Dean’s Message

CAED Alumni
Recognizing their core strength and clear vision

We ended our 60th Anniversary year with a flourish. Sixteen of our students received first-place, national-level awards for work ranging from research papers to design competitions. We dedicated the Construction Innovations Center and completed renovations on other college buildings. Three of our departments – Architectural Engineering, Construction Management and Landscape Architecture – were reaccredited, and we continue to garner national rankings.

Additionally, our students and faculty have helped lead Cal Poly toward a national reputation for leadership in sustainability as evidenced in the July CSU/UC Sustainability Conference. Our combined reputations for excellence and leadership are not new and owe much to the achievements of generations of our alumni.

The coming year promises to build on the achievements of our college. Architecture and City and Regional Planning are celebrating their 45th and 40th anniversaries, respectively. Our faculty continues to expand interdisciplinary teaching and research. New equipment and technology is spurring another round of teaching and project innovations. All of these activities are moving the college forward while remaining true to our core values.

Although we recognize that the world is much more uncertain this year than last, we remain committed to educating the next generation of planning, design and construction professionals to tackle big challenges. We thank each of you, our alumni and friends, who assist us in this important mission. Your ideas and perspectives shared with us at our regional gatherings, college and departmental events, and Advisory Council sessions help us shape today’s student experience.

Although times present unexpected difficulties, it is the timeless fundamentals of our Cal Poly education that enable us and our graduates to prevail. Our alumni are proof of this.

In this publication, we celebrate five of your colleagues: distinguished alumni whose careers have been sustained by core strength and clear vision. They represent hundreds more of you who have created that legendary Cal Poly reputation for passion, endurance and productivity. More than ever, this is the legacy that inspires and impresses the current generation of students.

I look forward to meeting with as many of you as possible, and I will use our alumni e-mail publications and newly redesigned Web site to let you know what we are doing and gather your insights and suggestions for our future.

R. Thomas Jones, AIA

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On the Cover
Bruce Danziger participated in the structural design of the Sony Center roof in Berlin, Germany, designed by Murphy/Jahn Architects. Read about the Cal Poly Architectural Engineering alumnus’ career on page 6.

PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN BRENSING
The new Construction Innovations Center, designed by architects Austin Veum Robbins Partners and built by Straub Construction

In October, several hundred people attended the dedication ceremony for the college’s newest facility: The Construction Innovations Center. Although the facility is one of only a handful of buildings in the United States designed exclusively for a Construction Management Department, it also has an interdisciplinary mission.

At the dedication, Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker spoke of the impact of this project on the future of learn by doing at Cal Poly. He applauded the multidisciplinary curriculum at the college and its application-oriented program that prepares students for the professional world.

Sandra Ogren, vice president for university advancement, praised all who were involved in the collaboration. “We were able to create a partnership that has resulted in the very best facility imaginable,” she said of the interaction between the state, the university, alumni and corporate donors.

Dean R. Thomas Jones sees the building as integral to the college’s evolution as a 21st century educational innovator. “We are unique in the country for our specific combination of planning, design and construction programs, and that gives us a collaborative edge.” In addition to the continued focus on interdisciplinary methods of instruction, the college is also looking to the future of sustainability both in its buildings and in its teaching with this new facility a component in realizing those goals.

Following the dedication ceremony, the college broke ground on the next phase of the complex: the Simpson Strong-Tie Materials Demonstration Lab, all part of looking ahead to the next 50 years of education at Cal Poly.
When asked what he remembers most about his education at Cal Poly, architect Ernesto Vasquez, AIA (ARCH ’73), pauses before saying, “the idea of participating at a professional level in a global world.” Vasquez adds that the transition was supposed to be from high school to college, and instead it was from high school to the idea of a global community. This he credits to a combination of the international faculty hired by then dean George Hasslein and the international student body on campus.

“It was a special place,” Vasquez recalls. “We had a sense of opportunities unfolding in front of us.”

While the notion of acting as a professional architect in the global community might have been a new one, Vasquez was no stranger to the international world. As a child, he spent summers in his mother’s native country, dividing his time between Mexico City and Acapulco. Professionally, the capital marked him most. “The urban life, history and the context of that city was very moving.”

Coming from the sprawl of Southern California, this exposure to the vibrant urban plazas and neighborhoods of Mexico City made an impression. “It wasn’t just a neighborhood in the sense of people living near one another. The barrios had a history, a culture and in the mix was contemporary architecture.”

As his guide, Vasquez had an uncle who introduced him to architectural sketching and painting. A different uncle pushed Vasquez farther along the path toward architecture. “My early interest was in the buildings of a city and in drawing for pleasure.”

During a hot summer working with his uncle in Pasadena, he focused on his goal. “It was hot and I was hired on the job site as part of the crew to clean up the plaster construction dust. A man arrived in a suit and tie, and I said,
"If I'm on a job site, that's who I want to be." That man was the architect.

Today, Vasquez tells this story with laughter in his voice; the sound of a man who knows the full story of what the profession entails, but for him, the memory of the man in the tie is a good one. "Was I motivated to go to college, and to Cal Poly? Yes!"

Now Vasquez can look back on these experiences through the lens of success. His firm, McLarand Vasquez Emsiek (MVE) & Partners, is one of the 10 largest architecture firms in California. Moreover, three of the firm's key principals also graduated with degrees from Cal Poly.

MVE & Partners prides itself on forward-thinking design initiatives, such as sustainability, smart-growth and urbanization. Responsible for many of Southern California's iconic buildings, including the MTA Headquarters Tower in downtown L.A., the Water Garden and the Wilshire Courtyard office complexes in Santa Monica and the Wilshire District, respectively, the firm is also widely known for its work on world-class resorts, including The Reserve outside Palm Springs.

Vasquez is equally proud of the firm's mixed-use residential and transit-oriented developments (TODs), including Fruitvale Transit Village in Oakland, Seabridge Marina in Oxnard and The Plaza Irvine, one of the highest-density residential projects in Irvine history. His team recently completed the Uptown Oakland development, an urban renewal project incorporating a mix of retail/commercial, entertainment and residential uses in downtown Oakland.

"Today we have to focus on affordability, mixed-use and the links to transportation," Vasquez says. "We have to leverage urban solutions for other issues, including parking."

MVE & Partners is also well poised globally, with eyes on the "BRICs" an acronym Vasquez doesn't claim to have invented for Brazil, Russia, India and China. The firm is currently engaged in western China, Egypt and Panama and exploring options in India and outside Moscow.

Vasquez is very engaged in ensuring that young people have the same opportunities he did. Active on many boards, he has focused his philanthropic efforts with groups committed to Hispanics and education.

He and his wife, Socorro, have created five five-year scholarships at the CAED for students graduating from two Southern California institutions: the Don Bosco Technical Institute and the Saint Joseph Ballet Academy.

"An urban oasis," is how Vasquez describes the latter. "We wanted to give back, and here we can help Latinos who deserve the opportunities we had."

Vasquez wants each of the students to follow their own dreams, as he did, but hopes at least a few will gravitate to architecture or the design professions.
Ambitious

Bruce Danziger’s projects treat viewers worldwide to visionary structural patterns

No matter how far he travels, Bruce Danziger (ARCE ’88) remains loyal to the tradition of architectural engineering he first discovered as a student. “Cal Poly ARCE is way ahead of other institutions, including polytechnics, in terms of communication and collaboration between architects and engineers.”

This is an impressive statement from a man who has taught at Pratt University School of Architecture, Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), University of Puerto Rico School of Architecture, and is currently the Bedford Professor, a visiting chair, at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). The visiting professorship at RPI illustrates Danziger’s commitment to multi-disciplinary education and practice. “Literally, the goal I have over my three-year appointment is to strengthen the links between the architecture and engineering schools.”

How does he plan to do this – given that he is still practicing with Arup in Los Angeles? First, by understanding the benefits of bringing current engineering practices to the classroom.

“Exposing students and faculty to current examples of engineering design is a very effective way to learn.” Danziger adds that, “The advancement of structural engineering principles, combined with the artistic collaboration between architecture and engineering, is what I find most rewarding about my career. The combination is essential to the success of any building and to the well-rounded education of both architects and engineers.”

Joining Arup in 1988, Danziger has a résumé of structural engineering experience that is long and stellar. Arup has 90 offices in 37 countries, with as many as 10,000 projects running concurrently. In this environment, Danziger has played an integral role in the design, development and construction of international projects that have required intense coordination between architecture and engineering.
and engineering, including the Pavilion of the Future at the 1992 Universal Exposition in Seville, Spain, the Sony Center’s roof in Berlin, Germany, the Lerner Student Center at Columbia University and the Mondavi Center at UC Davis.

Working with such international names in architecture as Eric Owen Moss, Bernard Tschumi and Murphy/Jahn, his projects have run the gamut from conceptual to practical.

A career that has successfully combined professional practice, teaching and publication in professional journals might seem the result of careful planning. “Not so,” says Danziger, who credits his career path to recently retired Cal Poly Professor Clay Pharoh.

“He said to me, ‘Luck is the residue of design,’ and that turned out to be a big lesson for me – and one that helped me organize my career ambitions at an early stage.”

Danziger explains that he interpreted the phrase to mean that preparation in order to be ready for opportunities was more important than seeking the opportunities. Apparently good advice, for it led to an early career move: joining Arup and the Arup Fellowship, which took Danziger to London to work with Peter Rice. The rest is history.

It is easy to have fond memories of Cal Poly and the education he gained there, says Danziger, who often finds himself consulting on a project with a Poly grad.

“We immediately get to work and resolve complex problems – just like at school!”
Congratulations is a word Susan Van Atta (LA ’83) will hear frequently this year. In October, she received an American Society of Landscape Architects National Honor Award for her design of Lagoon Park at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB). In making the award, the jury complimented her on the project for its design and economy of means: “proof that you don’t have to have a huge budget to do fabulous things.”

Lagoon Park is an example of this principle. Van Atta was asked by UCSB to turn a gravel parking lot into wetlands habitats as required by the California Coastal Commission. She saw the opportunity to do even more.

The result is six acres that immerse students in nature and give them an appreciation of the subtle beauty of vernal pools and marshes, while overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Native vegetation, not fences, protect the wetlands from trespassers. Enhanced beach access via ramps and stairs, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and other amenities such as surf showers, bike racks and outdoor study areas protect habitats by concentrating use in defined areas.

With her firm, Van Atta Associates, located in Santa Barbara, Susan, her architect husband and two sons feel a close tie to the region. She likes its ecological diversity, saying that it “equals health.”

Van Atta majored in environmental studies at UCSB and worked in Santa Barbara for several years, during which she discovered a “personal need to physically create environmental solutions, not just talk about them,” a need her planning job didn’t fulfill.
Pointing to a key moment in her decision to return to campus for a second degree, this time in landscape architecture, she credits Ian L. McHarg’s book, “Design with Nature.” McHarg was a pioneer in the concept of ecological planning, a notion that struck a chord with Van Atta and was a good fit with her background in environmental studies.

Looking for a place to study landscape architecture, Van Atta admits that Cal Poly’s beautiful location made her decision easy, but it was the architecture and horticulture programs and the nature of a polytechnic education – learning practical hands-on skills – that were the real influences on her decision. In retrospect, Van Atta says that as a woman she wanted to focus on technical proficiency, believing this would be an important asset and confidence booster after graduation.

One of Van Atta’s goals at school was to gain the education to start her own firm. Twenty-three years after founding Van Atta Associates, she remains committed to the belief that the education students receive at Cal Poly embraces more than core curriculum and creates leaders who are ready to direct a firm and not just be employees.

Today, Van Atta Associates is involved with a broad range of projects, a reflection of the many interests of its founder. Van Atta laughingly says that her professional role of landscape architect includes everything from “hand holding to being the authority” – her manner of encompassing the range from private, often well-funded projects to committee-led, tightly budgeted public work.

While delighted about her national award, Van Atta is already focused on the future, including the forthcoming publication of a book in June 2009, “Native Flower Gardens for Southern California.”

Her awards and portfolio of work support Van Atta’s credo that environmentally sensitive solutions do not equal sacrifice. Instead, these solutions can and should be healthier, more enjoyable, and attractive. She believes that concerns over the environment have placed landscape architects in positions as leaders, as they often have a broader view of the project than the other design professionals. Ideas that are certainly award-worthy.
Long Beach native Darrell S. “Rocky” Rockefeller (ARCH ’78) credits his professional success to two men: Edward Killingsworth and George Hasslein.

“I never considered college. I worked for Ed Killingsworth, and he encouraged me to get an education,” says Rockefeller, looking back at the origin of a 30-year career. It was a coincidence that Killingsworth, well known as the architect of Case Study House #25, was also the college roommate of then Cal Poly Architecture Dean George Hasslein.

Today, Rockefeller acknowledges his good fortune. “Ed Killingsworth was a fantastic architect with an office full of talented people. They worked on big buildings, houses, everything.”

Starting off as a general office boy, Rockefeller admits the office exposed him to people and events beyond his expectations.
“I got to hear Baron Hilton pontificate and see every facet of design.” Pretty heady stuff for a young man. “When I took the entrance exam at Cal Poly, I felt that was already a dream fulfilled, and I hadn’t even started school.”

While the unsettled economy is a worry in today’s building industry, Rockefeller is also concerned about the “grey-haired drain” – a term he applies to the trend of his contemporaries leaving architecture for real estate, development or other second careers. Specifically, he worries about the pressure on younger firms to perform. “I remember setting up an office in my 20s, and 30 years later, I bring a lot more experience to those decisions.”

Rockefeller believes that there is a long learning curve in the architecture business and that architects hit their stride in their 40s when they “have learned enough creatively, technically and legally, which means better buildings.” He believes this has meant better decisions for his firm as he has matured.

“I’ve learned how to hire. It’s a challenge to assemble a culture of workers who understand your ethical and moral approach. I want to work with people who have the client in mind and aren’t interested in building a monument to themselves.” His goal: “surround myself with the best and brightest who want excellence.”

That kind of team has helped Rockefeller Partners Architects produce work its founder is proud of. Although they have been successful in residential, commercial, and adaptive reuse, it is residential design that remains closest to Rockefeller’s heart.

“Custom residential is a blank slate and, particularly in California, clients are interested in design appropriate to the site. They are more likely to agree to our modernist approach. You can really work through the process of helping someone take their dreams and create a space for them.”

Adaptive reuse and sustainability also play a key role in the firm’s portfolio. Long committed to sustainability, Rockefeller acknowledges that for many clients it is now a must, and much of their work is LEED certified. The firm is currently involved with a 38-unit adaptive reuse warehouse-to-residential loft project, and hopes it will be Southern California’s first adaptive reuse LEED Gold certified project.

Despite professional acclaim, Rockefeller casts an experienced eye to measuring success. “I don’t want to grow a business too large. I’ve done that before and felt I was moving too far away from architecture and becoming just a marketer and administrator.” His perfect size: two junior partners, six or eight associates, and plenty of time to enjoy walks on the beach.
Growing up in Pebble Beach, it is not surprising that Brian Curley (CRP ’82) knew from the time he was 12 that he wanted to design golf courses – a straightforward career goal until he realized there was no school of golf course design.

In high school, Curley met golf course architect Robert Muir Graves, at that time one of only four or five architects making a living doing solely golf course design in California. Curley remembers Muir Graves’ advice: “You can have a great idea, but if you can’t get the ideas on paper in the form of a workable plan, it won’t happen.”

The importance of a technical background made an impression on Curley and led to his decision to attend Cal Poly. “I wanted to learn and also to be instantly employable. I thought that would happen with the technical background in City and Regional Planning at Cal Poly.”

Curley also credits his success to other early professional experiences – first, at Landmark Golf Company, where he was able to work with Pete Dye. Curley describes this time as a perfect storm: right people, right place, right time. “They had good sites and plenty of talent, and I was thrown into a frying pan and into a lot of really good work.” This included renowned courses such as PGA West and Kiawah Island.

During this period, he also met Lee Schmidt, who would join with him in 1999 to form Schmidt-Curley.

Curley firmly believes his master planning education gives him an edge because the company is invited to join projects early and then allowed to focus on the detail of the course. “There is a big difference between...
being handed a piece of property previously planned and told to make it a golf course versus being involved at day one. Not everyone is aware of issues, including terrain, and it is much better to be involved from the beginning where you can properly add those components into the mix.”

Much has changed since Curley was a young man dreaming of golf courses. In the early to mid '80s, the idea of a golf course community translated into an explosion of golf courses tied to residential construction. One California example: Palm Springs.

Early in the formation of their partnership, Curley and Schmidt decided to explore overseas opportunities. They have opened an office on Hainan Island in Haikou city, China, which Curley refers to as “the Hawaii of China.” Elsewhere around the globe, they are designing in Egypt, Thailand, Mexico, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam (near the famous Cu Chi tunnels on the Ho Chi Minh Trail).

“Overseas, they want the western model of the golf community,” says Curley, “and we are there to provide it.” They are responsible for 10 of the 12 courses at the Mission Hills Golf Course in Shenzhen, China, the world’s largest golf facility and host of the World Cup of Golf for the next 12 years on its Jose Maria Olazabal Course.

Schmidt-Curley acknowledge that top tier courses designed by a well known golf personality will always have a marketing edge, but they believe that there is a place for a design team to compete with the big golf names. This is what they have built their reputation on: providing a golf experience for all levels of play. “After all,” Curley says, “there are top tier golfers who forget that the course needs to be well designed for those who are not playing at their level.”

Clearly, they are doing many things right, as Schmidt-Curley has received numerous awards for their work, including Asian Golf Monthly’s first and third place “Best New Course in Asia” for Amata Spring Country Club in Bangkok and Chiangmai Highlands Golf Spa and Resort. The firm was runner up in the category of “Best Golf Course Architects in Asia” for the last two years.

Schmidt-Curley has designed more than 100 courses in 24 countries on four continents, with no intention of slowing down. It’s a far cry from the pace of life at Cal Poly when Curley spent his free time playing in bands at The World-Famous Darkroom and Tortilla Flats. On the other hand, maybe that was just the prep he needed.

Partners Brian Curley and Lee Schmidt


Curley with David Chu, chairman of China’s Mission Hills Group
Recognizing Our Generous Supporters

The College of Architecture and Environmental Design would like to thank alumni, parents, friends, foundations and corporations for their generous support. The students and faculty on these pages share what that support has meant to them.

“THE FRATESSA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP NOT ONLY HELPS ME PAY TUITION, BUT HAS ALSO HELPED ME PURSUE A MINOR IN ART. I AM VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND MY EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS.”

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“THE ROBERT HIFUMI ODO SCHOLARSHIP ALLOWED ME TO PURSUE A DESIGN INTERNSHIP ABROAD. THE EXPERIENCE HAS EXPANDED MY VIEW OF ARCHITECTURE INTO NEW AND CHALLENGING AREAS. I AM TRULY GRATEFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY."

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“The Minton Scholarship has allowed me to focus more on school and athletics, and allowed me the time to complete my minor. I am very thankful for the ability to spend my senior year in college focusing on what truly matters.”

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“STUDYING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AT CAL POLY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DREAM OF MINE, AND THE RRM DESIGN GROUP SCHOLARSHIP HAS ALLOWED ME TO DO THIS.”

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“THE SCHOLARSHIP FROM DARDEN ARCHITECTS HAS GIVEN ME THE ABILITY TO PURCHASE THE SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS AND MATERIALS RECOMMENDED BY MY PROFESSORS THAT I COULDN’T AFFORD IN THE PAST.”

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ARCHITECTURE
HANDS-ON LEARNING is a hallmark of a Cal Poly education and is especially important in the CAED. Your support of the Student Leadership Development Fund provides resources necessary to enhance our students’ educational experience.

The recognized accomplishments of students in all of the departments in the CAED can be attributed to Cal Poly’s learn-by-doing style of education and student participation in competitions, field trips, off-campus projects, national and regional conferences and senior projects. The Student Leadership Development Fund plays an important role in enhancing leadership opportunities for our students.

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BE A PART OF THEIR SUCCESS.
In late summer, over 1100 students, staff, faculty, administrators and professional organizations attended the 7th Annual UC/CSU/CCC Sustainability Conference hosted by Cal Poly and organized by CAED Professor Margot McDonald. The conference was the largest in California State University (CSU), University of California (UC) and California Community College (CCC) history.

Attendees explored ways to implement social, environmental and economic sustainability on our campuses statewide and prepare future generations for “green collar” jobs. The event was funded in part by the UC/CSU and CCC Investor Owned Utilities (IOU) Partnerships and numerous sponsors and exhibitors.

For more information, visit the post-conference Web site at www.sustainability.calpoly.edu.