

CAL POLY COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

impact

LEARN / LEAD / LIVE / FALL 2024

TRAILBLAZERS IN THE FIELD

Students explore
the past and build
our future in
CLA labs

INSIDE:

- The Value of Strategic Minorng
- Cal Poly's Spanish Language Debate Team Breaks Down Borders
- Generous Donors and Alumni Support Poly Gives 2024



CAL POLY

WELCOME

Message From the Interim Dean

As many of you know, Dean Williams recently embarked on a new professional adventure at Oregon State University. I'm excited to be temporarily stepping into his shoes, serving as interim dean this year while the university conducts a national search for our next permanent dean.

I came to Cal Poly in 2007 as an assistant professor



in the History Department, where I taught classes ranging from graduate seminars on the Scientific Revolution to lower-division surveys of early America. I've spent the last 10 years in

various leadership positions, including as graduate director of the History Master of Arts program, an administrative fellow in the CLA dean's office, History Department chair, and, most recently, the associate dean for student success.

I accepted an offer to join Cal Poly's History Department faculty all those years ago for the same basic reason that I agreed to serve as interim dean: the exceptional people who comprise the Cal Poly community. In this new role, I'm looking forward to finding new ways to support the outstanding staff, faculty, students, alumni and friends of the college.

Almost two decades in, I remain in awe of the transformative educational opportunities that our faculty and staff create for our students. In the pages that follow, you'll get a chance to learn more about some of those opportunities, including the Spanish Language Debate Team, cutting-edge CLA research labs, and how our students are leveraging minors in strategic and creative ways.

I'm grateful for all that you each do to support the college and, most importantly, the people who comprise it.

All my best wishes,
Kate Murphy
Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts



CAL POLY
College of Liberal Arts

impact

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On the cover:

Students Jessica Conley (left) and Allison Fash get Learn by Doing experience as part of the Archaeological Field Methods Lab.



Strategic minoring supports Katie Ettl's professional journey.

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Her four minors help Katie Ettl (Political Science, '19) tell the unique and authentic stories of unhoused veteran populations in the Bay Area.

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MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY ALUMNA CREATES SIERRA SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

As part of her senior project, Shane Patrick (Master of Public Policy, '24) created the Sierra Sustainability Summit, a first-of-its-kind advocacy competition that gets students out of the classroom and into the environment they're learning about. The pilot program saw nearly 40 students and faculty, representing eight colleges and universities across the country, come together at Yosemite National Park to compete and apply advocacy skills to water and land management, conservation, public access, and environmental justice and equity.

NASA Astronaut Visits Preschool Learning Lab

On May 29, NASA astronaut and Cal Poly alumnus Victor Glover (General Engineering, '99) visited the Cal Poly Preschool Learning Lab to speak to and answer questions from the children as part of a campus visit celebrating Learn by Doing. Glover, an astronaut since 2013, is assigned as the pilot of NASA's Artemis II, the space agency's first crewed mission under the Artemis Program that will send four astronauts in the Orion spacecraft around the moon to check out systems ahead of future lunar missions.



NASA astronaut and Cal Poly alumnus Victor Glover with kids at Cal Poly's Preschool Learning Lab.

Alumna Nicole Mullikin Wins 'Rising Star Award'

San Luis Obispo immigration attorney and alumna Nicole Mullikin (Modern Languages and Literatures, '15) is the 2023 recipient of the Women Lawyers Association of San Luis Obispo County's Rising Star Award, honoring her work as a lawyer with fewer than seven years of experience.



Melodie Rivas and Nicole Mullikin (right) at the San Luis Obispo County Women Lawyers Association's award ceremony.

'Short Cuts' Premiere at SLO Film Festival

"Short Cuts," a collection of eight short films written, produced and directed by an interdisciplinary group of students, premiered at the 2024 San Luis Obispo International Film Festival in April. Featuring stories of love, loss, discovery and connection, the films were a collaboration between students under the mentorship of interdisciplinary studies in the liberal arts Lecturer Randi Barros, and art and design Professor James Werner.



History alumna Jess O'Leary in front of the exhibit "Hidden Voices: Influential Women in San Luis Obispo History."

STUDENTS CURATE MUSEUM EXHIBIT ON SLO'S HIDDEN VOICES

In the fall of 2023, Zoë Levit (Anthropology and Geography, '23) and Jess O'Leary (History, '24) curated a historical exhibit displayed at the History Center of San Luis Obispo County. The "Hidden Voices" exhibit tells the forgotten stories of four women who were pillars of the San Luis Obispo community.



Alumnus Eyole Mbongo Honored for Supporting Hispanic Success in Higher Education

In December 2023, Eyole Mbongo (Political Science, '07), senior legislative assistant to U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-San Antonio) of Texas's 20th congressional district, received the Outstanding Congressional Staffer Award. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities recognized his exceptional dedication to advancing equity in education by working to fund and support Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Meet the New CLA Associate Dean for Diversity and Curriculum

After a nationwide search, Julie Bettergarcia joined the CLA Dean's Office in September as the new associate dean for diversity and curriculum. Bettergarcia has taught as a professor in the Psychology and Child Development Department since 2007 and has held several leadership roles across Cal Poly. The Dean's Office said: "We are thrilled to welcome Bettergarcia to this role as she brings strong research expertise in stereotyping, prejudice, stigma, multiracial identity, intergroup relationships, social identity, belonging and underrepresentation in STEM."



Cymbals players perform during the Battle of the Bands.

Mustang Band Feels the Love at Parade in San Francisco

The Cal Poly Mustang Band—the Pride of the Pacific—took to the streets of San Francisco for the 2024 Chinese New Year Festival and Parade on Feb. 24, helping the city ring in the Year of the Dragon. It marked the ninth time the interdisciplinary marching band performed in the parade since 2014.



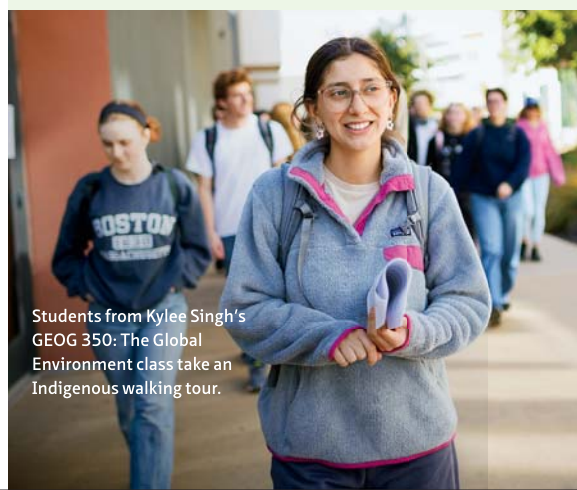
CLA Double Major and Rose Float Vice President Helps Bring Team a Win

Collin Marfia (Anthropology and Geography and History, '24) served as vice president of the 2023 Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Rose Float team and helped the team secure the Crown City Innovator Award at its 75th Rose Parade appearance on New Year's Day in Pasadena. The float featured electric eels powering musical instruments in a colorful undersea environment. Additionally, he partnered with Associated Students Inc. to reimagine UU 221, also known as the San Luis Lounge, to showcase years of Rose Float memorabilia celebrating the tradition's rich history.



STUDENTS CREATE INDIGENOUS CAMPUS WALKING TOUR

Amy Contreras (Comparative Ethnic Studies, '24) and computer science and ethnic studies student Sophie Martyrossian created a new interactive campus tour that sheds light on aspects of Native American history that intersect with locations, names and objects around the Cal Poly campus. As they developed the tour materials, the pair did their own archival research as well as conducted interviews with members of the yak tit'yu tit'yu yak tilhini Northern Chumash tribe to ensure a respectful and accurate tour experience.



Students from Kylee Singh's GEOG 350: The Global Environment class take an Indigenous walking tour.



Students of Mustang Media Group and their advisors at the 2024 ACP Awards.

MUSTANG MEDIA GROUP WINS PRESTIGIOUS PACEMAKER AWARD

Mustang Media Group, Cal Poly's award-winning integrated student media organization, won an Associated Collegiate Press (ACP) Pacemaker award for best student media business in the nation at the 2024 ACP Spring National College Media Conference. The group also won two Pacemaker awards for multiplatform and newspaper/newsmagazine at the ACP Fall National College Media Convention in October 2023. The Pacemaker award is one of the oldest awards for collegiate journalism.

Professor Pat Lin Selected for Inaugural Artificial Intelligence Advisory Group



Philosophy Professor Patrick Lin was named an inaugural member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Aerospace Artificial Intelligence Advisory Group. Lin is helping advance the appropriate use of AI technology in aeronautics,

aerospace research and development, and space. The announcement came shortly after Lin's white paper, "Space Data Ethics: The Next Frontier in Responsible Leadership," was published by NASA.

Students' Costume Creations Showcased in Local Theater Productions

Alumni Julia Neils (Art and Design, '24) and Natalie Rathle (Interdisciplinary Studies, '24) spent eight weeks researching, dyeing and sewing costumes for two local productions as part of their 2023 Summer Undergraduate Research Program project. After weeks of work, the pair watched their creations live on stage for Festival Mozaic's 2023 Summer Music Festival.



Dancers wear Rathle and Neils' dresses while performing Appalachian Spring.

Graphic Communication Students Visit World's Largest Trade Fair in Germany

In the spring of 2024, Graphic Communication Department Chair Colleen Twomey accompanied six graphic communication students to Düsseldorf, Germany, for drupa 2024—the largest technology exhibition in the world for the printing and packaging industries. The students worked with global print media organization WhatTheyThink on the drupa daily as well as networked with visitors, learned about new technologies and visited exhibitor stands.

Cal Poly Arts Brings Unique Concert Experience to Central Coast

In the 2023-24 season, Cal Poly Arts hosted The Concert Truck—a 16-foot box truck turned mobile concert hall—and provided 10 unique concert experiences to residents across San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. The free concerts, featuring pianist and Concert Truck codirector Nick Luby

and visiting pianist Mikael Darmanie, provided live classical music entertainment, reaching everyone from students in local school districts to residents at Atascadero-based El Camino Homeless Organization.



Students at a Santa Maria-Bonita School District elementary school enjoy a Concert Truck show.

English Major Assists Cal Poly's First Big West Commissioner's Cup Win

English major Izzy Martinez served up a beach volleyball victory as part of Cal Poly's first Dennis Farrell Big West Commissioner's Cup win. Mustangs achieved the highest point total in the award's 24-year history. Martinez is a two-time All-Big West team selectee and a 2024 Big West All-Academic honoree. She and her playing partner, Ella Connor, were named 2024 Big West Pair of the Year and helped Cal Poly advance to the NCAA Championship semifinals.



CLASS ACTS

Learn how CLA faculty are using funding from the Office of University Diversity and Inclusion's inaugural Cal Poly Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) High Impact Mini-Grant Program. Their work supports Cal Poly's goal of becoming an HSI by 2026.



Jason Peters and Valanci Villa, who is attending Washington State University as a PhD student in English.

JASON (JAY) PETERS English Associate Professor & VALANCI VILLA English Alumna

English Associate Professor Jason (Jay) Peters and Valanci Villa (M.A., English, '23) are assessing Cal Poly's First-Year Composition Program for anti-racist pedagogical approaches and identifying any potential inclusivity gaps. Their research will inform possible pedagogical enhancements and improve culturally relevant curricula, benefiting historically marginalized communities within the program, including the university's Latinx/e community. Since receiving the grant, the project has partnered with another English Department project to revise the First-Year Composition Program's curriculum in time for semester conversion scheduled for the fall of 2026. The evidence-based research from the HSI High Impact Mini-Grant will inform course design and teaching materials to revise the entire program curriculum.

Q: What inspired you to apply for this grant?

A: "This project stemmed from conversations Jay and I had about sense of belonging for the Latinx/e community at Cal Poly while I was a graduate student in the English Department. Both the HSI High Impact Mini-Grant and our research project were created to uplift the voices of Cal Poly's students of color." —Valanci Villa

LILY RIVAS Communication Studies Alumna & LESLIE NELSON Communication Studies Associate Professor

Lily Rivas (Communication Studies, '24), advised by communication studies Associate Professor Leslie Nelson, created a podcast as part of her senior project. "Hasta La Raíz" explores intersectional identities and issues within the Latinx/e community, including the Latinx/e trans experience, colorism and machismo culture. The listening sessions premiered in the Latinx/e Center for Academic Success and Achievement, or La CASA, and the completed series is publicly available via Cal Poly Digital Commons. Read the research paper at bit.ly/3UAW7D0, and listen to the five-part podcast on Spotify (spoti.fi/3QMYkKC).

Q: What inspired you to apply for this grant?

A: "For my senior project, I knew I was going to record a podcast miniseries. However, soon into planning, I realized that the topics in my podcast needed to be discussed in Latinx spaces, as there are many deeply rooted issues that need to be brought to light." —Lily Rivas



Lily Rivas and former Dean Philip Williams.



Christopher J.
Woodruff

CHRISTOPHER J. WOODRUFF

Music Department Director of Bands

Local professional mariachi ensemble Mariachi Voces Tapatías will present on the history and style of the musical genre of western Mexico during a multiday residency funded by the HSI mini-grant. The residency will include master classes sharing the techniques of playing in the styles of wind, brass and string instruments, culminating in a public performance by the group along with Cal Poly students who participate in the master classes and rehearsals.

SUSANA A. LÓPEZ **Psychology Assistant Professor** & JAY BETTERGARCIA **Psychology Associate Professor**

During the 2023-24 school year, the two Latinx/e faculty members co-created Cal Poly's first Latinx/e psychology course with Latinx/e psychology students Elias Sandoval, Cristian Reyes, Adriana Rodriguez and Citlali Luna Silva. In line with the Cal Poly HSI Task Force recommendations, the course provided an opportunity for university Latinx/e students to engage in "servingness" by cocreating decolonial and liberation approaches to psychology education. Servingness is a multidimensional and conceptual way to understand what it means to move from simply enrolling Latinx/e students to actually serving them. While Latinx/e student voices and experiences were centered during the course development, all students will benefit from Latinx/e-focused courses as the researchers and professors expand the curriculum to closely reflect the breadth and nuance of human experience and development in a diverse world.



Susana A. López



Jay Bettergarcia

JAY BETTERGARCIA

Psychology Associate Professor

The Queer and Trans Latinx/e Joy Project provides mixed-method research experiences for students who are Latinx/e, bilingual and/or LGBTQ+. While research about Latinx/e students' experiences at HSIs has increased, little is known about the specific needs, experiences of belonging, resilience and joy of queer and transgender Latinx/e students. Psychology Associate Professor Jay Bettergarcia's previous research studies involving Cal Poly Latinx/e, undocumented and LGBTQ+ student populations have focused on diversity, equity and inclusion in campus health and well-being and access to basic needs services; however, this project centers a strengths-based perspective exploring joy, resilience and thriving. The project results will help inform the development of programs and services for students living at these intersections, while supporting queer and trans Latinx/e students to develop as coresearchers.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Read the faculty members' full responses in the online version of Impact magazine.

MINOR DEGREES, MAJOR IMPACT

ALUMNA **KATIE Ettl** USES THE SKILLS SHE HONED FROM HER FOUR COLLEGE MINORS TO TELL THE UNIQUE AND AUTHENTIC STORIES OF THE UNHOUSED VETERAN POPULATIONS IN OAKLAND AND SAN FRANCISCO

When Katie Ettl (Political Science, '19) heads to work at Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco each morning, she knows that the day will bring something different.

As the communications and public relations coordinator at the nonprofit, a 50-year-old organization supporting veterans "every step of the way," from health and housing to employment and legal issues, Ettl works with a diverse population of unhoused, low-income and at-risk veterans, sharing their stories in an authentic manner—skills her four college minors helped her hone.

"I currently work with a veteran population that is predominantly unhoused, most over the age of 55, and many of them carry different mental and intellectual capacities," she said. "My minors really helped prepare me to engage with all kinds of veterans, meet them where they're at, and understand the interlocked social issues that cause their homelessness with a critical lens."

She expanded on her Cal Poly political science degree with four minors: women's and gender studies; ethnic studies; queer studies; and media arts, society and technology.

A quadruple threat, Ettl is among many alumni who have strategically added minors to complement or enhance their skill sets.

"In my role, I write a lot of content, and that work relies on connecting with the veterans that we serve," Ettl said. "Throughout these three years working at Swords to Plowshares, I've been able to use my ethnic studies, women's and gender studies, and political science knowledge to connect with and write about folks in a way that is intentional, authentic to who they are, and doesn't take advantage of their experiences."

When applying to Cal Poly in fall 2014, Ettl knew she wanted to study theories of power

in organizations and society. Her impressive minors, however, were not part of the plan.

"Coming to Cal Poly as a low-income student, my first year was really just figuring it out as I go," she said. "I did not have a ready-made path, and I was a bit intimidated by my peers who already had career goals."

After taking a few classes within her major, Ettl felt that some of the curriculum focused on areas she wasn't as interested in.

"I wanted to study the more theoretical stuff, and at the same time, I was getting involved with some of the feminist clubs on campus," Ettl said. "There, everyone was

Katie Ettl (back row, second from left) with the 2019 cast of Original Womxn's Narratives.





Katie Ettl credits the College of Liberal Arts for helping her build diverse interests and skills.

talking about being a minor in women's and gender studies."

Those conversations sparked her interest, and she quickly embarked on her first minor in women's and gender studies to learn more about theoretical power structures. Soon after, she added an ethnic studies minor.

"Once I started taking the classes, I realized my minors and major just made complete sense together," she said, noting how ethnic studies and women's and gender studies were essential in tailoring classes to her interests.

The minors in media arts, society and technology and queer studies followed naturally in support of her goal to learn more about how political science relates to political agency and identity.

"I feel like my minors were these lenses that I was able to add on to my proverbial camera," Ettl said. "It was just so helpful to have an institutional and academic curriculum back the feelings and the experiences I was going through."

While adding a minor might seem par for the course for many students, Women's, Gender and Queer Studies Department Chair Elizabeth Adan says strategic minoring can help students inform their major studies while enhancing their professional profile and opening themselves up to a multitude of career opportunities.

"I think Katie is a great example of successful strategic minoring because she used her four different minors as opportunities to pursue her many different, but

very much overlapping, interests," Adan said. "She also developed impressive knowledge and skills that allow her to pursue many different careers, including advocacy, government or nonprofit work, as well as media and cultural production among many other possibilities, all informed by her commitments to social justice."

Though minoring strategically was not Ettl's intention at first, she credits the College of Liberal Arts for providing the opportunity and flexibility to pursue her passions.

"I had a personal investment in each of my minors, and they made me enjoy my major more," Ettl said.

The close-knit departments and relationships she formed with professors helped cement that personal stake.

"The community and professors in the Women's, Gender and Queer Studies Department, the Ethnic Studies Department and the science, technology and society minors program were almost overwhelmingly supportive," Ettl said. "I want to reiterate my support and gratitude for them because I wouldn't be where I am today without them."

And no matter what the future may hold, Ettl says her time at Cal Poly will have a lasting impact.

"Who knows if I'll stay in the nonprofit world forever? However, I'm fortunate to confidently say my education prepared me to look at all opportunities that come my way critically, and I have the skills to decide if they align with my values," Ettl said. "The College of Liberal Arts provided me with a holistic education, and I will always apply the lenses that I learned to all aspects of my life and not just my career."

Learn more about the 42 minors offered by the College of Liberal Arts at cla.calpoly.edu/student-resources/minors.

From left: Alumna
Rachel Burris and
student Jessica Conley.

A photograph of two women working in a field. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a grey button-down shirt, a tan cap, and yellow gloves, is looking towards the camera. She is standing next to a large wooden frame that appears to be a sifter or a seed tray. In the background, another woman with dark hair, wearing a red puffer jacket and a black cap, is leaning over the wooden frame, working with the soil. The background shows a grassy hill under a blue sky with white clouds.

FRESH FROM

THE LAB

SEE WHAT LEARN BY
DOING LOOKS LIKE IN
A TRIO OF CLA LABS
ACROSS DISCIPLINES

JOE JOHNSTON



UNCOVERING THE PAST

The late-morning sun streams over the hills at the Diablo Canyon Lands, more than 12,000 acres of pristine coastal lands located about 15 miles from the Cal Poly campus. Small archaeological teams of Cal Poly students, alumni and faculty are carefully unearthing artifacts from a homestead built nearly a century ago. The Yoshida family lived on the undeveloped section of this coastline with their 10 children from 1928 until February 1942, when they were forcibly removed and sent to a Japanese internment camp. While the original family members were unable to return, their descendants recently gathered from all over California to honor their family history and uncover pieces of their past.

Anthropology Professor Terry Jones and Geography Associate Professor G. Andrew Fricker co-led an archaeological excavation with current students and alumni as part of the Archaeological Field Methods Lab (ANT 310).

"We know the names of the people that lived at this site and the events that surrounded their lives. This is what we call historical archaeology, or text-aided

archaeology," Jones said. "The historic record tends to record the activities of the big players, major advances and the upper classes. Historical archaeology aims to flesh out the lives of people whose paths aren't that well documented. History consists of what happened to them, too. Our task is to look at the small things they left behind and what they say about their daily lives. And then you can place their daily lives against the backdrop of these bigger events in history."

While archaeology students were working in the field, Fricker was mapping the site with a drone and GPS and recording the found artifacts.

"On the one hand, students were digging and recovering artifacts in a traditional way, but we were recording them all with state-of-the-art technology," Jones said. "That added another tremendously important dimension to the quality of experience. I know from recent graduates that our students are getting jobs because they know this technology from being exposed to it. Graduates from other programs elsewhere in California don't get this kind of hands-on exposure to these technologies."

From left: Students
Ethan Linley,
Anna Vanderford
and Jesse Horsley.





From left: Professor Terry Jones and alumnus Justin Tidd.

Descendants placed memorial stones bearing the names of the 12 Yoshida family members at the site.



Jones enlisted the help of local recent anthropology alumni as “crew chiefs” to lead small groups of student excavators and give them individual instruction on excavation methods.

“They like to come back,” he said. “They get a little break from the work that they’re doing and more experience supervising. Students get to learn from people who have acquired experience and to network. They get to find out firsthand what people think are the important things that they need to know if they’re going to seek employment in this field.”

In the spring of 2025, Jones is planning to work with three senior projects and an alumna’s master’s thesis using the cataloged artifacts from the successful excavation. By studying the remains of trash left by the family, the team learned about the Yoshidas’ daily life. These findings help fill in the details of their experiences, including dietary preferences, particularly a strong preference for abalone and turban snails, and their collection of fine Japanese pottery.

“I feel very strongly that if you’re going to be a cultural resources manager/archaeologist, you need to understand the realities of what the record looks like, how to investigate it, and all the people who are connected,” Jones said. “You can’t do archaeology only from books.”

Thirty Yoshida family descendants from multiple generations traveled from all over California to honor their family’s history at the site. “They had brought 12 smooth stones, each painted with one of the names of their relatives that had lived at the site—Japanese on one side and English on the other,” Jones said. “We placed the stones in the site as a tribute, and it was a very powerful moment. I’ll be honest, I wiped away a tear. It was one of the most impactful moments in my 45 years of doing archaeology.”

VISUALIZING BRAIN WAVES

A basketball fan watches the big game, eagerly waiting to see whether a gambling bet will pay off. A college student listens to quiet sounds while asleep, hoping that the association with what they studied yesterday will help their memory tomorrow.

What do these two people have in common? Both are research participants in the new electroencephalography (EEG) lab run by Associate Professor Kelly Bennion and Assistant Professor James Antony from the Psychology and Child Development Department.

EEG uses sensors placed on the scalp to measure the brain’s electrical activity and record changes in real time.

“Getting our EEG lab up and running has confirmed that it is an excellent technique and methodology for

“[STUDENTS] GET TO FIND OUT FIRSTHAND WHAT PEOPLE THINK ARE THE IMPORTANT THINGS THAT THEY NEED TO KNOW IF THEY’RE GOING TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT IN THIS FIELD.”

—TERRY JONES, ANTHROPOLOGY PROFESSOR



undergraduate students,” Bennion said. “EEG provides a student-friendly way to look at neural signals and tie them to behavior.”

Student researchers use EEG to observe participants’ reactions to specific stimuli in various settings. In one study, sports fans watch a basketball game while making occasional bets on whether a team will score, and their success rate determines how much research compensation they receive. “Prior studies have found neural signals related to high engagement, and we predict that we will see these signals more strongly while participants watch plays that they bet on,” Antony said.

In another study, Bennion, Antony and student researchers are studying how targeted memory reactivation can improve memory formation during sleep.

“We can strengthen memories during sleep by linking learning with specific sounds and then softly playing those sounds back to participants while they sleep,” Antony said. “This has been shown most often for simple associations, but in the real world, so many things we learn are connected in a more complex way (for example, think of the number of things that are related to the concept of World War II).

“In this latest study, we’re asking whether we can reactivate more complex networks of associations during sleep. We’re predicting that more complex memories can be reactivated, but only when we encourage people to integrate information during learning. An example of this is if we asked you to try to recall all the information related to some event, so the memories are all bound together, so to speak.”

By putting research methods into practice, students gain a better understanding of the existing scholarly literature and develop essential skills to pursue graduate degrees and enhance their careers.

“We discuss EEG as a method in every class we teach, so having students learn how to collect and analyze EEG data gives them an even clearer picture of how the studies they’re reading about in their classes truly come to life,” Bennion said. “We have many students eager to eventually get their Ph.D., in which prior research experience is essential for being admitted. However, even if students do not end up going to graduate school, interning in the lab can help enhance many skills, such as teamwork, critical thinking, ability to read and critique scientific literature, data analysis, and more.”

Graduate student researcher An Huynh (Psychology, ’24) cites her work in the lab as a key motivator for furthering her work in the field.

“Dr. Bennion and Dr. Antony were the ones who inspired me to continue pursuing psychology and discover why people behave the way they do,” said Huynh, who is pursuing a master’s at Cal Poly in business analytics. “We are currently aiming to publish a study that investigates how daydreaming affects memory! Moving on in the future, I am looking forward to continuing research on cognition and putting what I learned into application.”



Top: Kelly Bennion inserts electrode gel into the EEG cap worn by psychology research student Colin Schmitt. Bottom, from left: Colin Schmitt, Kelly Bennion, An Huynh and James Antony test the EEG setup to measure fans’ engagement with the basketball game.



Top: The team's bamboo model of the Ocean Site One VR gateway takes shape. Inset: Concept art for the exhibit's interactive gateway.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Santa Barbara locals are accustomed to seeing dozens of large offshore oil platforms, but few have seen how the structures are teeming with marine life below the surface. Artificial reefs have formed on the towers over the years, providing an unexpected habitat for many underwater ecosystems. The oil wells are scheduled to be decommissioned within the next 10 years, but there is debate about whether to remove the platforms entirely or leave them behind as human-made habitats.

Ocean Site One is a series of research projects spanning disciplines and campuses. Faculty and students are

creating a virtual reality experience to educate the public about how marine life thrives in unexpected places and how removing the oil platforms could have unintended negative consequences. Eventually, the experience will be developed into a traveling museum exhibit to educate broader audiences.

"The Ocean Sight One experience is designed to function through a virtual reality headset with immersive video and audio that takes the participant on the dive down the underwater length of the oil platform structure, so the participant can see and interact with the vibrant marine life all around," said David Gillette, codirector of the Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies (LAES) program and an English professor. "This experience is accompanied by the voices of scientists and community members who have been studying this marine life for years. When the project travels the state of California, the VR experience will also be accompanied by an inviting, interactive gateway structure constructed over and around the entrance to the room where the VR is being presented."

Over the winter and spring quarters of 2024, LAES students collaborated with architecture, engineering and business students from Birmingham City University (BCU), a landlocked university located a two-and-a-half-hour drive northwest of London. Working across continents, the teams designed and built the interactive entrance to the Ocean Site One VR experience. After five months of work, Cal Poly graduate Bella Slosberg (Journalism, '24), who is seeking a master's in environmental sciences and management, and LAES student Madelyn Cruz, who is working on a master's in engineering management, traveled to Birmingham with Gillette. There, they presented the final working design at BCU's Innovation Festival—a research showcase where students can network with industry professionals. Meanwhile, LAES Codirector Michael Haungs hosted a live-streamed viewing of the BCU presentation in Cal Poly's Expressive Technology Studios in the Frost Center for Research and Innovation so both teams could take part.

“PROJECT-BASED LEARNING WITH A REAL-WORLD PROJECT HAS PROVEN TO PROVIDE A FASTER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND LASTING UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS OF THIS KIND OF COLLABORATION.” —DAVID GILLETTE, CODIRECTOR OF THE LIBERAL ARTS AND ENGINEERING STUDIES PROGRAM



Bella Slosberg (far right) and Madelyn Cruz (second from right) work with BCU students on the gateway structure.

“Collaborative engineering and design work continues to expand around the globe, with more diverse work groups coordinating their efforts across time zones, languages and national boundaries,” Gillette said. “To more effectively prepare students for professional work in this kind of environment, project-based learning with a real-world project has proven to provide a faster, more comprehensive and lasting understanding of the benefits of this kind of collaboration. This also better prepares students for the kind of work they are likely to encounter as soon as they enter the workplace.”

Student teams from both campuses worked together through the project’s entire development process. Shorter design exercises taught them design and user experience principles through hands-on iterative trial and error. The teams then applied everything they had learned to the final design for the physical gateway entrance. Along the way, they also learned how to collaborate across great distances using an academic version of Agile project management software that allows an iterative approach to delivering a project throughout its life cycle. Faculty interested in increasing collaboration between the two institutions were testing methods for effective and efficient project coordination.

“I have always been impressed by how quickly students of the same age and same general interests are so willing to dive into complex collaborative projects that cross oceans and national divisions, especially if that project involves a central goal of improving how we

interact with different communities and with our natural environments,” Gillette said. “When our projects focus on sustainability and respect for and celebration of difference, the physical distance between students seems to dissolve as they quickly realize and appreciate how we need to be working together to solve the complex, world-spanning problems that confront all of us.”

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BCU students work together at Innovation Fest. Inset: A coral model.



The Cal Poly and CETYS debate teams
after a competition in Mexicali, Mexico.

SIN FRONTERAS

CAL POLY'S SPANISH LANGUAGE DEBATE TEAM GIVES
STUDENTS A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL ISSUES

As the only Spanish-language debate program at a public university in the United States, the Cal Poly Spanish Language Debate Team has been at the forefront of intercollegiate debate since it was established in 2017.

Through a partnership with Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior (CETYS), a private polytechnic university in Mexicali, Mexico, the team offers domestic and international opportunities for bilingual students to gain a broader understanding of global and societal issues.

“Spanish debate is growing in the United States, and we have the chance to shape how it transitions from academic settings to community-based advocacy, addressing real-world problems,” said Marion W. Hart, director of the Spanish Language Debate Team.

Since 2021, the team has partnered with CETYS to provide hands-on debate experiences in Mexico and California for an interdisciplinary group of students. Legados—an annual Spanish-language civic debate—elevates and analyzes policies and conditions that impact Californians from both the State of California and Baja California.

This year’s 2024 ¡Legados—USA! cowinner, communication studies student Andrea Valle, credits the team with providing a unique and memorable collegiate experience.

“Being on the team has been both exhilarating and unforgettable. I’m so happy that I was given the opportunity to join the team, even when I thought that I couldn’t do it,” Valle said.

With a double minor in Spanish and sales, Valle was recruited to the team her freshman year after taking Hart’s class, SPAN 302: Advanced Conversation and Composition in Spanish, to brush up on her conversational skills.

“As a newer team member, I never expected to be so successful. Of the three major debates I’ve participated in, I’ve won all three,” Valle said. “That is something I will always remember and is a highlight of my college career.”

On top of her academic and competitive successes, Valle has found that the team also helps prepare her for her future career.

“My goal is to work in the sales field, and since joining the team, I have become more confident and learned new ways to communicate with different types of people,” Valle said.

“ALTHOUGH DEBATES CAN SOMETIMES GET INTENSE, IT’S ALWAYS IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY. THIS IS A TEAM WHERE EVERYONE WANTS TO SEE EACH OTHER SUCCEED.”

—ALONDRA CARDOSO, SPANISH LANGUAGE DEBATE TEAM CAPTAIN

Como el único programa de debate en español en una universidad pública en los Estados Unidos, el Equipo de Debate en Español de Cal Poly ha estado a la vanguardia del debate intercolegial desde su creación en 2017.

A través de una asociación con el Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior (CETYS), una universidad politécnica privada en Mexicali, México, el equipo ofrece oportunidades nacionales e internacionales para que los estudiantes bilingües obtengan una comprensión más amplia de los problemas globales y sociales.

“El debate en español está creciendo en los Estados Unidos, y tenemos la oportunidad de dar forma a su transición del ámbito académico a la defensa de la comunidad, abordando cuestiones del mundo real,” dijo Marion W. Hart, directora del Equipo de Debate en Español.

Desde 2021, el equipo se ha asociado con CETYS para proporcionar experiencias prácticas de debate en México y California para un grupo interdisciplinario de estudiantes. Legados—un debate cívico anual en español—eleva y analiza políticas y condiciones que impactan a los californianos tanto del Estado de California como de Baja California.

La co-ganadora de Legados—USA 2024 de este año, la estudiante de estudios de comunicación Andrea Valle, le da crédito al equipo por brindar una experiencia universitaria única y memorable.

“Estar en el equipo ha sido estimulante e inolvidable. Estoy muy contenta de haber tenido la oportunidad de unirme al equipo, incluso cuando pensaba que no podría hacerlo,” dijo Valle.

Con una doble especialización en español y ventas, Valle fue reclutada para el equipo en su primer año después de tomar la clase de Hart, SPAN 302: Conversación y composición avanzadas en español, para fortalecer sus habilidades conversacionales.

“Como uno de los miembros más recientes del equipo, nunca esperé tener tanto éxito. De los tres grandes debates en los que he participado, he ganado los tres,” dijo Valle.

español continuada

“Eso es algo que siempre recordaré, y es un punto culminante de mi carrera universitaria.”

Además de sus éxitos académicos y competitivos, Valle ha descubierto que el equipo también le ayuda a prepararse para su futura carrera.

“Mi meta es trabajar en el campo de las ventas, y desde que me uní al equipo, tengo más confianza en mí misma, y he aprendido nuevas formas de comunicarme con diferentes tipos de personas,” afirma Valle.

Alondra Cardoso, estudiante de sociología y la capitana del Equipo de Debate en Español, comparte la opinión de Valle y también aprecia la camaradería que fomenta el equipo.

“Unirme al equipo fue una de las mejores decisiones que tomé en la universidad porque me permitió encontrar mi hogar lejos de casa y conocer a muchos otros estudiantes motivados,” dijo Cardoso. “Aunque a veces los debates pueden ser intensos, siempre son constructivos. Este es un equipo en el que todos quieren que los demás tengan éxito.”

Mientras que el programa de lengua española es único y relativamente nuevo, el debate ha sido parte de Cal Poly desde sus comienzos en 1901. Sin embargo, no fue hasta una conversación “muy persuasiva” con el codirector del equipo de debate Chris Skiles durante una improvisada hora social de profesores en 2016 que Hart decidió ayudar a co-crear el programa.

“Terminamos hablando mientras tomábamos una copa, y Chris habló sobre los beneficios pedagógicos del debate, cómo empodera a los estudiantes para que sean capaces de abogar por sí mismos, y propuso que lo hiciéramos en español,” dijo Hart. “Al final de ese trago, decidí asistir a la clase de debate. A la segunda semana, ¡ya estaba convencida!”

Junto con el codirector del equipo de debate John Patrick, Skiles y Hart crearon el programa de debate en español con tres objetivos centrales: crear una liga californiana en la que los estudiantes hispanohablantes compitan en competencias regionales y estatales; fomentar un consorcio fronterizo con universidades de los estados fronterizos para colaborar en



The Cal Poly and CETYS debate teams pose in front of a Blanca Nieves restaurant mural in Mexicali after a tournament.

Sociology student and captain of the Spanish Language Debate Team Alondra Cardoso reflects Valle's sentiments and also appreciates the camaraderie the team fosters.

“Joining the team was one of the best decisions I made in college because it allowed me to find my home away from home and meet many other driven students,” Cardoso said. “Although debates can sometimes get intense, it’s always in a constructive way. This is a team where everyone wants to see each other succeed.”

While the Spanish-language program is unique and relatively new, debate has been part of Cal Poly since its inception in 1901. However, it wasn’t until a “very persuasive” conversation with Debate Team Codirector Chris Skiles during an impromptu faculty social hour in 2016 that Hart decided to help cocreate the program.

“We ended up talking over a drink, and Chris spoke about the pedagogical benefits of debate, how it empowers students to be able to advocate for themselves, and proposed that we should do it in Spanish,” Hart said. “By the end of that drink, I decided to audit the debate class. By the second week in, I was sold!”

Alongside Debate Team Codirector John Patrick, Skiles and Hart created the Spanish-language debate program with three central goals: creating a California league where Spanish-speaking students compete in regional and state competitions, fostering a border consortium with universities in border states to collaborate on solutions to shared challenges, and finally, building connections with institutions across Latin America for an international debate circuit.

“The program offers a supportive community—helping students build networks—while tournament participation allows students to broaden their horizons and tackle civic and policy challenges with cultural and linguistic fluency,” said Hart.

“DEBATING ENHANCES ANALYTICAL THINKING, PUBLIC SPEAKING AND CONFIDENCE—ALL OF WHICH ARE CRUCIAL IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS.”

—MARION W. HART, SPANISH LANGUAGE DEBATE TEAM DIRECTOR

Next to seeing the students’ improvement and providing a supportive learning environment, Hart is proudest of how the program empowers students to fulfill their potential. The majority of participants are first-generation Americans, whose families immigrated to the U.S. from Latin America.

“This program is a vital resource for our Spanish-speaking students, and this is really visible with our first-generation students, who make up a significant portion of the team, as it gives them unique opportunities to develop critical skills essential for academic and personal success,” Hart said.

The team’s partnership with CETYS has seen first-generation students like Valle and Cardoso debate current, local issues affecting Californians such as H-2A visas for temporary agricultural workers, sustainability and water rights.

“Debating enhances analytical thinking, public speaking and confidence—all of which are crucial in professional settings,” Hart said. “In an era where technology often overshadows language and literature, this program ensures that students become trained, competent and bilingual advocates for the importance of humanities in education.”

Interested in supporting the Cal Poly Debate Team? Contact the CLA Development Office at cladevelopment@calpoly.edu.

soluciones a retos compartidos; y por último, establecer conexiones con instituciones de toda Latinoamérica para un circuito internacional de debate.

“El programa ofrece una comunidad de apoyo—ayudando a los estudiantes a crear redes—mientras que la participación en torneos permite a los estudiantes ampliar sus horizontes y abordar retos cívicos y políticos con fluidez cultural y lingüística,” afirma Hart.

Además de ver cómo se mejoran los estudiantes y de proporcionarles un entorno de aprendizaje propicio, Hart está muy orgullosa de cómo el programa capacita a los estudiantes para desarrollar todo su potencial. La mayoría de los participantes son estadounidenses de primera generación, cuyas familias emigraron a Estados Unidos desde América Latina.

“Este programa es un recurso vital para nuestros estudiantes hispanohablantes, y esto es realmente visible con nuestros estudiantes de primera generación, que constituyen una parte significativa del equipo, ya que les da oportunidades únicas para desarrollar habilidades críticas esenciales para el éxito académico y personal,” dijo Hart.

La asociación del equipo con CETYS ha logrado que estudiantes de primera generación como Valle y Cardoso debatan cuestiones locales de actualidad que afectan a los californianos, como los visados H-2A para trabajadores agrícolas temporales, la sostenibilidad y los derechos sobre el agua.

“Debatir mejora el pensamiento analítico, la oratoria y la confianza, aspectos todos ellos cruciales en entornos profesionales,” afirma Hart. “En una época en la cual la tecnología a menudo eclipsa el idioma y la literatura, este programa asegura que los estudiantes se conviertan en defensores capacitados, competentes y bilingües de la importancia de las humanidades en la educación.”

¿Le interesa apoyar al Equipo de Debate de Cal Poly? Póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Desarrollo de CLA al cladevelopment@calpoly.edu.

SPANISH TRANSLATION BY ANDREA VALLE

COURTESY OF ARACELI ARONIN



2024 ¡Legados—USA! cowniners Andrea Valle (front, left) and Araceli Aronin pose with their award and the Legados judging panel.

EVERY DONOR COUNTS! EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS!



Left: Former Dean Philip Williams with Cal Poly mascot Musty the Mustang. Below, from left: Sarah Carvalho Khan, Chris Trapani and Samantha Schneider.

Thanks to donors like you and the Dean's Advisory Council (DAC), the College of Liberal Arts ended Poly Gives Weekend high on the university leaderboards. With the highest number of donors and third-most money raised to support Learn by Doing, the CLA more than doubled last year's fundraising results.

DAC created two challenge gifts, rallying CLA donors with gifts of any size to create a much larger impact. Gifts to the Dean's Excellence Fund unlocked \$9,000 in matching funds. Meanwhile, CLA departments engaged in a friendly competition to see which could bring in the highest number of individual donors, with an additional \$5,000 from DAC to be split among the top three.

DAC's mission promotes the many ways their fellow alumni can give back, while providing financial support and counsel for implementing the dean's vision for

the college's goals and initiatives. Sarah Carvalho Khan (English, '98), Samantha Schneider (Speech Communication, '98) and Chris Trapani (Political Science, '90) spearheaded this year's effort.

"It seems daunting sometimes to do something impactful individually," said Khan, who heads the human relations office at Vaxart Inc. in South San Francisco. "But collectively, it's such an honor to be able to pull resources together and make a difference. I hope that my fellow alumni know that there are many ways to

contribute, and whatever the amount, their gift counts."

Added Trapani, who founded Christie's International Real Estate Sereno in Northern California: "I have learned by giving [that] my life is enriched in countless ways. I also feel strongly about contributing specifically to Cal Poly because of my experiences there and my hope to pass along this goodness to students who will someday be carrying the torch in our local communities."

Schneider, CEO of AmpersandPeople Inc., agreed. "Giving back to my school in a meaningful way—more than just writing checks—but knowing what direction the college is taking, how are we preparing future leaders, and lending my expertise to be a part of it again has been the most rewarding," she said. "Cal Poly was an amazing time in my life and has served me well in my career. It feels really good to prioritize supporting this work with focused programs and recognizable outcomes."

Learn more about the many ways you can support Learn by Doing. Contact the CLA Development Office at cladevelopment@calpoly.edu.



“Cal Poly was an amazing time in my life and has served me well in my career. It feels really good to prioritize supporting this work with focused programs and recognizable outcomes.” —SAMANTHA SCHNEIDER

Poly Gives 2024

TOTAL RAISED: 154% increase from 2023 to 2024

2023: \$26,506 (No. 6 on leaderboard)

2024: \$67,388 (No. 3 on leaderboard)

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL DONORS: 125% increase from 2023 to 2024

2023: 132 donors (No. 2 on leaderboard)

2024: 297 donors (No. 1 on leaderboard)

The Dean's Advisory Council (DAC) and former Dean Philip Williams provided \$15,000 for a challenge match and the CLA Dean's Challenge award.

CLA DEAN'S CHALLENGE AWARD WINNERS

Dean Williams partnered with the DAC to award **\$5,000** to the top three CLA departments with the greatest number of donors.

1. \$2,500 – Music Department, **74** donors

2. \$1,500 – Psychology and Child Development Department, **36** donors

3. \$1,000 – Journalism Department, **31** donors

Enabling Excellence

Gifts from friends and alumni enable the CLA and its departments to provide high-impact Learn by Doing practices, projects and extracurricular programs. Thank you to all our supporters for helping CLA sustain the margin of excellence that Cal Poly students expect and deserve.



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Thank you to the 2023-24 members of the Dean's Advisory Council for their time, guidance and support of the CLA.

- **James W. apRoberts**
(Art and Design, '02)
CEO/Cofounder,
Subplot Studio

- **Melissa S. Figueroa**
(Journalism, '02)
Director of Communications
& Public Affairs, Shaw Yoder
Antwih Schmelzer & Lange

- **John Hinton**
(Speech Communication, '96)
Managing Director,
Brown & Brown

- **Sarah Carvalho Khan**
(English, '98)
Head of Human Resources,
Vaxart Inc.

- **Howard A. Lim**
(Art and Design, '89)
President, HOW Creative

- **Daniel L. Rivoire**
(Philosophy, '07)
Executive Director for
Leadership Development,
SLO Chamber of Commerce

- **Samantha Schneider**
(Speech Communication, '98)
CEO and Principal,
AmperSandPeople Inc.

- **Christopher Trapani**
(Political Science, '90)
Founder and CEO,
Christie's International
Real Estate Sereno

CENTERING UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN TECH

Meet 2023 Honored Alumni Award recipient Leanne Pittsford (Political Science, '04), CEO of Lesbians Who Tech & Allies

Leanne Pittsford (Political Science, '04) is the CEO and founder of Lesbians Who Tech & Allies. With over 100,000 members worldwide, the organization has grown into “the largest LGBTQ+ community of technologists in the world,” according to its website. Programs include coding scholarships, mentoring programs and leadership training for LGBTQ+ women, women of color and nonbinary tech professionals.

The organization’s mission states: “Because LGBTQ+ women and nonbinary leaders are rarely centered, their voices are often missing from leadership. We center that demographic in our organization’s name to provide value to that community.”

The College of Liberal Arts recognized Pittsford, also an entrepreneur, technology strategist, UX designer and tech investor, at Cal Poly’s 2023 Honored Alumni Awards, the highest honors bestowed upon Cal Poly alumni.

“We chose Leanne as our honoree this year because of her commitment and success in creating platforms and opportunities that uplift underrepresented communities,” said former Dean Philip Williams. “Leanne Pittsford is a changemaker, a visionary who pushes the boundaries, transgresses norms and is not afraid to speak truth to power.”

During Pittsford’s time at Cal Poly, she learned resilience in the face of significant personal struggles. But eventually, she found a path that combined her personal and professional passions into positive change.

Coming from a very conservative, religious background, Pittsford had only begun to question her sexuality as a high school senior. Despite her success as high school valedictorian and class president, at Cal Poly she struggled on a campus that at the time was not very welcoming to LGBTQ+ students.

A statistics course offered her the chance to conduct an experiment on the campus community’s response to Pride Week, leading her to discover her passion for data science. She went on to complete a graduate program in equity and social justice at San Francisco State University.

Pittsford “fell in love with tech” by managing data and building online fundraising tools in her role as senior director of Equality California, the largest statewide LGBTQ+ organization backing the “No on Prop 8” campaign fighting a 2008 proposal to ban same-sex marriage in California. As she advanced her own career, she continued to help others to follow the same path. Through her many endeavors, Pittsford has always sought to connect diverse, nontraditional talent and tech companies with each other.

“Leanne’s Cal Poly story reminds us that, 20 years ago, Cal Poly wasn’t always a welcoming community for some of our students,” said Dean Williams. “It demonstrates how far we’ve come as an institution to become a more welcoming and inclusive place. It’s my hope that Leanne’s story will encourage all of us to redouble our efforts to make Cal Poly a community where all our students feel they can belong.”



“Leanne Pittsford is a changemaker, a visionary who pushes the boundaries, transgresses norms and is not afraid to speak truth to power.”

—FORMER DEAN PHILIP WILLIAMS

CLASS NOTES

Share your recent news in the next Impact magazine at cla.calpoly.edu/update.

1970s

Nathalie Taylor (English, '79) won three third-place awards, including one for a piece about Hearst Castle, at the San Diego Society of Professional Journalists awards banquet in June 2023. Taylor has won 104 professional journalism awards since 2004.

1980s

Neal Meyers (Political Science, '80) retired as a litigator, primarily representing public agencies. He is now involved in California water policy, sitting as an elected director on a local water agency board and a director at the San Diego County Water Authority.

Roy Xavier (Graphic Communication, '80) has retired and is living in San Luis Obispo.

Gayle McCallum (English, '83) traveled the world solo and then joined the Peace Corps following her graduation from Cal Poly before embarking on a meaningful and fulfilling 35-year career in higher education.

Brenda Boylan (Applied Art and Design, '86) appeared in an artist spotlight in *Fine Art Connoisseur* magazine.

1990s

Robert Tanner (Political Science, '92) accepted a promotion to deputy assistant United States Trade Representative for Information and Communication Technology Services and Digital Trade in the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Tanner advises the U.S. Trade Representative on the formulation, execution and enforcement of U.S. policy for digital trade.

Loren Mannard (Human Development, '94) recently celebrated her 15th anniversary at Kaiser Permanente covering the Central Valley, providing counseling to 6,800 Kaiser employees and physicians. She has been a licensed therapist for 23 years and serves on the Stanislaus County Behavioral Health Board.

Brian Lawson (Speech Communication, '96) celebrated his 20th anniversary working with the U.S. Department of Defense.

Shannon Hunt (Journalism, '97) is an Emmy-winning executive producer of "From Scratch," a culinary and travel TV series that tells the stories of different cultures and the people who put food on our tables.

Craig Weinreich (History, '97) taught history and English for 15 years at Sunny Hills High School in Fullerton, California, before moving into an administrative role at the school. He is now in his fourth year as its principal.

2000s

Aron DeFerrari (Political Science, '01) was named the Outstanding Prosecutor of the Year in 2022 for the state of California for his work as a Contra Costa County deputy district attorney.

Kirsten Grind (Journalism, '02) joined The New York Times in March as a tech investigations reporter in San Francisco after 12 impressive years working for The Wall Street Journal.

Shea Somma (Philosophy, '07) creates and shapes custom, hand-shaped surfboards through his Central Coast-based business Somma Special Designs.

2010s

Josh Haevernack (English, '11), a lawyer with the global law firm Dentons, is married and loving life.

Travis Raynaud (Child Development, '13) is the new internal career readiness advisor for Cal Poly's Orfalea College of Business, following nearly 10 years as the career counselor for the college within Cal Poly Career Services.

Briana Whitney (Journalism, '14) is the creator and host of "True Crime Arizona," which consists of a podcast, TV specials, documentaries and case investigations.

Alberto Ganis (Communication Studies, '15) returned to Cal Poly as a lecturer for the Political Science Department during the 2023-24 academic year.

2020s

Yesenia Beas (Psychology, '20) is the academic advisor and coordinator of Cal Poly's Multicultural Business Program, which provides students with professional support and resources to help them persist toward graduation.

Krista Smith (Journalism, '11, Master of Public Policy, '20)

became the new marketing director for the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance.

Evan Reed (Theatre Arts, '21) founded Bunker Arts Collective, a nonprofit organization that seeks to combat widespread vandalism and blight affecting property owners in Everett, Washington, through community trash cleanups, needle removal, vandalism mediation and mural commissions for independently owned and operated small businesses.

Alessandra Gardner (Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies, '22) has returned to Cal Poly as the temporary assistant technical coordinator for the Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies Program.

Brooks Lee (Sociology, '22) made his Major League debut as third baseman for the Minnesota Twins against the Detroit Tigers on July 3.

Ashley Monteiro (Psychology, '23) will attend UC San Diego in pursuit of a doctorate in experimental psychology, specializing in social psychology.

Hector Reyes (Psychology, '23) was part of a team that received first place in the Education category at the 2024 California State University Student Research Competition. Reyes is working on a master's degree at San Diego State University.

Alexis Morse (Theatre Arts, '23) recently accepted a position with Seneca Family of Agencies and will provide support to at-risk children and their families.



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