Learning Abroad

PAGE 18
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

features
18 LEARN BY GOING
22 ALUMNI STORIES
24 FACULTY ACCOLADES

news
02 STUDENT ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHTS
06 STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS
10 PROGRAM NEWS
12 DEPARTMENT AWARDS
16 SENIOR PROJECTS
It has been a pleasure serving as the interim department head of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department this past academic year. The department is fortunate to have student-centered faculty and staff who are committed to an application-oriented education.

The pride in our department was clearly evident during the awards presentation at the annual CAFES Student Council banquet. The students majoring in agricultural science and agricultural communication were recognized for many achievements. Of particular interest: the Beck Outstanding Senior Award was given to agricultural communication major Corrine Madison and the Louis H. and Stella S. Soares Outstanding Achievement Award given to agricultural science junior Jana Colombini. A number of other students were called to the stage that evening, making us proud.

A noteworthy achievement was the formation of a Student Advisory Committee consisting of students representing the two undergraduate majors and the graduate program for teachers. The students readily tackled a few changes they would like to see in the department. We listened and learned from them. The student feedback provided us with plenty to consider as we reviewed and altered the curriculum in both majors and the graduate program.

This issue of Reflections provides you with a glimpse of the many activities and successes of our department. We are committed to providing our students the best education possible. It is very gratifying to encounter our graduates as they provide leadership to the agricultural industry.

We wish you well in all you do!

Best Wishes,

Robert A. Flores, Ph.D.
Interim Department Head
Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow

Ten Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) club members and two advisors traveled to Scottsdale, Ariz., in July 2015 to participate in the Ag Media Summit. Not only did this expand the students’ awareness of opportunities in the agricultural communications area, but students were able to network and grow as ag communicators. This coming summer, the Ag Media Summit will be held in St. Louis, Mo., and ACT hopes to send members back.

Every year ACT participates in Cal Poly’s Open House activities. This year, Musty the Mustang came for a visit. Cal Poly ACT took pictures of parents, students, newly admitted students and other visitors from the community with Musty and photoshopped their faces on the cover of Ag Circle magazine. These photos were then emailed to the visitors. ACT members and agricultural communications students said they had a great day and gained new communication skills.

Other highlights from the year include volunteering at Farm City Nights at the local farmers market in downtown San Luis Obispo, where ACT members taught the public about pumpkins. Cal Poly ACT is always looking for ways to motivate and engage its members. During monthly meetings members of the agriculture industry talk about their experience and the opportunities available for students. If you don’t find ACT members networking, you’ll find them competing in the CAFES Student Council events. This year, ACT claimed the title of Small Club Kickball Champions.

Cal Poly’s student chapter of ACT also took home Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences’ Small Club of the Year Award for the third consecutive year.

Alpha Tau Alpha

Alpha Tau Alpha (ATA) is a professional fraternity for all students interested in joining the teaching profession. The fraternity is dedicated to allowing undergraduates to professionally develop their skills by taking agricultural literacy tours, hosting educational forums, and building camaraderie among members.

This year, ATA welcomed eight upper-division agricultural education and communication students into the national organization. These new members expressed a desire to enter the teaching profession and continue to develop professionally by becoming actively involved in the organization.

During the winter quarter, a group of ATA members had the opportunity to take an agricultural literacy tour around the southern part of the county. Students visited Talley Farms and Vineyards and the Pismo Oceano Vegetable Exchange, where they learned about vegetable production and the wine industry.
The fall and spring teacher candidate breakfasts were well attended. The breakfasts allow current teacher candidates to share their student teaching experiences with undergraduates, the Agricultural Education and Communication Department faculty and staff, and special guests from throughout the university.

COLLEGIATE FFA

Collegiate FFA (CFFA) is known for its dedication to supporting high school students in the blue jackets. The organization strives to enhance the collegiate experience through service and engagement to create premier leaders, enable personal growth, and ensure career success. CFFA is open to all Cal Poly majors and welcomes students passionate about serving the FFA. CFFA members serve the FFA by judging local, sectional and regional contests, including opening and closing ceremonies, parliamentary procedure contests, and the South Coast Region speaking finals.

Another significant contribution the chapter makes to FFA is by financially supporting students. Five years ago the chapter created a scholarship program for outstanding high school seniors in the South Coast Region who plan to pursue a two- or four-year degree after graduation. Over the past year, CFFA has worked diligently to raise money for their scholarship program through various fundraisers, including partnering with the local Tahoe Joe’s restaurant and selling Superior Dairy ice cream and donated strawberries at Cal Poly Open House.

CFFA is proud to represent Cal Poly’s Agricultural Education and Communication Department and will continue to provide students with opportunities to support FFA members and network with peers and professionals in agricultural education.

MANRRS AND LATINOS IN AGRICULTURE

The Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) and the Latinos in Agriculture (LIA) student organizations serve a diverse population of students at Cal Poly. LIA offers opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills. Activities focused on community service, academic and career development, and social well-being provide ample Learn by Doing experiences in leadership development. Affiliation with the national MANRRS organization offers many more leadership experiences for members.

LIA participated in numerous activities throughout the year, including San Luis Obispo’s Farm City Nights. During that event, students had a booth at farmers market offering face painting for children and speaking with individuals about what LIA does for students at Cal Poly.

Jose Alvarez, Samara Guerra, Veronica Lemus, Yessica Hernandez, and Angelica Aldana, all members of Cal Poly’s Latinos in Agriculture Club, attended the MANRRS conference from March 30 to April 2 in Jacksonville, Fla. Angelica Aldana was elected as the national undergraduate vice president. She will work alongside the region six graduate vice president. Jose Alvarez won second place in the business pitch contest, with his proposal for developing a nonprofit or cooperative organization to support the H2A visa program for farmworkers in California while also ensuring a labor force for small farmers. The members
also attended numerous workshops hosted by industry professionals, allowing them the opportunity to network with industry professionals and members of MANRRS.

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A Student Advisory Committee was recently formed by the Agriculture Education and Communication Department to act as a voice between department students and faculty. Department representatives saw a need for more student input and involvement.

The purpose of the Student Advisory Committee is twofold: to represent students’ needs and concerns, advise on current issues relative to students in the department, and make recommendations to the department; and to continue to strengthen and develop the student experience in the department.

The committee is comprised of representatives from various stages of their academic career, including both undergraduate and graduate students, and represent the department’s three programs: agricultural communication, agricultural science and master of agricultural education. Selected students will serve a minimum one-year term and will discuss topics related to curriculum, fundraising, department improvements and student success.

Three student subcommittees were formed, including one to provide recommendations regarding class availability, curriculum changes, and sequencing of classes. New subcommittees will be formed as needed.

Committee Members

Master of Agricultural Education: Bailey Riedel and Kenny Goodman

Agricultural Communication: Harrison Reilly, Kenna Lewis (vice chair), Holly Wilson (secretary), Jordan Dunn, Lindsay Robson, Haley Warner

Agricultural Science: Alden Caldwell, Alison Einolander (chair), Caitlin Stanton, Emily Dale

Advisors: Ann DeLay and Ben Swan

(Top) LIA members at Farm City Nights (L-R): Yessica Hernandez, Robert Flores, Sara Manzo, Samara Guerra, Jose Alvarzecz. (Above) (L-R): Department Head Robert Flores, Veronica Lemus, Samara Guerra, Yessica Hernandez, Angelica Aldana, Jose Alvarez, Professor Ann De Lay
For more than 80 years, Cal Poly has hosted the State FFA Judging Finals. On Saturday, May 7, more than 2,000 high school agriculture students flooded the campus, all with hopes of being named state champion. For many students, this is the culmination of four years of hard work and dedication. For others, this is their first experience at a state competition. We would like to congratulate all the teams that competed, especially the state champions of this year’s contest. Listed below are the Cal Poly students, faculty and staff of the State FFA Finals Leadership Committee responsible for organizing this year’s event. A special note of thanks goes to Farm Supply Company, J. B. Dewar, Inc., and Farm Credit West for providing meals to all competitors.

General Chair: Bailey Riedel
Awards: Meagan Dunlap and Nathan Kesser
Barbecue: Paul Cardinalli, Nicole Davis and Dustin Mollard
Communications: Hannah Fortin and Kenna Sandberg
Logistics: Cody Davis and Brian Snyder
Results & Finance: Katie Fernandes and Kayla Manning
Sponsorship: Kenny Goodman and Julie Schellhase
Tabulations: Tyler Dickinson, Trey Johnston and Samantha Maas
Advisors: Ann De Lay, Donetta Dunnigan, Chelsi Faria, Robert Flores, Sherri Freeman, Erin Gorter, Bill Kellogg, Megan Silcott, Ben Swan and Scott Vernon

ABOVE – Students competing in the Light Horse competition. RIGHT TOP – High school students evaluate carcass quality in the Meat Judging contest. RIGHT BOTTOM – California FFA State Officers helping with the Best Informed Greenhand (BIG) contest.
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

ANGELICA ALDANA

Cal Poly agricultural science junior Angelica Aldana was elected as a national officer at the 2016 Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Conference in Jacksonville, Fla. She will serve as the region six undergraduate vice president for the 2016-17 year.

As a national officer, Aldana said she wants to do her best at serving the members of region six. “I am most excited to continuously learn from my teammates and use what I learn to best serve the members,” Aldana said. She wants to help the region grow by communicating with and visiting new chapters, while also keeping an open line of communication with existing chapters to find out how to best serve them in accordance with their needs.

A personal goal for Aldana is developing skills to become better at managing and planning complex and ambiguous events or situations. Along with serving the MANRRS region six members, which encompasses California, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon and Arizona, Aldana will be working for California FFA as their summer intern.

Aldana, 21, from Bakersfield, Calif., said her past experience with FFA led to her passion for the agriculture industry and leadership. She hopes to be an agricultural educator and FFA advisor for high school students one day.

fast facts

Level: Junior
Major: Agricultural Science
Hometown: Bakersfield, Calif.
JANA COLOMBINI

The Colombini legacy will continue at Cal Poly. Agricultural science senior Jana Colombini was elected Cal Poly’s ASI President for the 2016-17 school year. Colombini represents the third generation of Colombinis to attend Cal Poly. Her brother, Jason, was ASI President in 2013, and her father, Jay, served on what is now the ASI Board of Directors when he was a student.

Her campaign slogan, “Count on Colombini,” could be seen everywhere on campus. “My vision is to make Cal Poly a better place for all students,” said Colombini. She strives to promote diversity and safety on campus, including enhancing the lighting on campus and reinstating the escort vans. Colombini also wants to increase transparency between ASI and students, which means increasing communication between the two. On her website, countoncolombini.com, she states that students are shareholders in ASI and they deserve to see and know where their student fees are going. She is also a large supporter of Cal Poly students and the San Luis Obispo City Council working in harmony.

Colombini said that she would not be where she is today without the support of her friends and family. “I have a lot of passion and willpower and I think that is something that is imperative when reaching for your goals,” she said.

Colombini credits the Agricultural Education and Communication Department with helping her prepare for public speaking and presenting herself in a professional and organized way. She believes that the faculty support she has found at Cal Poly has helped her achieve her presidency.

fast facts

Level: Senior
Major: Agricultural Science
Hometown: Linden, Calif.
KENNA LEWIS

Cal Poly agricultural communications senior Kenna Lewis claimed the championship title at the Young Farmers and Ranchers National Collegiate Discussion Meet in Kansas City, Mo.

Lewis, of San Luis Obispo, claimed the 2015 California Champion title in February 2015, qualifying her for the national competition.

The California Farm Bureau Federation of Young Farmers and Ranchers is a program for agriculturists aged 18 to 35 who are actively involved in production and affiliated professions.

“One unique thing about the national contest is the perspective the different competitors bring,” Lewis said. “Each representative comes from a different state and, therefore, has a different take on each agricultural issue. It’s really interesting to understand production methods from across the country and how issues affect agriculturists differently from coast to coast.”

Cal Poly Agricultural Education and Communication Professor Ann De Lay, coach Lindsey Liebig of the California Farm Bureau, and a group of California Young Farmers and Ranchers committee members traveled with Lewis to Missouri.

The final debate leading to Lewis’ victory was focused on how the Farm Bureau should protect and encourage producers’ ability to use new technology and how the organization can work with government entities and the public to encourage innovation.

Lewis said the topic is close to her heart.

“In order to feed our population, which continues to rapidly grow, we need to be able to produce more food on the same amount of land,” said Lewis. “The only way to do that is to invest in research and technology that can enhance our current production methods. As an agricultural communication student, I feel I have a responsibility to help express to the public the importance of technology in agriculture and ensure consumers that the highest safety measures are taken when it comes to innovations such as biotechnology.”

fast facts

Level: Alumna, Class of 2016

Major: Agricultural Communication

Hometown: San Luis Obispo, Calif.
WHERE ARE OUR STUDENT TEACHERS?

- Hilmar High School
- Hughson High School
- John Pitman High School
- King City High School
- Lemoore High School
- Los Banos High School
- Nipomo High School
- Pioneer Valley High School
- Righetti High School
- Ripon High School
- San Luis Obispo High School
- Santa Maria High School
- Santa Ynez High School
- Soledad High School

Fall 2015 Student Teachers: (L-R) Joanna Gomes, Chelsi Faria, Jennifer Daniels, Breanne Pacheco, Gary Potter

Spring 2016 Student Teachers (L-R): Kelly Dawkins, Alyssa Berry, Karina Salomon, Mayra King, Kelsey Councilman, Bailey Kirby (not pictured: Stephen Geisler)

Fall 2016 Student Teachers — (L-R) Danielle Zurcher (Los Banos High School), Alex Zappulla (King City High School), Brady Cerda (San Luis Obispo High School), Chelsey Porter (Santa Maria High School), Kylin Costa (Pioneer Valley High School), Jose Vargas (Soledad High School), Nicolette Schiber (Hughson High School)
This year marked the 28th year that Cal Poly has hosted the 26 Hours of Science and Technology in Agriculture Program. This program started as a senior project more than two decades ago and continues to this day. The 26 Hour Program was organized by a small planning team consisting of students Omar Gonzalez, Veronica Lemus, Miguel Rodriguez and Marisol Martinez, all members of the Latinos in Agriculture (LIA) club. Seven schools participated in the event with more than 60 students in attendance.

The program hosts students from partnering high schools to attend hands-on agricultural and science based workshops on topics such as interviewing skills, animal reproduction, networking, and soil science. The students are also encouraged to ask a panel of LIA members about their college experiences and the application process. Many of the students participating in the 26 Hours of Science and Technology in Agriculture Program come from low-income, underrepresented ethnic groups. The goal is for the students to leave the program feeling that attending a university is within their reach.

If you are interested in supporting programs like this, please contact the department at 805-756-2803.
Twenty-nine high schools, spanning several counties and 21 school districts, recently partnered to form the South Coast Region Agricultural Education Consortium (SCRAEC). The goal of the consortium is to strengthen existing agriscience and agricultural mechanics curriculum in high schools.

Cal Poly lecturer Erin Gorter serves as the program director for the SCRAEC and assisted in applying for grant funds through the California Career Pathways Trust Grant to meet those goals.

In June 2015, the South Coast Region was awarded $5.7 million.

“Local programs have been busy using the money to update their vehicles, shop equipment, and purchasing laboratory tools to strengthen student opportunities within their programs,” said Gorter. Professional development for advisors and leadership development for students will include industry tours and an Agricultural Mechanics Power and Design (AMP’D) Experience for students. This year's program serves as a pilot program for future years.

The funding will have an enormous impact on the schools within the region, said Gorter. “We want our students to be college ready but also develop soft-skills and career readiness through rich agricultural education experiences,” she said.
During fall and spring quarters, the Agricultural Education and Communication Department (AGED) recognized the success of its students during an awards reception organized by students enrolled in the AGED 303 course. Students chose the theme, prepared the food, and hosted the reception. Students and faculty wore the theme’s “Wayne Wednesday” attire while they celebrated. We thank the students in AGED 303 for their hard work and dedication in putting on a wonderful event.
2015-16 AWARD RECIPIENTS

- Kayla Manning: 2016 Outstanding Agricultural Science Senior Award
- Jordan Dunlap, Katie Roberti, Harrison Riley and Kenna Lewis: 2016 Outstanding Agricultural Communication Senior Award
- Giuliana Marchini: 2016 Outstanding Ag Communications Non-Major Award
- Kenny Goodman: 2016 Outstanding Graduate Student Award
- Meagan Dunlap: 2016 Outstanding Scholarship Award
- Student Advisory Committee: Alison Einolander (chair), Kenna Lewis (vice chair), Holly Wilson (secretary), Alden Caldwell, Caitlin Stanton, Emily Dale, Harrison Reilly, Jordan Dunn, Lindsay Robson, Haley Warner, Bailey Riedel and Kenny Goodman
- Mackenzie Gomes: Ag Circle Photo Contest
- Marleigh Ostrom: Writer’s Award
- Jana Russell: CFFA Star Greenhand
- Katie Fernandes: CFFA Star Chapter Farmer
- Matt Durian and James Broaddus: ACT Outstanding Freshman Award
- Roman Waskiewicz: ACT President’s Award
- Breanne Pacheco and Karina Salomon: 2016 Outstanding New Teacher Award
- Brady Cerda: Casey Family Scholarship and Barbara Parker Weber Ag Education Scholarship
- Kylin Costa: Lee and Astrid Arthurs Scholarship and Sandra Crabtree Memorial Scholarship
- Chelsey Porter: Harold Frace Memorial Scholarship and Clint and Jane Randolph Scholarship
- Jose Vargas: Burlingham Memorial Scholarship, San Marcos Grange Student Teacher Grant, and Lassanske Family Scholarship
- Alex Zappulla: Barbara Parker Weber Ag Education Scholarship
- Daniella Zurcher: Ed and Gertrude Bucher Memorial Student Teacher Scholarship, Rosario Curletti Scholarship, Bill and Debbie Kellogg Ag Education Scholarship, and Fred Turner Scholarship
End of Year Banquet

At the end of each school year, the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) honors students who went above and beyond academically. This year a number of agricultural science and agricultural communication students were recognized at the event:

Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) – Small Club of the Year

Katie Roberti — Beck Outstanding Senior Award finalist

Corinne Madison — Beck Outstanding Senior Award

Mary Allen, Hannah Fortin and Veronica Lemus — Soares Outstanding Junior Award finalists

Jana Colombini — Soares Outstanding Junior Award

Emily Dale — 2016-17 Ag Council secretary

Maddy Braught — 2016-17 Ag Council communications director

Above – Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow won Small Club of the Year. Right Top – Jana Colombini (left) won the Soares Outstanding Junior Award. Right Bottom – Corinne Madison (left) won the Beck Outstanding Senior Award.
CLASS OF 2016 graduates

[Images of graduates in regalia]
“FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS PERCEPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION”

Agricultural science students Veronica Lemus and Yessica Hernandez traveled to the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences Conference (MANRRS) in Jacksonville, Fla., to present their senior project titled “Experiences and Perceptions First Generation Students Have of Higher Education.”

The project was focused on first-generation students’ experiences while attending Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. Lemus and Hernandez wanted to learn first-hand the perspectives and obstacles that first-generation students have at Cal Poly versus non-first-generation students and the impact it may have on their success. According to English Professor Jose Navarro, only nine percent of Cal Poly’s student population are first-generation students. Of those nine percent, only about half earn their bachelor’s degrees.

Lemus is no stranger to the topic. “I am a first-generation student and was intrigued to learn of the similarities and differences between other first-generation students,” she said. Lemus and Hernandez interviewed students who volunteered for the study.

Lemus, of Santa Paula, Calif., plans to teach agriculture and hopes to use the study’s information to help guide other first-generation students to college and prepare them for the adjustment.

Overall, Lemus, Hernandez and their advisor Professor Ann De Lay, said they are happy with the results. They hope to better understand and assist first-generation students, and ultimately increase the number of first-generation students attending Cal Poly.
You young women in agriculture career and leadership seminar

Agriculture science seniors Diane Meyer and Natalie Madson created, planned and executed a youth leadership seminar for young women interested in agriculture. They wanted to provide high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to learn more about the career opportunities within the agriculture industry.

This topic is near and dear to both of their hearts. Both Meyer and Madson come from agriculture backgrounds; however, Madson said that they still weren’t aware of all the amazing agriculture opportunities out there. Madson said that they understand that the high school years are some of the most influential in a girl’s life, so they believe it’s extremely beneficial for them to be exposed to positive women in the industry to motivate the girls to further their education and find their passion in the industry.

After months of planning, on September 12, 2015, the first annual Young Women in Agriculture Career and Leadership Seminar (YWALS) took place. Meyer and Madson had a strong lineup of agricultural professionals, including Mark Rush, Leslie Friend, Adrian Brannan and Celeste Settrini, with Michelle Jimenez as the master of ceremony.

Meyer and Madson were extremely happy with the outcome of the event. According to Meyer, “the feedback from the speakers and attendees was all positive.” She continues by stating, “We learned so much about the details and time that go into planning a successful event.”

In May of 2016, Meyer and Madson traveled to New Orleans, La., to the American Association for Agricultural Education Conference and competed in the Innovative Poster Competition. Although they did not win, they were extremely grateful for the opportunity. The opportunity even led to a graduate school offer for Meyer, which she happily accepted. The event went so well they are excited to announce that the second annual Young Women in Agriculture Career and Leadership Seminar in September of 2016.
STUDY ABROAD

Learn by Going

By Mary Allen and Chelsi Faria
Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing motto turned into a “Learn by Going” motto for eight students in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department who studied abroad this academic school year. The majority of the students traveled to South American countries to become more conversational in Spanish, which is highly encouraged when working in the agriculture industry.

Agricultural communications junior Melissa Hardoin studied abroad in San Sebastian, Spain. Through this experience, Hardoin learned how to handle different situations while being in a different country, and she gained more independence, responsibility and self-directness. One of the most interesting things that Hardoin noticed in Spain was that all of the fruit and vegetables were sold on the streets, just like farmers markets in the United States. “I got the impression that they did very little processing over there and that it probably came straight from the farm to the street,” Hardoin said.

In Florence, Italy, agricultural communications junior Nicoletta Chiodo, found that big grocery stores do not exist. Rather, the residents go to the market a few times a week for their produce. Chiodo also noticed that produce seemed fresher and more perishable. The fruits and vegetables in American grocery stores are made to look “perfect,” but not in other countries. “People in Italy have fruits and vegetables that are not perfectly round, have spots, and could still have visible dirt on them when they were purchased,” Chiodo said. She learned to respect and appreciate the different types of customs and background that people come from, which will help her build relationships and connections throughout her life, she said.

Mary Allen, an agricultural communications senior, studied abroad in tropical Heredia, Costa Rica and completed a Spanish speaking intensive semester by attending classes, living with a host family, and speaking with the local “ticos”. “Costa Rica changed my life in so many ways,” said Allen. “My eyes were opened to the global agricultural industry, the differences in food safety, and just the unique ways life is lived. I am so thankful for such an opportunity and I know I will use

“Costa Rica changed my life in so many ways ... I am so thankful for such an opportunity and I know I will use the skills gained for the rest of my life.”
the skills I gained for the rest of my life.” Allen also had the opportunity to visit Cuba on a field trip. “I am excited to see where Cuba is in 10 years because I know it will change in regards to tourism, modernization, and produce exporting,” said Allen.

Caitlin Paulus, agricultural communications senior, studied abroad in Costa Rica. She said Spanish was one of the most important things she learned while there. “I think that it is important for anyone who wants to work in the agricultural industry, especially in production, to know some Spanish, and being able to immerse myself in that language and culture during my internship was extremely helpful,” Paulus said, who interned at EARTH University’s organic farm, La Finca Integral Orgánica, and the university’s communications office. Paulus said that her biggest takeaway was realizing how little she knew. “Completing my internship abroad not only opened my eyes to global agricultural issues that I knew little or nothing about, but also provided me with the knowledge and foundation to get involved,” she said. “EARTH really showed me the power of agricultural education and the effects it can have on an individual, a community and the world. Since I have returned from EARTH my focus has shifted more towards international issues and the power of agricultural education.”

About 19 percent of Cal Poly students study abroad during college, and we are thankful that our students could experience such an opportunity.
19% OF CAL POLY STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD, A LIFE-CHANGING AND BENEFICIAL EXPERIENCE.
A CHAT WITH A RECENT ALUMNA

JENNIFER RAY
AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION, ’13

In 2013, Jennifer Ray graduated from Cal Poly with a bachelor’s degree in agricultural communication and a minor in agribusiness. Following Cal Poly, Ray accepted a graduate assistant position at Kansas State University, where she earned a master’s degree in 2015. Her master’s thesis, Applying the Guidelines: A quantitative content analysis of a state agency’s external communication was a communications audit of Kansas State Research and Extension to determine recommendations for improving their communication strategies, won Outstanding Thesis from the Association for Communication Excellence for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE).

What does your job entail?

Since August 2015, I’ve worked as the communications coordinator for the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. I coordinate website and social media content, e-newsletters, print newsletters, media relations and various reports throughout the year. I also coordinate the annual, state-wide story writing contest. The organization does a lot with a small staff, so there’s no typical day-to-day routine, and there’s always an upcoming event or newly-developed teaching resource to promote.

What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

I enjoy the opportunity to teach the general public where their food and fiber come from. By providing teachers with quality resources and inspiring them to teach agriculture, Ag in the Classroom reaches K-12 students — the next generation of decision makers. It’s a rewarding mission to work toward. Plus, it’s an adventure learning to use a wide variety of media platforms effectively, and trying to balance my time.

How did Cal Poly’s Agricultural Education and Communication Department prepare you for your job?

The department is very dedicated to helping students succeed. I took full advantage of all the help I could get: the hands-on classes, the opportunity to work in the Brock Center, the advice of friendly faculty members, and of course, the chance to print my homework for free and to network with other students in room 229. Through all these experiences, I developed communication and teaching skills that have helped through my role as a graduate teaching assistant at Kansas State University, and now in my role at Ag in the Classroom.

Do you have any advice for graduating students as they enter “the real world”?

My advice is to continue learning as much as you can, ask questions, and take time to reflect. Even though you’re not in class anymore, you will still be tested every day, and there will still be a lot to learn. If you’re not sure where to start your career, try a post-grad internship. All of your experience and knowledge will help you determine what you want to do and how to do it well.
Cal Poly alumni Dan Borges successfully completed his first year as dean of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at Modesto Junior College (MJC).

Borges started his agricultural education career at MJC as a natural resource student, where he was involved in both student government and agriculture clubs on campus, including Young Farmers and Ranchers. After MJC, Borges transferred to Cal Poly, where he quickly changed majors to agricultural science. Borges is no stranger to student leadership. At Cal Poly he was involved in Collegiate FFA, Alpha Tau Alpha, Alpha Zeta, and the Ag Council. After graduating from Cal Poly, Borges taught high school agriculture for ten years.

After teaching, Borges found another calling. He received his administrative credential and worked on the Tech Prep Grant for the Stanislaus County Office of Education. A position opened up at MJC and Borges took it, continuing to work on various grants for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

When asked about his first year as dean, he said it went really well. At the beginning of the year, Borges set a personal goal for himself: to better the communication within the staff, community and agriculture industry. And he did just that.

Congratulations to Borges on his successful first year as the dean of agriculture and environmental sciences at MJC and wish him many more prosperous years to come.
INTERIM DEPARTMENT HEAD ROBERT FLORES, EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Professor of agricultural education at Cal Poly, Robert Flores was named the Tulare County Farm Bureau (TCFB) Educator of the Year for his dedication and service to the TCFB Youth Leadership program. The TCFB Youth Leadership program is a yearlong program that provides Tulare County high school juniors with multiple opportunities for professional and personal growth within the agriculture industry. For the past 30 years, the youth leadership program has traveled to Cal Poly to provide the students with team building experiences and expose them to all the opportunities available at Cal Poly. For more than 15 years, Flores has administered the Myers-Briggs personality assessment to the students, which allows them to learn more about their leadership potential and personality characteristics. Flores has been instrumental in making the trip a success for the students and helping them to better themselves as they finish their high school career.

HONORARY STATE FFA DEGREES

Each year at the California State FFA Convention in Fresno, Calif., selected individuals who have shown dedication and outstanding service to California agricultural education and the California FFA Association are awarded an Honorary State FFA Degree. This year three Cal Poly faculty and one staff member were awarded this honor.

Bill Plummer
Animal Science Department

Stan Henderson
Animal Science Department

Virginia Walter
Horticulture and Crop Science Department

Launnie Ginn
Horticulture and Crop Science Department
Without the generous support of our alumni, industry partners, and friends, we would not be able to continue to offer the outstanding Learn by Doing programs Cal Poly and the Agricultural Education and Communication Department are known for. We thank you and honor your commitment and service.

Adelle B. and Gary J. Maricich
Alden Lane Nursery & Garden Center Inc.
Alison J. and Andrew S. Broadus
Amy K. English-Haas and Mathew F. Haas
Anthony J. and Cheryl A. Silva
Betty A. Rulison
Bill and Debbie Kellogg
Daniel E. Lassanske
Debora Helgeson
Donald J. and Edith M. Carroll
Donald M. and Kathryn A. Finkes
Douglas D. and Mary Piirto
Dow Chemical Company
Elizabeth G. and Sheldon K. Smith
Gemma F. Dalena Doglione and Ryan C. Doglione
Gregory D. Beard
Hilmar Cheese Company Inc.
Hogan Company
Ira D. and Michele K. Patrick
James V. Shanks
Jane and Clint Randolph
Jeffrey L. Buckley
Joseph E. and Jill Sabol
Looker Consulting Company
Loretta and Steven M. Del Papa
Marco A. and Marjorie L. Zaldivar

Mark Looker
Mark P. and Melissa A. Hansen
Mark R. Fernandez and Cara L. Giacomazzi-Fernandez
Maryann C. and Michael Halseth
Matthew R. and Danielle M. Baffunno
Melanie A. and Anthony Gutierrez
Meredith L. Sinclair
Richard and Sharon Clauss
Richard F. Nimphius
Robert A. and Sheryl E. Flores
Robyn J. and Bruce J. Rominger
Ronald J. and Diane Furtado
Salvador S. and Gloria M. Villasenor
Sandra D. and Steven A. Fortin
South Coast Region Agricultural Education Consortium
Stephanie R. Witherspoon
Steven G. Carney
Susan W. Heinz
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William R Broadbent Charitable Remainder Unitrust
Department Happenings 2015-16