On March 19-21, Cal Poly’s Landscape Architecture Department was proud to host LAbash 2015. LAbash is an annual North American landscape architecture student conference that fosters connection and education of the young landscape architecture community. Every year since 1970, a different university in the United States or Canada plans and hosts LAbash. Cal Poly was excited to host LAbash this year since the last time the event was held on the West Coast was in 1993 at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. This year’s theme was Genius SLOci, celebrating the spirit of place in landscape design. During the three-day event, 350 attendees, 50 professional presenters and expo representatives visited Cal Poly.

For two years, the LAbash 2015 Planning Committee worked to make this international conference a reality. The planning team consisted of twenty landscape architecture students, and two students outside the major. The student team planned and designed everything from the budget, sponsorship, graphics and marketing, website design, presentation recruitment, venue booking, planning evening social events, scheduling, and creating signage and decorations for the events. Most of our committee members had no experience with event planning, but everyone rose to the challenge and helped each other along the way.
LABash 2015 officially kicked off on Thursday, March 19. Registration and the expo were held in the Simpson Strong-Tie Building. That day, students from as close as Cal Poly, Pomona and University of California, Davis, to as far as University of Montreal and Pennsylvania State University arrived in San Luis Obispo. In the afternoon, the LAbash Opening Ceremony was held in Chumash Auditorium and featured the American Society of Landscape Architect's National President, Richard Zweifel, as the keynote speaker.

Friday was filled with presentations, panel discussions, design charrettes, and skills workshops. We also hosted two tours on Friday; one kayaking trip to Morro Bay and a tour of the Wine and Viticulture unit on campus. Lunch and dinner were held in the M.A.C. gym in the Recreation Center. During the meals, all of the attendees gathered to listen to keynote speaker Kona Gray from EDSA, at lunch, and Lorie Olin, at dinner. Our Friday night social event was a beach bonfire at Oceano Dunes. The bonfire had multiple bonfire pits, s’mores, and Cal Poly student musicians and bands performing. For some of the LAbash attendees, the bonfire was the first time they had ever seen the Pacific Ocean!

Saturday’s tours were of the Poly Canyon native plant community and the architecture structures center, and a tour of the Leaning Pine Arboretum and Horse Canyon. Keynote presenters were Cal Poly alumna, Susan Van Atta at lunch and Mia Lehrer at dinner. The LAbash 2015 closing ceremony was held at SLO Brew and included karaoke and awards and prizes given to student attendees.

Overall, LAbash 2015 was a huge success and we are all so thankful to have had the opportunity to be a part of it. We are very thankful to all our guest presenters, our sponsors, all the Cal Poly faculty and staff and alumni who supported us, and to the student Planning Committee. If you are interested in learning more about LAbash, you can visit at our website at labash2015.com.