They work hard for their money: student loan rate lowest of CSUs

Karlee Prazak  
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Cal Poly boasts the lowest student loan default rate of the 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, according to the most recent data, and the Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships Lois Kelly thinks she knows why.

"Our students understand the responsibilities they have taken on, and are responsible in paying back their loans," Kelly said.

At Cal Poly, the student loan default rate is 1.2 percent — the national average is 7 percent. The next closest CSU is California Maritime Academy with 1.5 percent, and the CSU with the highest default rate is California State University, Stanislaus with 5.2 percent.

Student loan default rates are determined by dividing the amount of students who default, or don't pay back their loan, by the total number of students repaying loans.

There are multiple factors that influence default rates and they all depend on the student.

Noelia Gonzalez, director of financial aid at CSU Stanislaus, said a student's family background as well as demographic and socioeconomic factors are important when comparing her university's default rate to Cal Poly's.

Gonzalez said she felt her students came from lower income areas in comparison to Cal Poly students, who generally have stronger family support systems.

"You have to look at where (students) come from and their backgrounds," Gonzalez said. "A lot of our students are supporting their families. More of our students use loans because their families are not helping them out."

Program Coordinator of Career Services at Cal Poly, Carole Moore, said she agreed Cal Poly students tend to come from more financially stable families, which helps with their ability to handle repaying loans. She also said this, paired with post-college career opportunities, is a main factor in the low student loan default rate.

"If students have families that will support them and (have) an opportunity to seek higher paying jobs, it will be easier to pay the loans back," Moore said.

The ability for Cal Poly students to use their hands-on education when entering career industries is something Cal Poly prides itself upon, Moore said.

"Cal Poly pushes internships, lab experiences, co-op and field work," Moore said. "All of those opportunities provide industry exposure, networking and what it is to be an industry professional before graduating. That makes our students financially responsible and able to pay back loans.

Employment proves to be a main reason why schools like Cal Maritime have default rates close to Cal Poly's and far below the national average. Not only do Cal Poly and Cal Maritime have the two lowest student loan default rates, but they also have two of the highest graduation employment rates.

Cal Poly has a graduation employment rate of 67 percent, and Cal Maritime's "official number is 97 percent," said James Dalske, director of career development at Cal Maritime.

Both universities have students working toward specialized careers, which result in jobs out of college. This allows students to start paying back loans right away. Director of Financial Aid at Cal Maritime, Ken Welsh, said, "We have great career services here, and the fact that (maritime) is a limited industry," Welsh said. "The students are going toward their goal, and when they get out of here they get the jobs they want."

The student loan default rate ultimately depends on the student and their motivation to use the loan to create strong job opportunities.

see Loans, page 5

Students rejoice, professors dismay: the holidays are well on their way

Amanda Sado  
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The birth of Martin Luther King Jr. was celebrated Monday at the start of the third week of instruction, much to the appreciation of students who enjoyed a three-day weekend (or four for those lucky enough to be done Thursday).

Winter quarter at Cal Poly consists of two Monday holidays — one of which is notorious for causing students and professors to attend their Monday classes on a Tuesday.

Ashley Harvey, a food science junior, said although there could be a few students feeling cheated by the missed class days, most students look forward to the days off.

"Monday is my worst day. I have two labs so I really appreciate the break," Harvey said.

Although it is expected that students welcome the day of missed class with open arms, teachers are a little less ecstatic about missing class time.

"I find the (holiday) so early in the quarter inconvenient," said English professor Carl Wooton. "It seems like we are just getting started and then we have this interruption.

Five weeks after the first Monday-holiday, campus celebrates President's Day on Feb. 21. To avoid another missed day of instruction for Monday classes, the Academic Senate recommended Feb. 22 follow a Monday schedule thus causing students to miss Tuesday classes instead.

Susan Olivas, the interim associate registrar at the office of the registrar said it was a necessary resolution (to follow a Monday schedule) to minimize the number of canceled Monday classes.

The Academic Senate, which is in charge of approving and evaluating university policy and procedures, is the faculty governing body of the university, which represents approximately 1,000 faculty members. It is comprised of 51 elected faculty representatives, four senior administrators and two students as stated on the Cal Poly website.

This recommendation by the Academic Senate was put into effect in 2005 and since then academic calendars have been formed with classes following a Monday schedule on a Tuesday when there is more than one Monday holiday within the same 10 week quarter, Olivas said.

"I think that this scheduling is kind of clumsy but with the schedule of classes that meet two days a week — Monday, Wednesday and Friday — the students get more instruction the days that they meet," Olivas said.

see Holidays, page 5
Chinese president's visit to Washington begins with human rights protesters

Margaret Tave
Warren R Strobel
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Even before Chinese President Hu Jintao’s plane landed outside Washington on Tuesday for his state visit, the human rights protesters were gearing up.

China’s jailing of political dissidents and media censorship have long been a concern for civil rights advocates and the U.S. government.

When Hu last visited the White House, in 2006 to meet with President George W. Bush, a woman who represented the Falan Gong movement — which is banned in China — interrupted their remarks. That was during an “official” visit, less prestigious than a “state” visit.

Now, as President Barack Obama welcomes Hu for China’s first state visit to the United States since 1977, complete with an arrival ceremony and a posh state White House dinner Wednesday, a convergence of forces is giving new energy to the critics’ push.

— The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in absentia last fall to jailed democracy activist Liu Xiaobo.
— China’s rise as a world business and military power, and a compliant rise in expectations that it should conduct itself as a civilized society.
— The explosive potential of the Internet and social networking in recent years to give voice to the oppressed.
— China’s scheduled transition of power in 2012 to a new set of leaders.
— Obama, who met last week with human rights activists in preparation for his discussions with Hu, is likely to speak of his concerns on two fronts: individual cases such as Liu’s and broader issues such as building free legal and governance systems.
— Obama said last year that Liu “should be released as soon as possible.”
— However, with China holding so much sway over major issues such as U.S. debt, the global economy and North Korea’s nuclear threat, the United States has little leverage to enforce its demands on the Asian power.
— No major human rights concessions are expected to be announced during Hu’s visit. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said Tuesday that “we will continue to have difficult conversations, but necessary conversations” with China about human rights, adding, “This is a long road.”
— Still, protesters who represented Chinese, Taiwanese, Tibetans and Uighurs made final arrangements Tuesday to fill Lafayette park, just across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, while Hu huddled Wednesday with Obama.

Clothilde Le Coz, the Washington director of the organization Reporters Without Borders, who will speak at the rally, said freeing Liu would be its focus and that organizers hoped that word of the campaign would filter through China’s wall of censorship.

Chinese citizens have ways of getting around Internet censors, she said, adding, “We have great hopes that it will reach students, and maybe others, in China.”

Obama himself is expected to raise human rights concerns with Hu in private meetings. The issue also is likely to come up in a joint news conference Wednesday.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signaled a more robust stance last Friday in a speech at the National Press Club, declaring that “America will continue to speak up and express itself” on a wide range of issues, including China’s treatment of its Uighurs.

Liberthal, who served on the National Security Council staff under President Bill Clinton, the United States has the greatest influence on this by being an example, by practicing what we preach,” he said.

The human rights issue nonetheless could embarrass Hu, who by all accounts is eager to improve China’s image in the United States.

The Obama administration hasn’t always seemed to make human rights dialogue with Beijing a priority. On a trip to Asia soon after she took office, Clinton said she’d raise the issue with the Chinese, “but we pretty much know what they’re going to say.”

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Obama orders federal help for business

Peter Nicholas
WASHINGTON FORUM

Announcing a push to scrap onerous regulations on business, President Barack Obama is not only trying to patch a strained relationship with corporate leaders but also displaying a new strategy to bypass a hostile Congress and protect his political interests.

Obama signed an executive order Tuesday that aims to weed out rules that administration officials said could be burdensome for companies struggling to recover from the deep recession.

The executive order pre-empts House Republican lawmakers who had planned to make a regulatory overhaul their next major priority after an attempt to repeal Obama's health care law.

By invoking his executive authority, Obama showed that he no longer sees Congress as the main arena for advancing his agenda, as he did when Democrats controlled both the House and Senate.

Obama took the unusual step of trumpeting his order through an op-ed piece written for The Wall Street Journal.

The order is designed to get the full attention of two crucial constituencies who have abandoned Obama: business leaders and important work of protecting the environment while promoting economic growth," Obama wrote.

"This order requires that federal agencies to write regulations with a view toward boosting the economy and creating jobs. Another calls upon agencies to go back and pore over existing regulations to make sure they are up to date.

"One former Obama administration official, asked not to be named, said in an interview, "If this signals a more restrictive posture at the agencies, greenhouse gas regulation could be affected."

But an official with the Environmental Protection Agency countered that "EPF is confident that our recent and upcoming steps to address (greenhouse gas) emissions under the Clean Air Act comfortably pass muster under the enforceable standards the president has laid out."

"It seems doubtful Obama will back down in the near term. Many business leaders remain bothered by aggressive rhetoric from the White House over the two-grazer system of Wall Street behavior. They also dislike the system enacted by Obama to police banks and prevent another collapse of the financial system.

Yet old foes also credit Obama for his latest moves. "It has been a long time coming for small business owners to hear this from the administration, and we will be watching closely to see if today's directive leads to real regulatory reform," said Dan Danner, head of the National Federation of Independent Business, which represents small businesses.

"So much of the most onerous rule making in the Obama administration is in the midstream steps toward the political center, Obama is getting an earful from his liberal base."

Progressive groups argue that the BP oil spill, the financial collapse of 2008, mine explosions and product recalls point to the hazards of too little regulation. What's more, demanding that agencies spend time reviewing old regulations distracts them from the important work of protecting the public, some argued.

Inside the White House, aides aren't worried that liberals will bolt.

They believe that when the 2012 election rolls around, the left will line up behind Obama, but they know the president also must reconnect with independent voters.

"He's doing this now because it's part of this new White House staff's de-erence with business," said Rina Steinzein, president of the Center for Progressive Reform, a think tank. "He's looking ahead to 2012. He has to hope that no more disasters happen."

For months, even before the midterm elections, White House aides have said that Obama would press his agenda in the second half of his term through direct executive action, sidestepping Congress.

Unhappy with marathon fights in Congress, White House advisors were looking for better ways to showcase Obama as a leader and get his agenda on the messy partisan clash on Capitol Hill.

Obama's executive order is an example of the new strategy in action.

Obama could have made the executive order even stronger, experts said.

Executive orders are a means by which presidents act without congressional approval. The orders don't carry the full weight of legislation because they can be changed by future presidents.

During the House health care debate last March, King and others went on the offensive, describing the law as overblown, though they offered no specific evidence to contradict the White House.

The 2010 law makes it illegal for insurers to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., introduced them as "the real faces of reform."

The Department of Health and Human Services released a report that as many as 129 million people have a pre-existing condition that could jeopardize their ability to get insurance.

The 2010 law makes it illegal for insurers to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions, but the terms won't be fully phased in until 2014.

Republicans fired back, deeming the law an "overreach." Obama has complained that the measure was "dismal." Republicans say it's a "disaster." They also charge that the law will cost the nation jobs and increase federal deficits, despite reports from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office and Congressional Research Service that suggest otherwise.

Debate over health care is becoming more civilized

David Lightman
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

The Republican-led House of Representatives will vote Wednesday to repeal the sweeping 2010 health care law, but the debate on repeal was far more civil — if still spirited and partisan — than the Senate rhetoric that's colored Congress in recent years.

The repeal effort is largely symbolic, as GOP lawmakers are eager to show their support for the law as they ready to cast their campaign promises of last fall. The repeal is likely to fail in the Democratic-majority Senate, however, forcing Republicans to attack the law piecemeal in coming months.

Meanwhile, the polarizing issue that has emerged since the mid-2009 campaign to pass health care is not the law itself, but the political process.

"It has been a long time coming for the wealthy Americans and ap­pointed officials as "dangerously fanning the flames by suggesting that these in­cidents be used as a political weapon.""

Tuesday, however, Giffords had a far more conciliatory tone. He talked about the need for "civil discourse" and the need for "decency."

Conservative groups Tuesday quiekly personalized thousands of petitions from around the country urging re­peal.

Jenny Beth Martin, the Tea Party Patriotic national coordinator, recalled how conservative members of Con­gress were able to spread the word on talk shows and mobilize a big, angry crowd against the bill's passage last year.

This time, though, the effort was different — since Republicans have a 242 to 193 House majority, she said, "We'll enjoy tomorrow very much."

Democrats held their own hearing on the repeal, and witnesses included a breast cancer survivor, a hemophilia, a pedicurist and the mother of a col­lege student with pre-existing condi­tions. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., introduced them as "the real faces of reform."

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SANTA CRUZ (MCT) —
On Jan. 11, UCSC administration announced in an e-mail to the campus that graffiti found in a men's bathroom in a social sciences building contained a threat of violence to be carried out on Jan. 18.

The graffiti was initially discovered by a student and reported to campus authorities on Dec. 8. It has since been removed.

Campus was closed Monday for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, and it appears as though things were slower than normal Tuesday at least a few professors canceled classes and some students vowed to stay off the campus.

• • •
LOS ANGELES (MCT) —
Two Gardena High School students were injured when a gun in a student's backpack accidentally discharged Tuesday.

One girl was shot in the head, and is in grave condition at a hospital.

The other victim, a boy, was wounded in the shoulder.

According to Robert Alaric, a Los Angeles Unified School District spokesman, the gun discharged when a 10th grade boy either dropped or bumped the backpack containing the weapon.

Sources told the Los Angeles Times that after the gun went off, the student who brought it to school apologized to his classmates before running out of the classroom.

He surrendered to police in a dramatic end to a standoff after two fellow students were shot.

Briefs
WASHINGTON D.C. (MCT) —
The Supreme Court agreed Tuesday to hear an appeal from California officials and decide whether states are free to reduce how much they pay to doctors, hospitals and other providers under the Medicaid program for poor people.

Medicaid is jointly funded by the federal government and the states, but it's unclear how far states that are facing huge health care costs can go to reduce their spending on their own.

This appeal touched a chord in the high court. The justices agreed to hear three separate appeals from the states, all of which raise the same issue.

The lead case is Maxwell-Jolly vs. Independent Living Center of Southern California.

• • •
ARIZONA (MCT) —
Federal law enforcement officials have recovered "reams of videotape" recorded from surveillance cameras at the Safeway shopping mall in Tucson, Ariz., where Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was shot, video that they "leaves no doubt" about how the gunman methodically went about killing six people and wounding 13 others.

The video from multiple cameras, posted around the grocery parking lot, is "very, very clear," one federal official said.

As an example, one official who has seen the video described to him in detail said it shows that Giffords was shot first, followed by U.S. District Judge John M. Roll, who was standing near Giffords. Roll, 63, Arizona's senior federal judge, was killed in the rampage.

International
MEXICO (MCT) —
Mexican authorities said they had arrested a founding member of the notorious Zetas gang on Tuesday who oversaw the smuggling of drugs and migrants in southern Mexico.

Flavio Mendoza Santiago, 35, and a bodyguard were captured Monday in the southern state of Oaxaca, from which he allegedly relayed drug shipments and moved migrants from Central and South America north to the U.S. border.

Mendoza, a former soldier, allegedly joined the Zetas when the gang was formed in the 1990s by ex-members of elite military units.

He was among Mexico's 57 most-wanted drug suspects.

• • •
COLOMBIA (MCT) —
A pigeon that carried 45 grams of drugs into a prison was found by police Tuesday, a few meters away from a jail in northern Colombia.

The find exposed a drug transport method that even the authorities described as "clever."

Bucaramanga police commander Jose Mendota said the pigeon was carrying 40 grams of marijuana and 5 grams of "bazuco" (a cheap mix of freebase cocaine and other substances) toward the prison.

However, the bird could not reach its goal because the weight made it tired, and it fell to the ground.

Police officers watching the area around the prison spotted the bird and then realized that small packages had been tied to its wings.

Mendota said it is not the first time that pigeon couriers have been "recruited" by criminals.

Holidays
continued from page 1
Tuesday, Thursday — I understand it's necessary to balance missed class time," Wooton said.

Through dialogue with the Academic Senate, faculty and students believe this scenario is the optimal solution, Olivas said.

"In May 2005, the Academic Senate agreed on a way to make missing class days more equitable," Olivas said. "There are only a certain amount of class days that can be missed."

With classes offered at Cal Poly that only meet on Mondays, having two missed class days would mean those students would only attend eight classes throughout the quarter.

"Our policy is that the classes have to meet nine times out of the 10 week term," Olivas said. "We want for each day's offering to meet the maximal amount of times as possible."

Students and professors alike understand the reasoning behind the scheduling.

Loans
continued from page 1
be motivated. As soon as I gradu­
ate, I want to get a job and pay my loan back as soon as I can."

Aromin just proves the reason Cal Poly is able to boost such a low default rate is dependent upon the nature of the students, a fact Kelly pin-pointed from the get-go.

"Cal Poly students make (pay­
ing loans back) an obligation," Kel­
lly said. "Our students are employ­
able and have jobs and understand responsibilities."

always in o o

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For your viewing pleasure: a closer look at porn

Caitlyn Harkins is an English sophomore and copy editor for the Mustang Daily.

I watch porn. A lot.

I've watched porn alone, with significant others and even in a group setting. Given the opportunity, I can recommend a multitude of sites that would cater to your kink, fetish or vanilla interest.

It's probably a mixture of my intense curiosity and higher-than-average sex drive, but I've been clicking that "I'm over 18" button for at least four or five years now. And yet, when I open Cosmopolitan or visit a XXX site, the porn-viewing community still seems to be dominated by men.

According to the Internet Filter Report, 72 percent of men watch porn in comparison to women viewership of 28 percent. The disparity is pretty shocking, especially in 2011. Shouldn't we have movie theaters that cater to your kink, fetish or vanilla interest.

A study from Australian researcher Jade Sheen said women between the ages of 18 and 45 become more aroused when the porn they watch has a developed plot and direction with an emphasis on the erotic and sensual. It's a far cry from the up close P-in-V shots frequently found elsewhere, but if it gets me hot, then it's all good to me.

One alternative I suggest to female friends is to check out gay sites: the guys' bodies are pretty rocking while the lesbian ladies seem more genuine than the girls moaning and mewling in straight videos. This advice extends to guys too — two chicks means two of everything, and more is wetter, right?

While browsing, those pop-ups for fetish sites can seem scary. When even vanilla porn is deemed as disgusting, anything more hardcore instantly gets shuffled into taboo territory for most chicks. However, exploring those sites can pique an interest that can lead to a more fulfilling and satisfying sex life.

But, if extended shots of thrusting are still unsatisfying and you need to take steps before looking into fetishes, the variety extends to photos as well. Men and women can both appreciate an artistic nude, and there are plenty of resources for viewing either professional or amateur shots.

Once you find some sites that speak to you and what's in your pants, consider sharing with your partner. Yeah, there's a bad urban

Two chicks means two of everything, and more is wetter, right?

— Caitlyn Harkins
Sex columnist

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For your viewing pleasure: a closer look at porn

Just the TIPS

Mustang Daily

For Women.com is a site made specifically for hetero women — it's got shots with gals in mind, and often directed by women too. PornMoviesForWomen.com is a site made specifically for hetero women — it's got the tenderness of a Lifetime movie that seeks to acknowledge women rather than objectify them as merely things to be ruled on screen.

A new genre has emerged to address women in porn. It's written and shot with gals in mind, and often directed by women too. PornMoviesForWomen.com is a site made specifically for hetero women — it's got the tenderness of a Lifetime movie that seeks to acknowledge women rather than objectify them as merely things to be ruled on screen.

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Cauliflower: cabbage with a college education

THE FOOD FACTOR

Wednesday, January 19

HEATHER RICKWOOD is a food sciences junior and the food columnist for the Mustang Daily.

Mark Twain once said, "Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education." Not to lessen the value of cabbage, but cauliflower does have an astounding résumé that allows it to keep company with even the highest Cal Poly students.

The humble cauliflower has a head brimming with vitamin C, folate and fiber. It is completely fat and cholesterol free — only animal products contain cholesterol, so all you need to worry about is that you like cauliflower enough to eat it.

Through selective breeding, scientists have created varieties that provide different flavors and textures. The white variety is cabbage-like in flavor and crumbly in texture. The orange variety is slightly sweeter and more tender than its white counterpart, and has a slightly nuttier flavor. Finally, the purple variety gets its vibrant color from the anthocyanin antioxidant group present. This is the same antioxidant found in red wines that herald heart healthy benefits.

Roasting cauliflower with blue cheese

Ingredients
- 1 large head cauliflower, leaves trimmed
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon plus 1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese
- 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 tablespoon mustard, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Preparation
Position rack in lower third of oven; preheat to 450°F. Core a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Cut cauliflower into florets. Remove any extra woody piece from the ends, but keep the stem intact. Brush with 2 teaspoons oil and sprinkle with 1/8 teaspoon salt. Place side-down on baking sheet. Roast the cauliflower for 15 minutes. Turn halfway through and rotate opposite sides. Place cauli- flower in a small bowl. Serve the roasted cauliflower drizzled with the vinegar.
Facebook

Not all critics ‘Like’ Facebook movie

Amber Kiwan
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Last night, Cal Poly students gathered in Chumash Auditorium to watch a free screening of “The Social Network,” a film that revolves around the best kind of drama: Facebook drama.

The controversy concerning this documentary is highlighted by extensive media coverage. News outlets covered various topics relating to the film, from the validity of the events portrayed, to the speculation that Facebook is creating a society that lacks real motivation.

“The Social Network” tells the story of how Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg invented (or not) the Facebook idea and without him, Zuckerberg would not have been able to launch the site.

It turned out that Cal Poly students’ viewpoints, like the critics and the media, were split.

“I’d say Mark Zuckerberg is a good guy,” agricultural business senior Tony Racanelli said. “His partner didn’t invest as much, he wasn’t on the same route.”

Zuckerberg himself said, plain and simple, the movie is fiction. The young entrepreneur told The New York Times that he wished when people tried to write about Facebook, they would at least try to get it right.

But not all students took Zuckerberg’s side.

“I liked the movie because it showed how you can be corrupted by money,” said environmental management senior Scott Heltlesen. “But Mark chose money over friendship.”

The two main targets of criticism stemming from this film were Zuckerberg and Aaron Sorkin, who wrote the screenplay for the movie.

Zuckerberg took the heat from everybody who, like Hellesen, saw him as a thief of both ideas and money. And Sorkin took the heat from the rest, who said that his film did not tell the story of Facebook accurately. Zuckerberg stole their idea. According to The Washington Post, they are now attempting to void the earlier settlement because Facebook did not provide an accurate evaluation of its shares.

And the result of the lawsuits? In 2008, Facebook ended up paying $65 million to the Winklevoss twins for their lawsuit which claims Zuckerberg stole their idea. According to The New York Times columnist Frank Rich wrote a column commenting on the effect Facebook has had on politics, saying we have entered “a brave new political world where candidates need only exist in virtual reality.”

Others speculate “The Social Network” may have opened the doors for more films to fall into a new, internet-based genre. According to The New York Daily News, plans have been announced to make a Google movie.

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Looking back at the Tucson tragedy

Jeremy Cather is a political science senior and Mustang Daily liberal columnist.

I decided not to write about Tucson last week because I felt a week's time would dilapidate the fabricated narratives and rumor-mongering that often runs rampant in the media following any national tragedy and thus have a more accurate idea of what actually occurred and why. But a week and a half since the shooting has only left more questions and fewer answers.

I do know six people died and 13 were injured. I know the accused killer in his mug shot looks like absolutely psychotic, charmingly proud of the massacre he had just committed. I know my heart goes out to the families and friends of the victims of such a senseless crime. That's about all I know.

That's why President Obama's speech was perfect. Even his most ardent opponents, from Glenn Beck to Pat Buchanan, praised him for the speech. As president during a national tragedy, Obama was supposed to rise above the politics and unite the nation — and that's exactly what he did.

Obama talked at length about the inflamed political rhetoric used to attack the opposing side that has dominated political discourse over the last decade or so, picking up on one of the common themes from his presidential campaign. There is a fine line between impassioned politics and impatience, and it seems we have crossed over to the latter. Pundits and bloggers now talk of opposing viewpoints as if they belong to their enemies, not to fellow citizens doing what they think is best for them and their country. The polarized nature of politics today breeds this vitriol which then sustains itself as rational modern evaporation.

Talks of "reloading" and using "Second Amendment remedies" should have no place in politics. And though there is no direct connection between the political rhetoric and the shooting, that does not mean the tragedy should not represent a wake-up call to see that, as the president said, "the forces that divide us are not as strong as those that unite us."

As Americans, we actually agree on a wide range of issues — it's just that we never discuss them (consider the national tragedy he had just committed). I know my heart goes out to the families and friends of the victims of such a senseless crime. That's about all I know.

The poverty of speaking in such hyperbole is the violent and ballistic rhetoric that gets people excited for politics rather than a thorough understanding of the issues. It inflames passions for those insulated with the conservative populism that has gripped much of the nation, reminding them of revolutionary times and giving importance to their cause rather than being instilled with a simple civic spirit and desire to find common ground. Asking for civility is not calling for censorship; it's aspiring to higher political discourse to come to an understanding with the opposing side, not just to believe it in an effort to undermine it.

The most powerful point in Obama's speech was when he invoked the childhood optimism of 9-year-old Christina Taylor Green participating in politics for the first time. "Imagery — imagine for a moment, here was a young girl who was just becoming aware of our democracy, just beginning to understand the obligations of citizenship; just starting to glimpse the fact that some day she, too, might play a part in shaping her nation's future. She had been elected to her student council. She saw public service as something exciting and hopeful. She was the daughter of a congresswoman, someone she was sure was good and important and might be a role model. She saw all this through the eyes of a child, unimpressed by the cynicism or vitriol that we adults all too often just take for granted. I want to live up to her expectations. I want our democracy to be as good as Christina imagined it. I want America to be as good as she imagined it. All of us — we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations."

The cynicism many of us carry with us into politics did not originate in childhood. Indeed, as children, we are space-fed American Exceptionalism and democratic ideals so that we truly believed America is the greatest nation and can do no evil in the world. But as we mature, and become more aware of the world in which we live, it is easier to cast off our disappointment with politics and government than it is to try to fix it, easier to blame corrupt politicians or powerful interest groups than it is to see the failure of our own political discourse. No one wants the blame, but we must all accept some of it. And if we all make a conscious effort to work towards that ideal of our country we will be held as children, we will be making good progress towards making a more perfect union.
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Al Davis still has his rule over the Oakland Raiders

Monte Poole
THE OAKLAND TRIBUNE

His physical presence has lost its vibrancy, but his mind still races and his mouth still roars. His words drift and ramble and wander and sometimes fall off the face of the Earth. And then Al Davis gathers himself and returns to the matter at hand, upon which he exudes equal parts charm and intellect.

Even at age 81, deeply in the autumn of his life, the owner of the Oakland Raiders can sit before a room filled with reporters and cameras and spend nearly two hours reminding one and all that he’s still the boss, still in charge of one of the NFL’s most intriguing franchises.

Seated next to Jackson at a table on the stage in the team’s largest meeting room, Davis alternately needled and toyed with reporters. Wearing a black leather pullover and a bandage above his left eye, he spoke with conviction though not always with clarity.

“They didn’t expect him,” Davis said of Cable, “especially when I saw the contrast with (Jackson).”
Armstrong looks to leave his mark on Cal Poly athletics

Nikol Schiller

Armstrong's new president, Jeffrey Armstrong, has been a St. Louis Cardinals fan since he was a young baseball player growing up in western Kentucky. And when he found out Hall of Fame Cardinals shortstop Ozzie Smith was a Cal Poly grad, Armstrong was even more excited to become a Mustang.

Coming to Cal Poly from Big Ten powerhouse Michigan State, Armstrong knows a thing or two about how a strong athletic program can give a positive face to a university. Part of his long-term plan for Cal Poly includes finding a new athletic director and improving the athletics department, which will generate more money for the school.

Cal Poly, as well as the rest of the California State University system, could use as much financial help as possible. Though it's uncertain how the recent proposed $500 million budget cut to the CSU will affect the university as a whole, it certainly will have a "trickling down effect" on sports, Cal Poly interim athletic director Phil Webb said.

"One of the biggest single contributions to our revenue (are) student fees, the IRA (Instructional Related Activities) and ASI (Associated Students Inc.) fees," Webb said. "A consequence of reduced budget is a reduction in enrollment, and a reduction in enrollment has a significant impact on our revenue stream."

The budget cuts will force the athletic program to rely more heavily on fundraising than they already do. But Armstrong and Webb believe maintaining and expanding Cal Poly's athletic program is vital to the university's image. Armstrong said the athletics program is the front door for a university. Sometimes the sports program is what outsiders first see when touring Cal Poly, he said.

Though Michigan State and Cal Poly have very different athletic images, Webb said Armstrong's experience at a Big Ten school can only help Cal Poly sports.

"I don't think we quite have such a profile that Michigan State does, but I think certainly he comes from a school where he's had the opportunity to see what athletics can do for a university in terms of 'being the front porch' and really exposing the university in a very positive way," Webb said.

Preserving a strong athletic program and improving it can draw in alumni and potential donors. While Armstrong served as Michigan State's dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, he raised more than $200 million for his college.

"My wife and I, we were quite involved with development and alumni and stakeholders relations," Armstrong said. "Athletics was one part of how we developed relationships and maintained relationships with donors and alumni. Our college currently is the only college at Michigan State that has a football suite."

Webb said this is exactly the type of strategic advancement plan Cal Poly athletics needs. Every year the department receives the same amount of funding from the university and every year the cost of maintaining the sports program goes up. Scholarship funding increases and travel cost increases can take place, a new athletic director must be appointed. Allison Cone, Cal Poly's former athletic director, retired in December after six years as athletic director and 16 years at the university.

"The piece of it that we really need to work on and develop is the long-term, strategic major gifts," Webb said. "We've had some success in that area, but it needs to be more strategic."

More money from strong alumni relations could mean enhancing sports facilities for players. Better facilities attract top athletes. Top athletes mean more Cal Poly wins, which in turn translates into more money for the school.

One obvious facility enhancement needed on campus is Mort Gym because of its small size, said Brett Henninger, a biological sciences senior.

Mort Gym, not to be confused with the Recreation Center that is currently undergoing renovations, houses basketball and volleyball events. Improving Mort Gym would help athletic programs recruit better players.

"I think when you look at major, major programs they all have big stadiums," Henninger said. "Mort Gym can only hold (around) 3,000 people. When you bring recruits to Cal Poly the recruits won't be as impressed as the gym they saw at other campuses."

Not only would we get better players, but more people would want to go to the games, he said.

As long as Cal Poly can come up with the donor base from Armstrong's alumni relations plan, he can see better sporting facilities, such as a new gym built on campus.

"I do believe there's the need to enhance facilities for athletics as well as enhancing other facilities for other activities and pursuits on campus," Armstrong said. "Part of development and moving the program forward is working with the athletic director and coaches and determining what facilities are needed and then we have to step back and say, 'Well, what's feasible? Do we have the donor base? Do we believe it's the right thing for Cal Poly? Then we'll move forward.'"

Before any of these improvements can take place, a new athletic director must be appointed. Allison Cone, Cal Poly's former athletic director, retired in December after six years as athletic director and 16 years at the university. The search for a new director began before Cone retired.

Armstrong and Webb are part of the search committee that is chaired by Larry Kelley, vice president for administration and finance. They are whittling the list of well-qualified applicants down to finalists and will have a director named by the end of March, Webb said.

"The new director will be able to work with Armstrong to create an advancement plan to increase funds for the athletic department. The major gifts position in the athletic department is currently vacant and will be up to the new director and Armstrong to as to how that position is filled," Webb said. "He is interested to see how our advancement plan is developed once that position is filled."

Despite a gloom welcoming to the under-budgeted California education system, Armstrong is looking forward to being part of the Mustang family and the athletic department is looking forward to working with Armstrong as well.

"Take it or not, athletics is one of the things people talk about on the university and it can be the entry to talking about all of the other positive things at Cal Poly," Webb said.