You, as individuals and as political science (POLS) and master of public policy (MPP) alumni, are key to our ability to enhance the department’s educational environment and to increase opportunities for students and faculty to learn, develop and create. Your participation and support of the department assist with student travel to conferences, class field trips to Sacramento, faculty research and travel, independent and faculty-directed student research opportunities, and more.

We welcomed more than 110 new undergraduate students and 11 graduate students this year. Even as our student body continues to grow, we strive to provide high-impact learning experiences that exemplify Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing philosophy: small classes, small group research experiences, service learning experiences, internships, study abroad and creative class activities.

I have been a member of the faculty since 2007 and became chair of the department in September 2015. I am consistently inspired by our faculty’s knowledge, abilities and dedication to the discipline, their communities and their students. And I am impressed with our students every day — their passion for understanding the world, their dedication to improving their communities, and their energy and zeal for what they do.

This year, our newsletter focuses on political science “in the field” — showcasing examples of all the great things our students and faculty do outside of the classroom. I hope you enjoy it and are as inspired as I am while reading these stories!

Again, thank you for your past support and encouragement of the department. Please stop by or call when you are in the area. I look forward to visiting with you.

Best Regards,

Elizabeth Lowham, Ph.D.
Chair

Meet Our New Tenure-Track Faculty

Amelia Andrews
Martin Battle
Jennifer Denbow
It is my pleasure to once again take a moment to discuss the good efforts of the Political Science Alumni Advisory Board. This has been a year of expansion and growth for the board. We added additional seats and brought in some new faces to fill seats that opened up. We have continued our efforts to mentor students by making ourselves available and by producing events of interest to students as they move through their educational trajectory. For example, under the “How Does It Really Work” series, board members produced a “Campaign Experience” panel and fair where candidates and representatives from state and local races from both major parties talked with students about their experiences and opportunities to get involved with campaigns, as well as an event about finding fulfilling careers in Washington, D.C. In addition, the board continues to lend support to the excellent student-produced political science journal Paideia. Now in its third edition, it continues to gain recognition and prestige. The board also continues to encourage donations to the Political Science Department and the new Master of Public Policy fund. As you know, in this age of shrinking educational budgets, this support makes a variety of important things possible for our students — everything from having the funds that allow Mock Trial students to attend conferences to helping with the printing costs of Paideia. So, if you haven’t made a donation to the department recently, please do. It is a great time to be a Cal Poly Political Science Department alumna/us. The department is vibrant with both new and seasoned faculty doing interesting and meaningful work. They share a strong sense of purpose in their own work — in the way they put the students’ educational experiences first and by enjoying supportive collegial relationships. We can take pride in the experience we had and the experience of students today.

The Political Science Alumni Advisory Board’s purpose is to collaborate with and support the department in providing opportunities for mentorships, internships, career advice, and fellowship/networking among students and alumni. The board represents a wide range of alumni in terms of geographic location, background and career, which makes it a very enjoyable group to be a part of. This year we are working on creating events and activities to bring alumni and students together and seeking out more of our graduates to increase our talent and resource bank. If you have any ideas for social gatherings (cultural and sports events, book signings, company tours, presentations, interesting speakers, etc.) in your area that you think fellow alumni would be drawn to, please send your suggestions to: politicalscience@calpoly.edu.
Awards 2014-15

Faculty

2015 CLA Club Council Professor of the Year Award: Shelley Hurt

City of Pismo Beach’s Digital Engagement Strategy Grant Award: Mike Latner

CLA Circle of Giving Faculty Scholarship Grant: Jean Williams and Ning Zhang

CLA Scholarship Support for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty: Ron Den Otter, Matt Moore, Jean Williams and Ning Zhang

Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities Grant: Ning Zhang

Student

College of Liberal Arts: Outstanding Senior Recognition Award: Ashley Stephens

College of Liberal Arts Award for Contributions to the Public Image of the University: Lauren Cool

George and Janice Clucas Awards: Roy Aviram, Stacy Okoro and Michael Zamora

John H. Lynn Political Science Paper Awards

Master of Public Policy Outstanding Service Award: Sheila Mann and Sydney Tanimoto

Undergraduate Outstanding Service Award: Ashley Stephens

Academic Excellence Award: Cody Pajunen and Ashley Stephens

Graduate Academic Excellence Award: Ben Anderson

Master of Public Policy Paper: Ben Anderson and Aleah Klingenberg

Undergraduate Research Paper: Emily Matthews

Senior Project: Casey Higginbotham and Cody Pajunen

Undergraduate Paper: Tyler Creasman and Sarah Glendon

45 YEARS AT CAL POLY

This year we celebrate Professor Allen Settle’s 45th year of service to Cal Poly. Settle was one of the first faculty members hired after political science became a stand-alone degree at Cal Poly. He has provided crucial institutional memory and continuity across several decades of rapid change, both within the department and across the university. In addition to serving four terms as mayor of San Luis Obispo and five terms as a city council member, Settle has served on the Airport Land Use Commission, the Local Agency Formation Committee, and the League of Cities Revenue and Taxation Committee.

Settle’s acumen about the workings of local government and the practice of politics have provided abundant fodder for classroom experiences and learning. Students regularly comment on his passion for and knowledge about politics, and his ability to make politics and political science “real” in the classroom. Settle’s life and career at Cal Poly epitomize Learn by Doing as well as a well-lived life.

This year we celebrate Professor Allen Settle’s remarkable service to Cal Poly. The faculty, staff and students thank him for all he has done for the POLS Department, Cal Poly and the community.
Master of Public Policy Internship

— Joi Sullivan, MPP ’16

Last summer I interned for Parsons Corp. in Washington, D.C. Parsons is a medium-sized government contractor that emphasizes developing infrastructure both within and outside the U.S. I worked directly for the company’s vice president for government relations, who also serves as the company’s lobbyist. My responsibilities included researching legislation and corresponding with various members of Congress to ensure the office was properly prepared for any related future meetings and events. Additionally, a fellow intern and I were tasked with creating a matrix that the company’s PAC would use to make decisions regarding campaign donations. To meet this need, I oversaw the development of a software-based Web application that measured how “valuable” each member of Congress was to the company. This application provided a priority list that was based on several equations we developed, one for each business unit within the company. This project, called ConDAT, effectively consumed the majority of my time over the summer.

Other highlights of working in Washington, D.C., included attending meetings and events with my boss and meeting Senator Tester of Montana and Senator Hirono of Hawaii. I also attended numerous events hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Furthermore, seeing such incredible architecture and symbols of our nation’s history every day was an unbelievable experience.

Working for Parsons was a unique experience because I got a taste of what working for a private company was like versus working for the federal government. Developing the Web application ConDAT was one of my favorite parts of my job, as it presented numerous challenges and demonstrated how my classes in the Master of Public Policy program are preparing me for a career. The greatest part of my summer was being in the midst of the people who work to make our nation run well and being able to discuss ideas regarding the fundamental principles our nation was founded on. It truly was an experience unlike any I have had before.
Over the past summer, I worked with social sciences Professor James Keese on a follow-up research study. We evaluated the success of a development project in which Cal Poly students traveled to rural villages near Cusco, Peru, to install improved cook stoves. The installation of new cook stoves improve indoor air quality by replacing open fires inside homes with more efficient stoves with chimneys. Not only does this improve health, particularly for women and children, it also reduces pressure on forest resources.

The development project is run by a local non-governmental organization (NGO) called ProWorld. The survey I helped conduct focused on improved cook-stove adopters and non-adopters, in order to determine whether the stove was being successfully adopted and why. Although the survey was overseen by the Social Sciences Department, the experience was eye opening for me as a political science major. Especially interesting to me was the power structure within the villages, the diffusion of new technologies within those villages, and the relationship between the locals, the local NGO and the Peruvian government.

The project itself allowed me to explore and combine my interests in Latin America, international development and grassroots movements in order to see political science as more than theory, law and politics. My interest in global development was piqued after discovering the success of this project: a whopping 70 percent adoption rate of the improved cook stove. I realized that political science is intricately related to issues of culture, religion, demography and geography.

After realizing that the Peruvian government was installing its own improved cook stove in the same villages as Cal Poly’s partner NGO, my interest in the subject increased. I noticed there was a great lack of cooperation between two institutions that share similar goals. I began doing personal research to find out what kind of relationships exist between national governments and NGOs and what role NGOs play in politics. I quickly learned that the increasing role of NGOs, especially in developing and democratizing countries, is raising issues of sovereignty.

Aurora Chavez works in Peru with social sciences Professor James Keese on an internship with the Latin American Studies program.

This project epitomized the Learn by Doing motto of Cal Poly. As a political science undergraduate, I never imagined I would have the opportunity to experience things I had learned in lecture or read about in books. The project was not only crucial in the development of my interest in higher education and research, but also in my love and pride of being a Cal Poly student.
The small elevator to the apartment fit just one person and lacked a door. The stairs were covered with spoiled food and garbage; stray cats lingered underfoot.

Walking down the corridor, I discovered my housing for the next two months would be a flat with a single kitchen and a bathroom shared with 13 other women. These circumstances were certainly not what I had expected. Pulling out a small mattress, I made my spot for the next two months. Then looking out the bedroom window, I observed countless homeless families lying on the street as they tried to find food for their children. I was struck by how lucky I was to even have a roof over my head. Tired of hearing myself and the other interns complain, I realized my experience in Egypt would depend on what I made of it.

During my two months in Egypt, I interned with the Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of Childhood Conditions (EFACC). Despite the everyday heat topping 100 degrees and no air conditioning, the work atmosphere was often relaxed and friendly. My favorite time was during lunch, as work would end early to prepare for a meal shared by everyone. Pita bread in hand, discussions would inevitably turn to which Egyptian soccer player was the best.

At EFACC, I was assigned to create a project proposal to offset child marriage and promote reproductive health in Egypt. The proposal was to be submitted to the Canadian Foundation for the Local Initiatives for further consideration and evaluation. Though I was nervous about working on such a large project, I found the policy briefs I’d written in my political science classes were of great assistance. Applying my previous research and using my papers as guides enabled me to experience the realistic and practical challenges of policy making.

Returning to the U.S., however, I was troubled about my work with the non-governmental organization (NGO) and questioned my own perceptions of Egypt. A two-month internship in any country, I realized, is too short to properly understand the hardships the locals face. Interestingly, an ethnic studies class I took the following quarter focused on the role of volunteering. As the course progressed, new perspectives on NGOs and volunteer work led me to reflect and build upon my knowledge of Egypt. Likewise, many classes I’ve taken at Cal Poly have enriched my overall ideas of the world.

In retrospect, I now acknowledge how closely class material is tied to real-life work and experiences. Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing philosophy has truly made my career goals integral to my education.

Egypt is special. Even when considering the corruption and underdevelopment, each country has its own unique beauty. On my return to the U.S., I most missed Egypt’s third-world aspects and Muslim and Arabic cultures. I recalled those characteristics as most beautiful. Those attributes, without comparison in the U.S., had me thinking my time in Egypt was a fantasy, a shimmering mirage in the desert. Though Egypt’s chaos was initially disturbing, I gradually found beauty in its imperfections. In such frailties, I found human warmth, authenticity and reality.
I am a second year Master of Public Policy student focusing on veteran underemployment.

I am also the owner/operator of Pepper Creek Family Farms, a 15-acre sustainable farm in Arroyo Grande, Calif. Additionally, I am working with Cal Poly to establish a beginning farmer training program designed to train military veterans and local, socially disadvantaged farm laborers in sustainable farming.

Since my retirement from the Army, I have turned my efforts toward veteran advocacy and sustainable agriculture production. I am an active member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition and the first farmer on the Central Coast to be Homegrown by Heroes certified. My passion for both sustainable farming and veteran advocacy shaped my focus in agricultural programs that support veterans transitioning into agriculture, which led to Cal Poly’s Farmers Experiential Education and Development (FEED) Program.

The FEED Program is an agricultural training program developed to educate and prepare individuals who aspire to be farmers. The FEED Program’s mission is to develop a new generation of farmers to feed the world and — Morgan Boyd, MPP ’16
support their local communities. By applying Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing educational model, the overall goal of FEED is to increase the number of beginning farmers across the U.S. by preparing military veterans and socially disadvantaged farm laborers to successfully own and/or operate new farms. The program is a 12-week, non-credit certificate program designed to immerse students in a hands-on learning experience that will provide them with the knowledge, skills and tools required to become successful farmers, while also providing a supportive environment to ensure their overall success in the agricultural industry. To ensure that the students are fully prepared, FEED will focus on four traditional agricultural practices with a strong emphasis on agricultural sustainability: (1) small farm business management, (2) hydroponic and greenhouse production, (3) traditional row crop production, and (4) orchard production. Finally, the program is specifically designed to provide postgraduate mentorship throughout the first year of the beginning farmer’s career, which will create a foundation for long-term business sustainability.

We are preparing to launch the first course in March 2017. Since the program’s infancy, Professor Elizabeth Lowham has been an ardent supporter of my development of the FEED program. In addition to supporting my early efforts, Lowham connected me with the appropriate people and aided in collaborative efforts to ensure that I was taking the appropriate steps to reach out to the right individuals on campus. In addition, everyone involved in the MPP program has been extremely supportive of the project and offered advice on how to ensure that the program is met with success. Furthermore, my MPP education has enabled me to collaborate with various stakeholders and to understand the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s policies surrounding farmer-training programs.

LEARN MORE
If you would like to learn more about the FEED program or contribute to its development, please contact Morgan Boyd at mqboyd@calpoly.edu.
My summer began with me feeling confined as I donned a button-down, blazer and pencil skirt. I was quickly given a whirlwind tour of the Senate, House and Capitol buildings.

My tour guide was walking incredibly fast, and I was having a hard time keeping up in the heels I was not used to wearing. This was the start of my summer as a policy intern in U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz’s Washington, D.C., office.

Though I was assigned three legislative aids as my mentors, the highlight of my summer was working on foreign affairs. Every day, I was responsible for compiling a news update on the ongoing Iran nuclear negotiations. I was in constant disbelief that I had the opportunity to apply my global politics classes to my work. My final update summarized the details of the historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and I was later informed that it went right into the hands of the senator.

By the end of the summer, I had heard Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg speak in the Supreme
Court; sat in the front row as Colin Powell and Madeleine Albright were interviewed; watched a live filming of “Meet the Press,” where I personally asked Chuck Todd a question; and attended a lecture by Beau Willimon, the writer of “House of Cards.” I physically ran into John McCain in the hall, and while watching the Senate floor, witnessed Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren giggle and clasp each other’s hands.

I then traded in my suit for a pair of shorts and a T-shirt, got on a plane and flew to Vanuatu, a Pacific Island nation in the South Pacific Ocean. There I met up with Professor Laura Hosman to lead a two-day training for the Peace Corps on our SPELL devices. SPELL, or Solar Powered Electronic Learning Library, is a solar-powered computer server preloaded with educational content. The device is made mostly with components we ordered from Amazon.com and is not much larger than a textbook. I began working on SPELL in Hosman’s Global Synthesis of Liberal Arts and Engineering class at Cal Poly.

The Peace Corps was interested in SPELL as a tool to use in elementary schools throughout the Pacific region that were without electricity or Internet. Twenty-five Peace Corps volunteers stationed throughout Vanuatu’s 22 different islands paid their way to attend the training, believing that SPELL would empower their communities’ schools. To see a project go from a classroom at Cal Poly to a training room across the world was an amazing experience. Hearing the unique challenges the volunteers face in their communities and their vision of what they thought SPELL could do for them, not only brought the project to life, but also made it personal.

I went from connecting with policymakers in Washington, D.C., and getting an inside look into Congress, to traveling from village to village in Vanuatu and hearing about the tragedies from Cyclone Pam and the struggles of living in such a remote location. Connecting with people from another culture, gaining a better understanding of their lives, and building relationships made SPELL more than just a school project. These experiences represent two very different fields of political science. As a senior contemplating postgraduate work, I thought I would have to choose which type of “connection” I preferred. Instead, I have decided that the two experiences enhance each other, and I hope to balance the two in my career as a political scientist.
THE WILDS OF SACRAMENTO
— Michael Latner

Learn by Doing for students in Professor Mike Latner’s California Politics course included a field trip in December to the State Capitol in Sacramento, where they presented analyses of legislative performance to members of the Legislative Analyst’s Office, Department of Finance Committee staff, and the Governor’s Office. Groups of students used the Digital Democracy platform developed at the Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy to study the operation of committees in the 2015-16 legislative session in order to identify factors that shape policy outputs within the legislative process.

With assistance from state Sen. Bill Monning, students had access to a committee hearing room for a full day, during which they gave presentations on policy topics, including climate change, agriculture, health care, transportation, education and incarceration. The student presentations shed light on how the legislative process impacts the design and implementation of policy solutions, and they received critical feedback from experts in each of these areas. A number of these experts were Cal Poly alumni, inspired by seeing the next generation of Mustangs preparing to take the reins of public service and leadership. This trip was made possible through generous contributions from the Political Science Department, the City and Regional Planning Department and the Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy.

THE MOCK TRIALS
— Jonathan Lampkin, PHIL ’16

When the judge walked in, the room quieted and everyone stood. At one table, Cal Poly’s Mock Trial team sat representing the prosecution. The University of Southern California’s three-member attorney team sat at a similarly positioned table on the other end of the room. Immediately, round three of the annual UCLAssic Mock Trial Tournament commenced. The subtly tense energy in the room spoke to the fact that it would be a closely matched round.

Every year the American Mock Trial Association releases a case packet to undergraduates around the nation. Universities field teams that compete during rounds that last about three hours, during which one college represents the prosecution and the other represents the defense.

Students prepare for these tournaments by learning about case law, statutes, affidavits and the rules of evidence, which are largely identical to the Federal Rules of Evidence. They do this by enrolling in POLS 295,
After an entire quarter of learning about the United Nations, Cal Poly Model United Nations (MUN) students are eager to dive into their winter and summer conferences. This fall, students gained MUN experience in Professor Craig Arceneaux’s class by simulating the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) agency. The topic of discussion was the Syrian refugee crisis and what the UNHCR could do to help alleviate the situation. Throughout the 10 weeks in committee, students passed three resolutions that included immediate humanitarian aid as well as the creation of a United Nations Refugee Protection and Security Force to assist Syrian refugees.

In addition, this year students will be fortunate enough to travel in August to Brasilia, Brazil, for a weeklong conference held by Americas Model United Nations. Ten Cal Poly students will prepare to test their knowledge, teamwork and persuasive skills on an international level.
Matthew Moore

‘Buddhism and Political Theory’

My past work has focused on issues of value pluralism, the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and political theory as a profession. I’ve sort of followed my nose from topic to topic as different issues caught my attention. I have a personal interest in Buddhism and meditation. I’ve been a regular meditator since 2005, and I started to get curious about whether the Buddha had ever said anything about politics or government. It took me a while to figure out what the major collections of the Buddha’s teachings were, and also to find earlier scholarship on Buddhism and politics. The Buddha’s teachings take up about 12,000 pages in translation, and there’s a lot of repetition. I’ve read a big chunk, and I’ve found all of the passages that are relevant to politics. Oxford University Press will publish “Buddhism and Political Theory” in April 2016.

Ron Den Otter

‘In Defense of Plural Marriage’

My book explores the issue of how civil marriage ought to be defined, with a particular focus on plural marriage. My intention isn’t to defend any particular kind of plural intimate relationship. Rather, I argue that the U.S. Constitution should require states — which give marriage licenses to couples that meet the valid eligibility requirements — also give them to thruples and moresomes. What matters is whether plural marriage enthusiasts are being denied the kind of marriage they want to have without adequate legal justification. For me, the issue isn’t whether someone has good or bad personal reasons for wanting to marry at all or have some kind of plural marriage. As long as he or she is a consenting adult, the state should be indifferent to his or her reasons; they are his or hers and as such, are entitled to be respected. The point of the book is to explain why the arguments against legal recognition of plural marriage aren’t particularly strong. In fact, they resemble those that have been used in the case against same-sex marriage. Cambridge University Press published “In Defense of Plural Marriage” in 2015.
Jennifer Denbow

‘Governed through Choice: Autonomy, Technology and the Politics of Reproduction’

I argue in the book that the idea that individuals have choice and control over their reproduction actually often heightens outside scrutiny of individual decisions. The idea of choice has such appeal and sway in our society, but simply increasing choices doesn’t always or necessarily increase an individual’s autonomy. For example, having more choices can actually increase pressure on an individual to choose in the “right” way. This makes it possible for experts and state actors to judge some people as bad at governing themselves when they make reproductive decisions that challenge dominant ways of thinking. I also argue that, although autonomy is a really appealing idea in some ways, it often plays a role in justifying pretty horrific practices — like sterilizing incarcerated women, for example. The reasoning goes that it is appropriate and beneficial to impose expert understandings of appropriate decision making on individuals who are seen as lacking the ability to make good decisions. In practice, individuals are often only thought to have autonomy if they make the “right” decisions.

At the same time, however, I also think that there is something really appealing and potentially emancipatory about some understandings of autonomy. In fact, there’s an alternative understanding that focuses on autonomy as challenging norms and hierarchies. And so the book looks at that understanding as well and examines its utility for reproductive law and politics. NYU Press published “Governed through Choice: Autonomy, Technology and the Politics of Reproduction” in July 2015.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS


ALUMNI updates

Kelli Seybolt, (POLS ‘90) director of international affairs and foreign policy advisor to the commandant of the Coast Guard, came to Cal Poly to inform students about career and internship opportunities in Washington, D.C. Pictured left to right, Shari Mullen (POLS ‘82), Elizabeth Lowham and Kelli Seybolt.

2010s

Lance Iunker (POLS ’15) — I was wounded in Iraq in 2007. I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Cal Poly using my G.I. Bill. The Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy at Cal Poly hired me as a project director, where I created a veterans project for the institute called Operation Headstrong. Learn more about the project at operationheadstrong.com. Learn more about the institute at iatpp.calpoly.edu.

Cody Pajunen (POLS ’15) — I joined the U.S. Coast Guard and began basic training in Cape May, N.J., in December 2015. I’m not sure where I will be sent afterward, but I will try to join the maritime law enforcement community. While waiting to leave, I worked with an organization that sponsors Syrian refugees and Syrian schools.

Chris Connell (POLS ’14) — I am in my second year at the USC Gould School of Law. I have a summer associate position lined up for the coming summer at Ropes and Gray LLP in San Francisco.

Joe Vacovsky (POLS ’13) — I work at MindBody as a staff software engineer and have been at the company just under three years.

Candice Custodio (POLS ’11) — I was recently married in Paso Robles to alumnus (and my college sweetheart) Ruben Custodio (Business Communication, ’11). I’m an account manager at Edmunds.com and am working to become a full member of the Hollywood Rotary club.

Maili Winther (MPP ’11) — In 2013, I accepted a position with The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. I work as a grants associate in the School of Medicine’s Office of Research Administration. I recently attended the launch
party for Cal Poly’s Washington, D.C., alumni chapter and had a great time.

2000s

Hans Poschman (MPP ’09) — Currently I work at the Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Policy at Cal Poly as the fellowship and programs director. This year we launched our open government platform DigitalDemocracy.org, where a user can search by bill, speaker, hearing or keyword and pull up exact moments in videos and watch that moment, or share it out on social media. Additionally, the site provides access to information on lobbyists, campaign finance, bequested payments and gifts.

Edmond Woo (MPP ’08) — Since I graduated, I’ve been working as an intelligence specialist with one of the ABC agencies of the U.S. government. The work I do primarily includes analytical work related to counter-drugs and high-value targets. I also previously dabbled in Internet investigations and counter-terrorism cases. I truly think the education I received from Cal Poly helped me obtain this kind of work and has surely benefited my analytical thinking and work habits. The degree program opened my eyes to the variety of work available to someone in this degree field. Although I already knew the type of field I wanted to enter prior to enrolling, I am sure there were tons of opportunities elsewhere for someone with my qualifications.

1990s

Kelley Lashley (POLS ’95) — I graduated Santa Clara Law School in 1999. I now co-own a law firm with offices in Pasadena and Westlake Village. We specialize in estate planning, administration and tax. I am a pro bono settlement officer for the Los Angeles County Superior Court and serve on the Executive Committee of the board of directors for Five Acres, a nonprofit that provides adoption and foster care services for the greater Los Angeles area. I also serve on the Cal Poly Athletic Director’s Advisory Council, chair the Cal Poly Varsity Club board of directors and serve on the Cal Poly Alumni Association board of directors as director of athletics. I am married to wrestling alumnus Dan Lashley (Kinesiology, ’96). We have two kids and live in Simi Valley, Calif.

Chris Trapani (POLS ’90) — I am the founder and CEO of Sereno Group. My daughter, Gabi Trapani, is a second year business major at Cal Poly (my wife is Kirsten Trapani (Nutritional Science, ’91)). I have been honored to have been engaged in supporting Cal Poly’s vision by joining the President’s Council of Advisors. My business, Sereno Group, was most recently honored as the 31st most Charitable Corporate Giver (in Silicon Valley) by the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

1980s

Robert R. Burnett (POLS ’80) — I have been employed for the last 34 years with Citizens Business Bank in Arcadia, Calif., as vice president service manager. I have been married to Rosemary for 13 years. We have two daughters, Amanda, 24, and Paige, 22. After 34 years of continuous service, I retired this past June with the rank of battalion chief from the Sierra Madre Fire Department. We celebrated with a trip to Maui. I joined the Sierra Madre Kiwanis Club this past year, and I will be starting a two-year term as a board member of the Sierra Madre Creative Arts Group, a nonprofit philanthropic organization dedicated to bettering the lives of local youth.

KEEP US UPDATED

We’d love to hear from you and keep you connected to Cal Poly POLS! If you have an update you’d like to share, please email politicalscience@calpoly.edu. If you’re interested in being more involved with the department, please consider becoming a Friend of the Board. You can get more information on the alumni board at politicalscience.calpoly.edu/alumni/alumni-board.
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— NICOLE ANGELINI, MPP ’17
With your generous gifts, the department will continue to give students the tools and knowledge they need to become future leaders and make a positive impact. Here’s how your gifts will help the Political Science Department. It will:

- Increase the number and amount of scholarships
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- Fund Mock Trial and Model United Nations
- Support the student publication Paideia, providing students with a publication platform for their research
- Support student research assistantships and Earn by Doing opportunities
- Fund faculty research and conference opportunities, enabling faculty to contribute knowledge to the world and bring leading-edge information and techniques back to campus

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