NCAA Championships in March at St. Louis, will attempt to become the third Mustang ever to capture a Division I national title, following in the footsteps of Tom Kline (191 pounds, 1969) and Mark DiGirolamo (118 pounds, 1976).
TRAVEL TO SICILY IN 2008

Sicily – Taormina and Mondello
October 3-13, 2008

Strategically situated between Europe and Africa, the island of Sicily is a cultural crossroads that was paved by legendary Mediterranean civilizations. Begin your discovery of this fascinating island in Taormina, and see its many Greek, Roman and medieval monuments. Marvel at the volcanic crater of Mt. Etna, and explore archaeological ruins. Discover the impressive Doric temple at Segesta, the mountaintop town of Erice, and the picturesque fishing village of Cefalù. In Palermo, Sicily’s largest city, admire stunning architecture, and marvel at the mosaics of the cathedral in Monreale. Then, travel to the Greek colony at Agrigento, described as “the most beautiful city built by mortal men” by the Greek poet Pindar. The Sicilian town of Cefalù, (l) The Greek Roman Theatre in Taormina, Sicily (below) presents a wintry view of Cefalù.

Your trip is enhanced by informative educational lectures presented by local experts and excursions led by knowledgeable guides.

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Friends of Cal Poly—Join us on our travel programs. You need not be a member of the Cal Poly Alumni Association—or even an alum—to join us. All are welcome!
Preserving Democracy
One Document at a Time

Although Robert C. Tapella (GRC ’91) wasn’t a natural resources major at Cal Poly, one of his first official acts as U.S. Printer was to save almost 500 trees—by electronically submitting the federal government’s 2,200-page budget. For the first time in the nation’s history, the government will submit its proposed 2008-2009 budget electronically, a move that will save some 20 tons of paper and nearly $1 million over the next five years.

Nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed in October 2007, the energetic Tapella certainly has his work cut out for him. As the 25th Public Printer, he oversees the massive Government Printing Office. The largest information processing, printing and distribution facility in the world, the GPO houses more than 2,200 employees in a 1.5-million square-foot complex.

The GPO is responsible for the production and distribution of information and services for the three branches of government. Documents include the Congressional Record and Federal Register.

“It is unique in the world. We offer permanent, public access to the documents of our democracy. That is truly exciting,” he said.

Although it took awhile to complete his studies at Cal Poly, during that time Tapella also owned several businesses and served full time as district representative for Congressman Bill Thomas. He was working 20 hours a day and loving every minute of it. “Looking back, I realized I had been learning by doing. I didn’t know it then, but in retrospect, that is exactly what happened,” he said.

“The Greatest Lesson I Learned in My Life Was from My Cal Poly Baseball Coach,” says Robin Baggett, a 1973 Business Administration graduate. “When I was competing for a starting position, he told me, ‘Whatever you may lack in ability, you can make up for with desire and hard work.’”

Two successful careers later—first as an attorney, now as a vintner—he still believes desire and hard work pay off every time. In honor of the lessons he learned on the baseball diamond, he has named Cal Poly in his will so future generations can benefit from a similar experience.

“You always want to take care of your family first,” Robin explains about planning his estate. “After that, if there is some extra, you have to ask, ‘How can you do some good with that extra?’

To learn more about how you can join Robin in supporting Cal Poly through your estate plan, please contact:

Planned Giving and Endowments
Heron Hall, Building 117
Cal Poly
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0444
Phone: (805) 756-7125
Toll Free: (800) 589-2666
Fax: (805) 756-2711
E-mail: plannedgiving@calpoly.edu
Web: www.plannedgiving.calpoly.edu

It’s Your Legacy. Explore It.
ROSE PARADE FLOAT COMES UP A WINNER

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Pomona students captured the Fantasy Trophy from the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena. “Guardians of Harmony,” a Chinese-themed entry that was the only float engineered solely by students, was driven by Cal Poly San Luis Obispo student Breana Dixon. (Photo by Keith Durflinger, San Gabriel Valley Newspaper Group)