Controversial grading policy repealed

Electrical engineering guideline had predetermined grade curve

Will Taylor

A controversial grading guideline within the electrical engineering department was voted out by a faculty majority on Feb. 3. The guideline affected roughly 900 electrical engineering and computer engineering students and the tenure-track faculty who teach them.

The guideline, which had been in place for more than two decades according to numerous sources, was applied in order to standardize grade point averages and prevent grade inflation for certain classes within the department. The grading guideline could partially pre-determine student grades even before the quarter started. For instance, if a student set the curve and it was too high, their grade could be lowered to fit into that particular class' grading guidelines or vice versa.

The guideline was not official but was adhered to within the department. A sophomore computer engineering student who requested anonymity to prevent discrimination within the department, said the fact the guideline was "hidden" proved it wasn't fair.

"I think the fact that the department didn't tell anyone that this was their policy and that they were secret about it, shows how wrong the policy was to begin with," he said.

The guideline was similar to curving grades in classes, but was subtly different. Curving during a class is based on students' cumulative performances during the quarter. If a professor's material is unusual, hard, the top grade of the class would determine how the curve is set for the rest of the class below them.

The guideline didn't only affect students. When faculty members were being reviewed for tenure, they were evaluated through the Retention, Promotion and Tenure (RPT) guidelines. This is called a "probationary period."

Professor Robert Koob said he became troubled when professors were required to follow the guideline in order to remain on tenure track.

"My concern was that this guideline would show up occasionally that would make it seem like more than a guideline," Koob said.

"It would show up when evaluating teachers."

Department chair Art MacCurdy said the purpose of this guideline was to curb grade inflation and to prevent "harsh instructors from grading far below the norm." He sees Engineering, page 2

Short-cutters beware:

Crossing railroad tracks could result in $2,000 fine

Raqel Redding

Many students cross railroad tracks daily to get to school; some look both ways before they cross, while others listen to music and don't look at all. Yet no matter how they cross, they can be fined up to $2,000.

Crossing railroad tracks in non-designated areas is considered trespassing and could result in a warning, fines or arrest. Student housing located across the tracks from Cal Poly makes illegal crossing popular because it is faster and in some cases easier.

English junior Natalie Maris said she crosses the tracks frequently to get to school from her house.

"I go across the tracks all the time to get to school," Maris said.

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The gates are down and the lights are flashing, as the person is not crossing when the gates are down and the lights are flashing, it is illegal to cross tracks. The other way to cross is the Mustang Village crosstown that was built just last year near the Alex G. Spanos Stadium.

According to the Federal Railroad Administration Statistics for 2009, California had the highest statistics of trespassing fatalities out of all the states, with 59 fatal accidents due to crossing tracks illegally. Trespassing is getting in the right-of-way of a train, meaning any part of railroad property, said Aaron Hunt, director of Corporate Relations & Media for Union Pacific Railroads.

"Trespassing on railroad property could be standing on the gravel next to the tracks," Hunt said.

Railroad property or railroad right-of-way depends on where the tracks are, but according to Operations LifeSaver.org, an organization that helps educate about railroads, train overhang is at least 3 feet from the tracks, and potential loose objects could add to the overhang.

"We are trying to convince people that railroad right-of-way is a dangerous place. We're not doing this maliciously," Hunt said.

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—Aaron Hunt
Union Pacific Railroad

Poly invites Michelle Obama to speak at obesity summit

Aimee Vasquez

In response to the Michelle Obama's new government initiative, STRIDE (Science through Translational Research In Diet and Exercise) director Ann McDermott penned a letter to the first lady inviting her to speak at the HEAL SLO Childhood Obesity Summit at Hearst Ranch this fall.

The backbone of the initiative is aimed at combating childhood obesity and is already being implemented in San Luis Obispo County, thanks to the efforts of groups like STRIDE, which is a research-based community organization at California Polytechnic State University.

On Feb. 9, Obama unveiled the Let's Move Campaign. Backed by up to $1 billion a year in federal funds for the next 10 years, Let's Move represents the first federal childhood obesity task force ever created. According to the campaign's presidential memorandum, almost 30 percent of children across the nation are overweight or obese, which is almost triple the 1980 rate.

What's more, studies show that approximately 80 percent of obese children will continue to have a high body mass index (BMI) as adults. Overweight adults are at an increased risk for cancer, diabetes, heart disease and numerous other health problems.

The BMI scale is essentially an estimate of body fat percentage. Obesity is defined as having a BMI of more than 30, while having a BMI of more than 25 is considered to be overweight.

A 2004 study by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy...
SeaWorld trainer suffered “blunt force” injuries, autopsy says

Bianca Prieto and Amy L. Edwards

SeaWorld Orlando trainer Dawn Brancheau suffered “blunt force” injuries to her neck, head and torso after a killer whale pulled her under water last month, according to a five-page autopsy report released Wednesday.

The report confirms last month’s preliminary findings by the Orange-Osceola Medical Examiner’s Office that Brancheau’s cause of death was multiple traumatic injuries and drowning.

The medical examiner ruled her death an accident.

SeaWorld Orlando trainer Dawn Brancheau’s scalp and helmet were covered in cuts and bruises.

The medical examiner found fluid in Brancheau’s lungs, showing that she drowned. A toxicology report, which is routinely performed on autopsies, found no drugs in Brancheau.

Immediately after the attack witnesses told The Orlando Sentinel the killer whale shook and tossed the trainer while swimming with her in the tank.

The Sheriff’s Office said its investigation into the accident is ongoing and did not release additional information about the attack.

The lawyer representing the Brancheau family was not immediately available for comment about the autopsy. A message left for a SeaWorld spokeswoman was not immediately returned, although the park spokesman told The Associated Press it would have no comment.

Brancheau’s family has filed a motion in Orange County Circuit Court to keep SeaWorld’s Office photos and SeaWorld’s on-site video of the accident from becoming public.

In March, the park spokesman told The Sentinel, a large whale was stirring up the bottom of the tank, and it was difficult for the trainer to see anything.

The six-page autopsy report shows the violence with which Tilikum treated the veteran trainer after she was pulled in the water.

The orca removed part of Brancheau’s scalp and detached her left arm. She also suffered multiple fractures, including to her back, ribs, legs, arms and face. Her spinal cord also was injured, the report said. Her body was covered in cuts and bruises.

"We still have health problems and issues, and I think it’s good to be in the forefront of that," said Tom "Tad" Sefton, a program coordinator at STRIDE, explained.

"In general, I think San Luis Obispo is a forward-moving, health-conscious place," she said. "But we still have health problems and issues, and I think it’s good to be in the forefront of that."

While the county is working to get ahead of the obesity epidemic, STRIDE is supplying the research. STRIDE is working to create scientific standards for healthy eating and exercise. They then translate this into programs the community can easily understand and utilize. "I want to say that we use research in order to implement programs to help the community," Tom said.

For example, STRIDE’s Pink and Dade Chef’s program partners with the community’s Bright Futures after-school learning program to teach healthy eating habits. Tomas Cee, Bright Futures director at Mesa Middle School, said the 12-year-olds love the hands-on approach.

"The kids are very excited about the chef program," Cee said. "They are asking me at least every other day when we’re going to do it again."

The FLASH study, on the other hand, focuses on the college population. The study was developed to track and analyze the eating and other health habits of incoming freshmen. The program, which is still in the process of collecting data to analyze, will ultimately be used to help make changes across the campus as a whole.

STRIDE also provides programs for adults, minorities, elderly populations and pregnant women.

This multifaceted approach to fighting obesity is the reason McDermott said she thinks Obama might respond to the invitation. Both programs are based upon the societal model of public health, so they have a markedly similar structure.

Stephanie Teaford, the community liaison for STRIDE, compared the societal model to an onion.

"At the heart, the center, is the individual," Teaford said. "And surrounding that is their support, the family."

In fact, the programs were so similar that, after Obama’s speech, McDermott said her office was flooded with phone calls and e-mails from both community members and STRIDE participants. Within a week, McDermott and other STRIDE leaders decided to invite Obama to come and see San Luis Obispo’s efforts.

"We’re trying to tell her that we’re doing all the things that she asked for," McDermott said. "So we’re asking her to come out for the Childhood Health Summit."

The resulting invitation was really more of a compilation, highlighting the county’s efforts to create a healthy community. The letter included a photo documentary of San Luis Obispo schools, hospitals, nonprofits, government agencies and private businesses. Each of the 34 photo-stories was signed by community leaders, such as Cal Poly President Warren Baker and Assemblyman San Blasney.

"I think just the awareness of it is going to help people," Wong said. "It would really turn heads and create more awareness and community support. This is not something that just Cal Poly or one hospital can do. We need the whole community’s support." For Cal Poly students, addressing the obesity epidemic under the societal model means that many different disciplines have the potential to get involved. In fact, more than 11 disciplines, from statistics, architecture and graphic communication to nutrition and food science, are already taking part.
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Anonymous
computer engineering sophomore

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David Conn, the associate vice president for inclusive excellence, a program that looks to provide equal student opportunities on campus, said that such a system is not unusual, especially in engineering schools and departments. But he said such a guideline disregards individual teacher performances and may lessen their motivation to improve.

"What I personally object to is the notion that this is a static situation, everyone is going to be the same irrespective of who you have in the class or who is teaching the class," Conn said. "If I'm successful at being a good teacher, which means I have the ability to make my students learn better, then this process prevents me from giving them the grade they deserve.

Improved student performance could also be ignored under this system, Conn said. Cal Poly makes a strong effort to improve their students' performance, and there is evidence that even prior to attending Cal Poly, student performance is improving.

"We do have data that the quality of our students, our expectations, in terms of grades, high school standings, test scores and so on, have gone up over the years," Conn said. "One of the consequences is we've been graduating more students."

Many people on campus, including administrators, students and teachers, stated that they think the guideline was unfair and goes against university learning objectives. Cal Poly's grading policy is based on the "attainment of course objectives," according to the 2009-2011 Cal Poly catalog.

Scott Waddell, a 2009 electrical engineering graduate, said he didn't explicitly know about the unique guideline within his department until his fourth year. He said it is not unusual for electrical engineering students' grades to be curved, so he never took notice. But Waddell said the potential for furthering of faculty careers over student achievement was disturbing.

"I think the part of it being unfair is whether or not a teacher gets tenure," Waddell said. "You're putting a pressure on a professor to change grades that aren't reflective of their or students' performance. That's the part that I have a problem with... professors being strung along to help them achieve depart-

ment goals."

When Waddell was told about the guideline by "several professors," he said he was too busy with his course load to get involved.

Some students within the department, like Mike Sweetman, another 2009 electrical engineering graduate, said he didn't feel the guideline affected his work.

"I didn't notice much of a difference between what I got and what was recorded," Sweetman said. "I feel like I earned my grades and my teachers weren't trying to prove something by inflating or deflating."

But some say that a guideline like this is inappropriate no matter how small the effect may be on students. An anonymous source from within the department said they were simply disappointed with the lack of support for students.

"It saddens me how this place is so non-student oriented; professors are here to promote their careers, promote themselves," the source said. "Students come last."

An anonymous source from within the department said they were simply disappointed with the lack of support for students.

I feel like I earned my grades what was recorded," Sweetman said. "I see a lot of people that cross them not looking, so I can see why they have fines. It comes down to responsibility, and a lot of people don't take responsibility for themselves."

According to University Police Department safety and education go hand in hand. University police officer Ray Easter said fences are being put up around the tracks to deter students from crossing, because it comes down to the safety of the students.

"We don't give out citations very often. The ones that do get tickets are walking in between or parallel to the tracks. It's all about safety," Easter said. "If a student is very intoxicated, what happens when they fall?"

"We work hard to inform and educate as much as possible," Hunt said. "For one out of 10 encounters we give out a ticket. We will go the extra mile to educate. People don't want to pay a fine."

To deter people from crossing tracks and possibly risking a ticket, the railroad tracks along Cal Poly have clear signs giving warning about trespassing, but the fact that a person can be fined up to $2,000 is not made clear on the signs. Many students are aware that crossing the tracks is illegal, but almost no one knows the fine could be so large.

Psychology senior Tiffany Lluis said she knew it was trespassing, but she was unaware of the fine.

"I didn't know it could be that much, that's a whole quarter's tuition," she said. "I see a lot of people that cross them not looking, so I can see why they have fines. It comes down to responsibility, and a lot of people don't take responsibility for themselves."

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President Barack Obama announced expansion of oil and gas exploration off U.S. coasts; areas affected:

- New areas open for exploration
- Currently open
- New protected area

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WORD ON THE STREET
What would you rather have: world peace or your own apartment?

"World peace for sure." -William Pittman, biological sciences junior

"World peace. I can handle roommates fine." -Eric Gasper, civil engineering senior

"World peace. I don't like apartments." -Emily Carlisle, architectural engineering senior

"I'd rather have an apartment, because Brian (Plana) wants world peace." -Roeum Toum, computer engineering junior

"I would depend on the apartment, like if I could have my own man cave, I could orchestrate world peace from there." -Brian Planas, architectural engineering senior

"It would depend on the apartment, like if I could have my own man cave, I could orchestrate world peace from there." -Eric Gasper, civil engineering senior

"World peace. I don't like apartments." -Melissa McKinney, architectural engineering senior

"I'll take world peace if it means Brian (Plana) shaves." -Roeum Toum, computer engineering junior

"World peace, I don't like apartments." -Emily Carlisle, architectural engineering senior

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Drug already sold may reduce risk of prostate cancer

Thomas H. Maugh II
LOS ANGELES — Men at an above-normal risk of prostate cancer may be able to reduce their risk of developing the disease by taking a drug already on the market.

In research reported Wednesday, the drug dutasteride, currently used to shrink enlarged prostates, was found to reduce the risk of prostate cancer by about a quarter in high-risk men. The medication, sold under the brand name Avodart, apparently causes small tumors to stop growing or even to shrink, the team reported in The New England Journal of Medicine.

A previous study had found that a similar drug, finasteride, could also lower the risk of prostate tumors, but the new research — conducted at 250 sites in 42 countries — suggests that dutasteride is slightly more effective.

The new study "is further evidence that there is a role for these drugs in risk reduction," said Dr. Jack Jacoub, a medical oncologist at Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center in Fountain Valley, who was not involved in the study. "If a patient understands all the issues (associated with the drug), I think it would be appropriate to provide it.

Dr. Howard W. Sandler, an oncologist at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, was even more emphatic: "The question might be why isn't every man taking one of these drugs? They help people urinate better by shrinking the prostate; they probably reduce baldness and they reduce the risk of prostate cancer. There seems to be very little downside to them."

GlaxoSmithKline, which manufactures Avodart, said on Monday that it would apply to the Food and Drug Administration for permission to market the drug for risk reduction in men with high PSA levels — a measure of prostate cancer risk — a family history of the disease or other risk factors, such as obesity. But because the drug is already available, doctors don't need to wait for such permission to prescribe it as a preventive. Considering the low risk of the drug, that might be a safe option, experts said. Insurance companies are not likely to pay for it for that purpose, however, until the FDA approves it.

Both dutasteride and finasteride, sold by Merck & Co. Inc. under the brand name Proscar, are already approved for treating benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH, an enlargement of the prostate gland that causes urinary and other problems.

Prostate tumors and BPH are driven by the male hormone dihydrotestosterone.
Humane Society stirs conflict with agribusiness

Matt Campbell
MUSTANG DAILY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — An escalating culture war in the United States pits our appetites against our compassion for animals — and the Midwest is a key battleground.

Agriculture interests see an enemy in The Humane Society of the United States. One of their main voices calls the animal-welfare organization a bunch of “hustlers” who ultimately want to remove the eggs and bacon from your plate, the burger from your bun and the dog from the foot of your bed.

Utilized, the Humane Society dismisses what its director calls a “billion pump” of lies and defamation. It is pushing ahead, state by state, for laws against cruelty, from “puppy mills” to intensive confinement of animals in factory farms.

This is getting ugly. Some of the arena:

— In Kansas, the president of the state Farm Bureau is firing off complaints to corporations that show signs of empathy with the society.

— In Missouri, there may be a surreal showdown on the November ballot over a proposed law to regulate dog breeders — opponents are led by the head of the state pork association.

— Nationally, agriculture interests launch daily valiant against the society through a new outlet at Humane-Watch.org.

— The society says its critics are spewing inflammatory rhetoric.

“We see (our) strength and the very grassroots about it,” said society president Wayne Pacelle. “But we remind them and others that we are seeking simply to curb the worst abuses in livestock.”

The industry doesn’t buy that.

“Ultimately, the Humane Society wants to make it more difficult to produce livestock on the scale that this country requires to meet demand,” said Don Lipton, a spokesman for the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Industry argues that agriculture is vitally important to the economy and that each farmer produces food to sustain 155 people. Unnecessary rules on animal welfare pushed by the society, it says, will drive up prices cause food shortages and force farmers out of business.

The society denies that it wants to demoralize livestock production, although it does advocate eating less meat for health reasons and because livestock farms are heavy greenhouse-gas emitters.

The Humane Society is a big operation with 11 million supporters who contributed nearly $55 million in 2008. It calls itself a mainstream voice with a mission “to celebrate animals and confront cruelty.”

Among its crusades, the society fights against intensive confinement of livestock in factory farms. That includes cages with floor spaces smaller than a piece of typing paper for egg-laying hens and crates for pregnant sows that don’t allow them to move around for months.

The society also prods poultry producers to switch to gas to kill animals as a more humane approach than “electrically shocking them into permanent unconsciousness.”

Among the society’s tactics is to stock up in public held corporations so it can introduce shareholder resolutions for more humane animal treatment. It has aimed this tool at McDonald’s, Tyson Foods, Smithfield Foods and The Kroger Co., and intends to use it with Jack in the Box, Steak ’n Shake and Domino’s Pizza.

Among the society’s victories have been announcements by some companies to phase out egg-laying cages and subway cars, that they will start to buy cage-free eggs. Wal-Mart, the nation’s largest grocery, said last month that all of the eggs under its own label were now cage-free.

The industry has also successfully promoted ballot initiatives or legislation in a succession of states to ban intensive livestock confinement. At least six states now have laws banning or phasing out gestation crates.

One of the society’s biggest triumphs was in California, where 63 percent of voters in 2008 approved a law to phase out the confinement of animals “in a manner that does not allow them to turn around fully, lie down, stand up and fully extend their limbs.”

The success of the California initiative “sent a shudder up the spines of many involved in animal agriculture,” said MeatEating.com, an industry news outlet.

Defenders of big livestock production say it is in farmers’ self-interest not to abuse their animals.

Ultimately, the Humane Society wants to make it more difficult to produce livestock on the scale that this country requires to meet demand.

—Don Lipton

Spokesperson for the American Farm Bureau Federation

“Of course the farmer or rancher wants to be profitable, he has to take care of the animals so they can take care of him,” said Steve Bacus, president of the Kansas Farm Bureau.

He added that cages keep chickens from injuring each other and creates prevent sows from crushing their piglets.

But the Humane Society’s successes have been a wake-up call for the industry, said Lipton of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The Center for Consumer Freedom, which bills itself as a research organization on food, beverage and lifestyle issues, said Steinle & Steinle, and the Kansas Farm Bureau.

The society says its critics are spewing inflammatory rhetoric.

“At the beginning, one of our goals was to happen in the future with a broader agenda relating to agriculture,” said Paul Freisell, spokesman for the Missouri Pork Association.

The industry also supports a bill in the General Assembly to pass a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November to establish the right to raise domestically-raised animals in a humane manner whether dogs or hogs without “unusual economic burden” from the state. The bill has passed the House and is pending in the Senate.

Another pending bill would create a consumer protection board similar to the one in Ohio.

“It is just to make it hard to do agriculture. The board would base its decisions on sound science and not upon emotions,” said Freisell.

In Ohio, agriculture tried to prevent the society’s influence by proposing a state board of its own choosing to set livestock-care standards. The society took a setback when voters in November to establish the right to raise domestically-raised animals in a humane manner without “unusual economic burden” from the state.

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two years after enrollment and diagnosis of prostate cancer, the drug reduced the risk by 31.4 percent. Among men with a family history of prostate cancer, the study was funded by AstraZeneca. Avodart inhibits both forms, an enzyme called 5-alpha reductase, which is important in prostate cancer, according to the company. Andriole and his colleagues enrolled 8,231 men, age's 50 to 75, who had elevated levels of PSA but no evidence of prostate tumors on a biopsy. Half received dutasteride daily for four years, half received a placebo. All the men received biopsies two years after enrollment and again two years later.

Overall, 659 men taking dutasteride were diagnosed with prostate cancer (19.9 percent), compared to 888 men (25.1 percent) taking a placebo — a 23 percent reduction. Among men with a family history of prostate cancer, the drug reduced risk by 31.4 percent. The risk reduction occurred primarily in tumors of moderate aggressiveness, which the study found affects 40 percent of all prostate tumors in the general population. That means men "are less likely to be diagnosed with cancer that is not likely to kill them, so they are less likely to undergo aggressive treatment," Andriole said. "That spares the anxiety of cancer diagnosis and the costs of treatment.

The treatment also reduces BPH and its associated problems. A final benefit is that it reduces PSA levels and makes the assay a more sensitive indicator of tumors, a result that will be reported in a separate paper. "If the PSA level starts rising while a man is on this drug, that is a very strong signal that he has an aggressive tumor," and needs a biopsy, Andriole said.

About 5 percent of the men developed sex-related side effects, including reduced libido, poor erections and complaints about ejaculation, similar to the proportion who suffered them when taking the drug for BPH. Those effects were all reversible if they stopped taking the drug. Price may also be a problem. According to Glassman-SmithKline, the wholesale cost of Aproscar is $3.23 per pill. Finasteride is available in a generic form and is thus cheaper.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men after skin cancer, affecting 192,000 men per year and killing 27,000. Men who are concerned about their prostate cancer risk can calculate it at debashcua.edu/URB-innerPages/uroriskcalc.jsp.

Among men with a family history of prostate cancer, the drug reduced risk by 31.4 percent. The risk reduction occurred primarily in tumors of moderate aggressiveness, which the study found affects 40 percent of all prostate tumors in the general population. That means men "are less likely to be diagnosed with cancer that is not likely to kill them, so they are less likely to undergo aggressive treatment," Andriole said. "That spares the anxiety of cancer diagnosis and the costs of treatment.

The treatment also reduces BPH and its associated problems. A final benefit is that it reduces PSA levels and makes the assay a more sensitive indicator of tumors, a result that will be reported in a separate paper. "If the PSA level starts rising while a man is on this drug, that is a very strong signal that he has an aggressive tumor," and needs a biopsy, Andriole said. "That spares the anxiety of cancer diagnosis and the costs of treatment.

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Bay area band Crackerjack Highway to perform at Mr. Rick’s in Avila Beach

Rhiannon Montgomery
March 23

Crackerjack Highway will play jazz-melded-funk-rock music from their debut album for the first time in the San Luis Obispo area this weekend at Mr. Rick’s in Avila Beach.

The visiting band has an eclectic new album influenced by some of the most popular jazz, classic and modern rock bands.

Mark Schuh, lead vocals and guitarist, said they play everything from their own songs to a few covers of Miles Davis, The Doobie Brothers and Radiohead in a set.

“We’ve got an interesting mix, as much as we’re influenced by these guys, we don’t really sound like them,” Schuh said.

Schuh said the musicians have a diverse musical background and it shows in the sound on the record. The drummer, Aaron Xavier, studied jazz music, the guitarists are “classic rock kids” and the bass player has toured with 60’s singer Lou Loe. They may be fairly new as a group, but the individual members have also played with Sharon Colvin, Koolive, Melvin Sparks, Eric McFadden and Umphrey’s McGee.

Crackerjack formed in San Francisco in 2007 as an instrumental group. Schuh said they found there was not a big enough market for what they were doing and decided to add vocals. Schuh joined the group a year ago as the lead singer and has helped bring the band to a larger audience.

Schuh said with the changes they stepped up promotion and were able to record their first album, which was released last week. He said this is the band’s first tour outside of the Bay Area.

The five-member ensemble is playing shows up and down the West Coast and finished their Oregon leg last week.

Road gigs are famous for band antics and Crackerjack Highway is working on living up to the reputation. Schuh said it’s been a lot of fun on the road, and keyboardist Kevin Wong got a little crazy with a vaporizer on the Oregon trip and was laughing so hard tears started pouring down his face.

“We asked him what was so funny. He said he was just too stoned and couldn’t stop,” Schuh said laughing.

Schuh said they’ve had a lot of laughs on the road, but didn’t think many stories would be suitable for printing.

The trip to Avila was an idea they got from a group that had previously played at Mr. Rick’s and said they loved the atmosphere of the place. Schuh contacted the tavern soon after to make it part of the tour. Levi Cameron, booking and promotion manager at the venue, said he was impressed by the band’s original sound.

“I checked out their MySpace page to hear the music, and it seems like they’re really dialed in,” Cameron said.

Cameron said he thought they would be perfect for the laid-back Sunday crowd. He said customers come in swimsuits and enjoy the music and drinks.

“I can’t wait to see them,” Cameron said.

See Crackerjack, page 9
Crackerjack
continued from page 6

food.
Mr. Ricks is a beachside bar with a patio and an ocean view. Cronin said people wander in from the sand to hang out, have drinks and play pool. The bar has live music and dancing every weekend year-round.

Cronin said this time of year is when they start having bigger events. He said one of their most popular nights is the Friday night farmers market on the promenade. The bar has a band play out on the patio and hosts an after-party. Melanie O'Keefe of Pizza spends her time hanging out on the patio.

“It’s perfect. There’s a great ocean view, and the food and drinks are great,” O’Keefe said.

Cronin said they have a lot of regulars, but don’t see very many Cal Poly students or people from San Luis Obispo. He said they’ve been advertising more in downtown to draw residents, and Shull and Cronin said this weekend’s show is going to be “great.”

“We’re going to rock your socks off,” Shull said.

Crackerjack Highway is scheduled to play Sunday, April 4 at 3 p.m.

Palin
continued from page 10

but yourself.”
The “Real American Stories” Web site is still up, now as an extension of the television series. The site currently includes profiles of Americans, including some celebrities, who share their lessons about fulfilling their dreams and helping others.

The cable show hosted by Palin is being cast as program in the same vein, focused on inspirational people who have overcome obstacles in life. The premiere episode, which airs Thursday at 10 p.m. EDT, is set to feature a piece about a Marine who sacrificed his life for his fellow soldiers, and a story about a stockbroker who helps underprivileged youth pay for college.

“As Americans, we aspire to greatness,” Palin says in a promo for the show. “When we dream, we dream big. We reach out, we pick each other up. We pride ourselves on our make up and our character.”

In its original release about the show, Fox News said LL Cool J and former General Electric Chief Executive Jack Welch would be featured in the first episode, talking about making it in America as part of a segment called “In Their Own Words.”

The network did not specify when the interviews were conducted.

Palin serves as host of the program and conducted some studio interviews. The premiere episode of “Real American Stories” is re-airing Sunday, but does not yet have a regular time slot.

None of the well-known figures who will be featured on the show, including country music star Toby Keith, were interviewed by Palin. But the former Alaska governor did conduct interviews before a live studio audience with people with stories of inspiration, such as a girl who risked her life to save a stranger.
Calloway Dreams joins San Luis Obispo singer-songwriter community

Kelly Cooper  
MUSTANG DAILY  
ARTS

Acoustic band Calloway Dreams will open for Pure Water Construction Band at Backstage Pizza Friday night. Composed of two guitarists and a female singer, Calloway Dreams blends powerful vocals and relaxed melodies.

Guitarists Brandon Morris, a Cuesta student, and Cal Poly crop science sophomore Martin Etcheverry began playing together last fall after meeting through mutual friends. They reunited with a male vocalist before he moved away, and shortly after, Morris met Cuesta student Katie Boyer after her introduction on the first day of class.

"I usually don't say anything about my music stuff. But the professor said, 'Say something interesting about yourself,' so I said I like singing and playing piano," Boyer said.

"And I thought, 'This has to be our singer,'" Morris said.

The group said after incorporating Boyer, they almost effortlessly found their sound, pulling from influences such as John Mayer and Taylor Swift to create melodic ballads carried by easy-to-listen-to tones. Emphasizing the unity of female vocals and acoustic, the band wants to create a sense of appeal to a wide range of listeners.

"When we listen to a song, we all agree that the first thing that catches us is the melody," Morris said. "That's usually how we write our songs.

Their sound, however, stays far from their personal tastes in music, which range from country to hardcore rock. Yet the three are able to meet in the middle, finding a common playing style and lyrics they still enjoy. Close friend and fan Tim Kopps, who has listened to the group since the start, has watched them sacrifice their preferences for a common ground.

"Etcheverry and Morris have polar opposite tastes and music. It's cool how they both were willing to find a middle and adapt to different playing styles to accommodate Katie," he said.

Their playing style is directly built around their songwriting, which the band said is the most rewarding part. However, because most of the songs are written by Morris and Etcheverry, Morris said the lyrics don't fall into place as easily when writing for a female.

"I'm trying to put myself in her shoes, which is hard. But you take what you know," Morris said.

With just a five-song demo released, they continue to write with a focus on attaching lyrics with emotions. The feelings associated with the songs, they said, is what distinguishes a genuine artist from a media-marketed performer. True musicianship, they said they believe, encompasses not only performance, but original songwriting as well.

"Obviously, Carrie Underwood is super talented, but I don't believe what she says when she sings. But when I hear an Eric Church song, I know he wrote this. I know what he means," Morris said.

Finding lyrical inspiration from artists such as Jack's Mannequin, Etcheverry prefers to write about the inescapable ups and downs of relationships.

"We try to look at the good and bad side of relationships," Etcheverry said. "We're just trying to get all the different moods.

Boyer, a more secretive songwriter, finds it difficult to thread the thoughts together. Although she has not shared her personal songs with the group yet, she said

COURTESY PHOTO

Calloway Dreams, comprised of Cuesta and Cal Poly students, will open for Pure Water Construction Band Friday night at Backstage Pizza.

Rapper LL Cool J no longer to appear on Sarah Palin's new show

Matea Gold  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

NEW YORK — The announcement by Fox News on Tuesday that LL Cool J would be featured in the debut episode of a new show hosted by Sarah Palin provoked surprise among many — including, apparently, the rapper himself, who wrote on his Twitter account late Tuesday that he had not participated in the show.

"Fox lifted an old interview I gave in 2008 to someone else and are misrepresenting to the public in order to promote Sarah Palin's Show," he tweeted. "WOW.

Fox News said the program, "Real American Stories," included an interview the performer gave to the network as part of an online project of the same name that launched during the 2008 election. But producers are now excising his interview from the show after LL Cool J, whose real name is James Todd Smith, raised objections.

"Real American Stories" features uplifting tales about overcoming adversity and we believe Mr. Smith's interview fit that criteria," a spokeswoman for the network said. "However, as it appears that Mr. Smith does not want to be associated with a program that could serve as an inspiration to others, we are cutting his interview from the special and wish him the best with his fledgling acting career."

LL Cool J did not immediately respond to requests for comment made through his Twitter account or his manager. On Wednesday morning, while the news that Fox had cut him from the show was breaking, the star of "NCIS: Los Angeles" tweeted that "Nobody can bring you peace see Palin, page 9
Families tuning back into families

for television programming

Mary McNamara

For a while there, it looked like family television was dead. In answer to the hard-R ratings of cable, both network dramas and comedies became increasingly dark, gristy and/or sexually oriented, while the family comedy, once the keystone of prime time, dwindled to "The Simpsons" and a couple of live-action shows, one of which was "Two and a Half Men."

Finding a show the whole family could watch was virtually impossible — the kids got Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon and asked to turn the volume down. Oh, there was always Animal Planet and, of course, "American Idol," but in terms of scripted shows, programming seemed bound by isolated demographics.

It was strange, considering the "familization" of virtually everything else. But this past fall, with very little fanfare, television got back on message. Between the recent renaissance of the family comedy and the increasing popularity of kinder, gentler crime-solving shows, the long-lost family hour has quietly reconstructed itself.

After years of being dominated by shows about graphic police work, medical procedurals and the sexual antics of friends and colleagues, the television landscape is once again dotted by hometowns, ringing with the sound of multigenerational and mostly non-prostitute voices. Obviously, "family-friendly" is possibly the most subjective term in the English language (after "a woman's size 6") and the standards of language, violence and sexuality are, like that size 6, much more elastic than they were 20 or 10 or even five years ago. (Which means, among other things, that we're all going to have to get used to the fact that "socks" is the new "skirt.") Crime shows and even medical shows are gorier than they were in the day of "Muder, She Wrote," while animated shows with crude language and adult humor, such as Fox's "The Family Guy," and its spinoff, "The Cleveland Show," blur even simple things like genre.

But while no one saying that "The Wonderful World of Disney" is back on prime time, two significant things have returned: a Nick and Nora detectiveness, and actual children, who have been strangely MIA pretty much since "Malcolm in the Middle" ended four years ago.

For the last few years, CBS had the two most successful family (or family-ish) comedies — "Two and a Half Men" and "The New Adventures of Old Christine," but they followed in the footsteps of "Everybody Loves Raymond," focusing on the adults; the kids were mostly periphery. But last fall brought a slew of shows in which children at least shared the spotlight. First there was Fox's "Glee," a show that capitalized on the Disney-led, "American Idol" fed rediscvery of hoofin' and singin', "Glee" is all about the kids. And while some viewers object to the level of sexuality in the story lines, there are no obscenities and the only violence comes in the form of seriously high CX and heavy hip action.

Then, last fall, ABC single-handedly resurrected the family comedy, making Wednesday night the new "Thursday Night." "The Middle," follows the hilarious exploits of a working-class Midwestern nuclear family (and no so traditional it stars Patricia Heaton), while "Modern Family" goes multigenerational and socially aware, with its May/December second marriage and gay couple with adopted child.

They are followed by "Cougar Town," which is more of a sex comedy — and features one of those rotating new mothers who's always complaining about how hard it is over endless drinks with the gals — but the primary relationship between the lead character, her son and her ex-husband makes it a PG-13 hybrid. At midseason, Fox gave us " Sons of Tucson" and NBC finally launched Ron Howard's "Parenthood," a dramedy based on the popular film by the same name that follows another extended family as they wrestle with divorce, commitment and middle-class angst, but with more pathos than comedy.

Dreams

continued from page 10

she is still writing for herself, testing songs on both guitar and piano.

"I don't think about who I'm writing for, I just write for myself. I can put thoughts together, but to turn it into a song is really challenging," she said.

Collectively tying their talents together, the group has played a few shows around the San Luis Obispo area, hoping for more to come. San Luis Obispo event host Casey McDonald is excited for the band to join the singer-songwriter community. Having hosted showcases for over a year, McDonald has helped the band book two shows at The Clubhouse in San Luis Obispo, and is eager to continue working with them.

"They have a very lyrical style. Katie's voice is great. The combination of her voice and acoustic guitar is light and very pleasing to the ear," McDonald said. "More importantly, they seem to get along and that translates to the performance."

In their short time together, the group has had almost no problems, aside from the inevitable exhaustion from school. However, because both Boyer and Morris are wirh Cal Poly, the future of the group may be their biggest obstacle yet. But they are looking forward, ready to accept whatever direction finds them.

"Every setback is the setup for a comeback. Like when our singer moved away and then we found Katie, and now we've 20 times more lineup. It's just like one step back and two steps forward," Etcheverry said.

The band may take larger steps forward in the future, such as bigger shows and more promotion, but for now, just baby steps.

"If you like playing and writing music, then play and write as much as you can. If you get a few gigs, great. If you don't, so what? You don't play music to become famous," Morris said.

The free concert starts at 6 p.m. and is open to the public.

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After all of the flying bricks, far­

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As for the health care reform bill, there are other reforms that are more controversial, of course. If an

Health care bill not
as radical as projected

Indeed, I have heard so much about what this bill might create in the distant future that I lost sight of what the programs and reforms actually

There are also individual mandates, which require individuals to purchase health insurance, whether from the government or from a pri­

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The price of education increases while degree legitimacy decreases

Karen Stabiner

It's admissions notification season at colleges and universities nationwide, so let's congratulate the big winners.

Families who face payments of $50,000 a year over the next four years, for a bachelor's degree from a prestigious private university.

Families who face payments that will be at least 30 percent higher than last year, for a bachelor's degree from a University of California campus whose prestige is hanging by a thread of a decal.

Investing in the future, indeed.

Parents get the chance to spend the price of a vacation home on an undergraduate degree, and seniors embrace sentiment with a vengeance, convinced that they have left modern life's only significant hurdle. Perhaps it's no coincidence that so many schools send out their admissions notifications on April Fool's Day. And these are the good-luck scenarios; I can't bring myself to shine a light on families who are paying top dollar for what they always considered a last-resort school.

A quick disclaimer: I speak as a fellow traveler. Three years later, I still have a visceral memory of the moment the large envelope arrived from a favored school — and of the far different chill when I computed what a single one-semester required course might trim the fat, so that the cost/fiscal or psychic savings; that kind of making that difference.

I don't mean the seductive allure of a merit scholarship. I mean the siren song of a mid-tier public or an out-of-state land-grant university that turns out to be a better fit than good, apply early, and take yourself out of the high-stakes roulette game.

This scenario seems only to lower the stress quotient, not the out-of-pocket expense, but pay attention: Often that good school has to try harder, and trying harder can mean the seductive allure of a merit scholarship. Tip the balance of desirability — find a school that wants to distract you from the pie-in-the-sky admissions has become a contact sport. The real thrill is having your kid get into that school, especially if somebody else's kid didn't.

If you say it's trivial to be issue-neutral, which is quite possible that could be worth all that money and effort. Of course, because look at how many people want the Birkin, and they can't all get the Hermès Birkin bag. the $3,000 handbag.

Karen Stabiner

Karen Stabiner
Baseball

continued from page 16

Luke Yoder said, "But we can’t define our season by getting the short end of the stick. That’s just creating excuses for why we’re doing bad as we are.”

This weekend, the Mustangs will have a way to reverse the fate with a clean date at the start of conference play this season. Cal Poly will travel to UC Riverside Friday for their first Big West Series of the season.

"What it really comes down to is that we are not playing to our capabilities," Yoder said. "We have the capability to do very well.”

A year ago the Mustangs closed the season with the run at the record books. They finished with a 37-21 overall record and clinched the first NCAA regional playoff berth in school history.

They haven’t seen the same success this season. Cal Poly has yet to win a weekend series — or hold a winning record — all season. Not to mention, the Mustangs have tasted defeat in 10 of their last 11 games.

Recently, the games have been closer. The seven-run deficits have dwindled to single-run leads, and the Mustangs have been one big hit away from several victories.

"We feel like we are on the right path right now," Brayton said. "We’ve been working hard, and we feel things are going to turn around soon — start going our way.”

The competition could be a factor. Head coach Larry Lea is not one to stay away from a challenge; he is known for scheduling challenging opponents. This season, the Mustangs have squared off against four Pac-10 opponents and traveled to Arizona for the Coca-Cola Classic — a tournament that included teams like FIU, Arizona State and Oregon State. But, in each contest, Cal Poly kept the games close.

"It helps us out knowing that we are fully capable of playing with those top teams," Yoder said.

What’s the way to get out of this funk? How do they raise the combined .285 batting average? How do they lower the staff 6.73 ERA?

"We need to continue to work hard," Yoder said. "No matter how tired you are, you have to try and get out (onto the field)."

The Mustangs will have a special incentive to work this week, as opposed to others. As far as they’re concerned — this weekend — it is a new season.

"Stepping into conference we are 0-4. It’s a new season, it’s a new win-loss column,” Walsh said. “We have an opportunity for us — as a whole team — to have a clean slate and go out there to play to the best of our capabilities," Yoder said. "What’s happened earlier on in the season is behind us.”

Not including Wednesday’s 7-5 loss against Loyola Marymount, freshman Mitch Haniger leads the Mustangs with a team-high .337 batting average coupled with 17 RBIs and a 14-game hitting streak. Along with Haniger, four other Mustangs are hitting above .300. Outfielder Bobby Crocker is hitting .317, second baseman Matt Jensen is hitting .316, Brayton stands at .311 and Yoder is hitting an even .300 on the season.

The Mustangs’ first conference opponent, UC Riverside (12-8), may be a problem. The Highlanders are rolling off three victories in a four-game series against Saint Mary’s this past weekend. They will send starting pitcher Matt Andreozzi (2-2, 6.27) to the mound Thursday, starting pitcher Dustin Emmons (4-1, 2.87) on Friday and starting pitcher Matt Larkins (2-2, 5.06) on Saturday.

Even if the early non-conference schedule has not rolled the Mustangs’ way, every game means experience. "It sucks; we don’t like losing," Brayton said. "We’re frustrated with it.”

First pitch is set for Thursday at 6 p.m.

Smith

continued from page 16

With learning the X’s and O’s out of the way, Smith can focus on the little things.

"It’s just football now," Smith said. "I knew I can come out here and work. I know the things that I have to work on. I feel good.”

During the first day of spring practice, Smith walked around the field with swagger. He held his chin high — it was his day to prove that he has what it takes to lead the Mustangs.

“This year, coming back, I can already see it today,” corner back Aa Jackson said. "(Smith) was throwing the ball, slinging it around, looking good, putting the ball on the money, I can see (what he can be) — and I’m excited.”

Completion after completion, his performance didn’t go unnoticed — he impressed head coach Tim Walsh.

“I think Tony had a great practice today, and we want to see what he can do when he puts the pads back on,” Walsh said.

But the position is not unanimously his. Standing in his shadow is Andre Broadous — a former Oregon State Player of the Year waiting to grab hold of the starting quarterback position. Broadous racked up 6,600 yards of total offense at Grant High School in 2006 and 2007. Last season, he saw limited playing time and didn’t accumulate many stats.

“I’m athletic, and we run the triple-option here, so that works towards my strengths as a quarterback,” Broadous said. "I just got to get the mental part down, adjust the plays at the line of scrimmage, learning the offense, being a leader on and off the field — all the other intangibles besides the physical ones.”

Still Walsh isn’t sold on a starting quarterback. It is either Smith, the experienced veteran who knows the offense well and has the numbers, or Broadous, the inexperienced athlete who has the intangibles to be your prototypical triple-option quarterback.

"Day one, without pads on, (Smith) demonstrated some of the things we wanted to see him do to continue to stay at quarterback.

On the same hand, we saw (Broadous) do some of the same things he needs to improve upon in order to be the quarterback,” Walsh said.

Each wants to become the starter; neither wants to spend his season on the bench. Walsh plans to use that to both players’ advantage. He said he is going to let the competitiveness of both players help him decide the starter.

“We want to make that position as competitive as we possibly can, for our team’s growth but also push those two guys to be the two best players that they can be,” Walsh said.

Each player has the skill set the other wants. Smith wants to improve an aspect of his game that Broadous possesses: athleticism.

"I want to become a better factor in the run game,” Smith said. "I feel my training in the offseason has prepared me for that. I just need to do more of an explosive player, which I feel that I can be.”

Broadous seeks to improve an aspect of his game that Smith utilizes: awareness.

"I have a good arm,” Broadous said. "I have the ability to make all the throws in this offense. I don’t think the physical part is the problem for me right now ... (Smith) picked up to the offense faster than I did. He has more of the mental game than me.”

For now, Smith looks like he will end up at the top of the depth chart, but Broadous is not going to sit back quietly.

"I’m hungry," Broadous said. "I want to start.”

THIS WEEK IN CAL POLY ATHLETICS

SOFTBALL

FRIDAY DOUBLE HEADER

Friday at 12:00 p.m.
Saturday at 12:00 p.m.

WOMEN’S TENNIS

FRIDAY GAME

Friday at 1:00 p.m.
Saturday at 12:00 p.m.

MUSTANG COURTS

Friday at 1:30 p.m.
BATTLE FOR 1ST PLACE IN THE BIG WEST...

TRACK AND FIELD

Nathan Huerta
Joe Gatel

Krysten Cary
Steffi Wong

POLY INVITATIONAL

Saturday All Day

Admission for all Cal Poly Athletic Events is FREE for Cal Poly Students.