

CONNECTIONS

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN | CAL POLY | FALL 2009

RECOGNIZING ALUMNI
TALENT
Planning | Designing | Constructing



Dean R. Thomas Jones

Dean's Message

Keeping the Experience Real

Well-rounded education
is more important
than ever today

This has been a year of great challenges for so many of our alumni and friends, as our professions have taken much of the brunt from the economic slide. Yet these times also remind us of the conditions that shaped so many of the careers of our graduates during other similar periods. Tough times reveal that Cal Poly alums have the right skills to endure and prevail when compared to grads from other institutions.

It is heartening to know from our conversations with you that the CAED and the Cal Poly brand are still considered highly, and that firms headed by graduates from other universities still place a premium on hiring our students.

We learned from many firms we visited this year that both our professional colleagues and our communities are enthusiastic about our emphasis on preparing all majors to create sustainable communities, use innovative technology, practice global engagement, and embrace interdisciplinary collaboration.

Many of our alumni are in leadership roles in one or more of the four major areas of emphasis, and our educational model encourages partnerships with practitioners and civic leaders so we can ground our students in current and evolving real-world conditions.

Founding Dean George Hasslein was legendary for his bus tours to major offices and sites, and for his guest visitors on the campus. That tradition has been expanded to include an impressive breadth of off-campus projects, tours and programs, community-benefiting coursework, and a wide array of visiting lecturers, critics and guest faculty from around the world.

These program features are only possible because we have the time and talent

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THE WORLD.

of our alumni and friends behind us, and they provide the enhancements we cannot support on diminishing state funding.

In this year's magazine, we celebrate five graduates who exemplify the variety of paths a successful career can take. Hopefully they will inspire our current students to prevail as well. We have included pictures of some of our amazing students, so you can share our pride in the spirit and substance of our unique educational approach.

Quite simply, where it matters most, I believe we are still "winning, hands down, because we practice hands-on."

R. THOMAS JONES, AIA

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On the Cover

Architecture alumnus Lorcan O'Herlihy designed the Formosa 1140 building in West Hollywood. Read about Lorcan's career on page 10.

PHOTO BY LAWRENCE ANDERSON



The CAED Strategic Plan comprises (clockwise from top left): interdisciplinary teamwork; sustainability; innovative technology; and a global perspective.

A Bountiful Program

CAED Strategic Plan ensures that coursework brims with enriching experiences

Global engagement. Innovative technology. Interdisciplinary collaboration. Sustainable communities. These four touch points of the College's strategic plan are firmly grounded in an intersection of past, present and future.

Global engagement has gone beyond overseas coursework and now includes undergraduate senior and graduate thesis projects, student service projects and faculty research.

New equipment and the construction of the Simpson Strong-Tie Materials

Demonstration Lab point to the importance placed on innovative technology.

Interdisciplinarity has long been a hallmark of the College, and it is now expanding to include a greater cross section of the students in a studio or lab setting.

At the crossroads of these is the work done in studio and as research to create sustainable communities for California and beyond.

Dean R. Thomas Jones ticks off a list of projects underway or recently completed, each compelling evidence that the strategic themes are interconnected with the

College's program. "Ask about global engagement and the answer will include sustainability. Or ask about technology and hear about a project that includes collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach to reaching into our local communities."

Ultimately, the four points of the college's strategic plan point in one direction: creating sustainable communities through the education of the next generation of planning, design and construction professionals.

For examples of other projects currently underway, see the photos on pages 14-17.



Austin Hearst (left) and the tower's architect, Lord Norman Foster

The historic Hearst Corporation Building and a view of it today from the original base to its new tower (above)

The building reflects the Manhattan skyline and horizon (opposite).

Crowning Glory

Decades after its groundbreaking, Hearst Building soars to new heights

Each fall, students from the CAED freshman dormitory gather for a field trip to San Simeon and Hearst Castle. The West Coast icon of the American entrepreneurial family is well known to most of the students, as is the family's role as sponsors of the College's Hearst Lecture Series. What the students may not know is that Austin Hearst (LA '78), grandson of William Randolph Hearst, once saw the castle from their viewpoint: as a Cal Poly CAED student.

Today, Austin is an executive with Hearst Entertainment and on the Hearst Corporation Board of Directors. In his New York office with spectacular views of Manhattan, he took time to reflect on his experiences at Cal Poly as a graduate of the Landscape Architecture program.

"The most important thing in every kind of problem solving is the process," Austin says, adding that in a design school that is the overt focus: how to think through a problem to achieve solutions. "At Cal Poly I learned that there are multiple paths to an answer and should one not work, then you change paths. Learn by doing isn't a one-sided approach; it means success and failure, lessons that will guide a young person through the years ahead."

While Austin's path took him into the family business and away from landscape architecture, he is proud of his role as co-chair of the selection committee for the new Hearst Corporation Building in New York City. Conceived by Joseph Urban, the original project was halted in 1928 by the Great Depression, and the Hearst

Corporation was left with a base missing its tower. Austin says that it was always a dream of the family to gather the Hearst employees in one building and, while some might find the prospect of building on a historic monument daunting, Austin thought of it as an opportunity.

Admittedly, it was an opportunity fraught with difficulty as the building's landmark status meant the design couldn't change any part of the exterior. As a result, an important criteria in the selection of the architect was experience in bringing together historic fabric and contemporary design. From the beginning Austin felt Lord Norman Foster and Foster + Partners was the perfect choice.

"The question was how do we convince everyone else on the committee? Norman Foster was not an obvious part of the Hearst tradition, which is a conservative one architecturally, but we do have a tradition of hiring outstanding architects, so that had to be the selling point."

Austin considers the process, from selection of Foster + Partners to completion of the tower, the embodiment of the Hearst Corporation and therefore, of his family. Finished in 2006, the building was the first skyscraper to be constructed after 9/11 in Manhattan. It was designed to consume significantly less energy than a conventional office building and brings together, for the first time, all of the Hearst New York employees under one roof.

"Typically in New York, a developer leads the process and then finds a tenant." Not so with the Hearst family, which has a strong sense of ownership of place coupled with relationships to architects.

Austin says they have learned not to set out to build a legacy: "We do the best we can given the situation." Then he adds that in this situation the building went beyond expectations and admits that, yes, it will leave a legacy.

The CAED Hearst Lecture Series is supported by a generous contribution from the Hearst Foundation. For information, visit <http://www.caed.calpoly.edu/news-events/hearst-lectures.html#lecture-5>.





Among Wally's projects are SAIC Corporate Headquarters (right) and the Pacific Grove Tower (above)



Campus & Community

Wally Gordon tackles school and public sector projects at DLM Architects

Growing up, Wallace “Wally” Gordon (B.S. ’78/ B.Arch ’79) knew he wanted to be an architect. He also knew where he wanted to go to school: UC Berkeley. Looking back, he credits two men with sending him to Cal Poly.

“I was a senior in high school in Monterey and went to work for architects George Rhoda and Fred Keeble. Fred took me under his wing and said I would be better served by going to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.”

The remarkable part of this advice was the strength of George Rhoda’s connection to Berkeley: He was a descendant of one of Berkeley’s “12 Disciples” – the first 12 graduates. By the time Wally finished his own investigation of Cal Poly, he knew it was the right place for him and didn’t even bother applying to “the other school.”



Wally remembers Cal Poly’s appeal: the focus on a strong undergraduate education, a collegial community, and the close connection between the faculty and students. As a high school senior he met Cal Poly architecture alumni, and listening to them reinforce the notion of where he wanted to go. He also found a place where he could explore his interest in both

Wally (standing) returned to Cal Poly in 2007 as a visiting instructor and continues to visit as a guest critic.

design and construction, opting for dual majors in architecture and construction engineering until the degree nomenclature changed and he made “a fork-in-the-road decision.” Ultimately, he chose the new B.Arch.

Today, as president of Deems Lewis McKinley Architects (DLM) in San Francisco, Wally brings his early interest in relationships to the practice. DLM is committed to architecture that has a personal meaning. To accomplish this, they involve the principals of the firm from the beginning to the end of all projects. Since the early 1980s the firm has specialized in education and public sector work for which they have won numerous CASH/ AIA Design Awards.

Throughout his professional career Wally has continued a close relationship with campus and the College.

The entrance to the Technology Lab at Newark Memorial High School (right)

“There was a special student dynamic when I was there in the '70s and I see it now when I visit campus.”

This year, the Cal Poly Alumni Association named Wally an Honored Alumnus, the university's highest honor. In his acceptance speech Wally reinforced his belief in the lasting impact of the education he received.

“The quality of an architect is closely linked to the quality of our education,” he said. “Possessing a Cal Poly Architecture degree immediately validates my credentials with clients and among all design professionals. Whenever the issue of educational background is broached by a client and I inform them I am a graduate of Cal Poly Architecture, it's a done deal.”

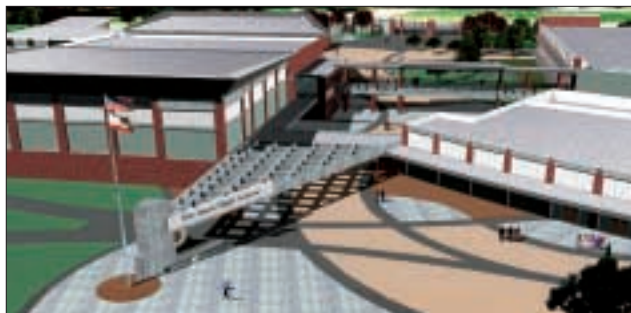
In addition to serving on the Dean's Advisory Council, Wally has been engaged with the College as a visiting instructor, joining CAED faculty members Nick Watry, Barbara Jackson and Will Benedict as a guest instructor in spring 2007.

“The students are not so different than we were; it's the tools that are different.” He admires how today's digital tools allow students to accelerate into a project. “They could articulate an idea and get it out there for others to see in a hurry.”

Teaching as part of an interdisciplinary team, Wally was amazed at how difficult it was to distinguish between architecture or construction management students on the teams. At the same time, and speaking as a principal in a design firm, Wally sees that the digital age means there is less interest in getting something right the first time.

“Is this a reason I want to stay connected with education? Definitely one of the reasons.”

With great faith in the future of the profession he hopes that he can be part of re-engaging young architects with a sense of urgency and “getting it right” that were both such a part of his early days. Not a bad legacy.



Reed School
(above)
A rendering of
De Anza High
School (left)



Helen Park with her husband (above)
The Seattle Center fountain (right)

Fluid Design

Helen Park utilizes her architecture background to 'choreograph water'

Helen Park (B.Arch '86) looks back on her career with a sense of wonder and pride. As a young girl in South Korea she was fascinated with the idea of building, and one of her earliest memories is playing with the small jars and boxes from her parents' pharmacy. Despite her interest, and later her conviction that this was her career path, there were stumbling blocks. "Architecture is not a good career path for a woman" she was told many times.

Helen's family moved to the United States in 1975. "My parents sacrificed everything for their children," she says. "We were only allowed to take \$1,000 per person out of Korea" and so they moved to the U.S. with very little. The family stayed in Kentucky for several months before deciding to move to California. "The land of opportunity," Helen remembers.

It was her high school career counselor who said that if she was serious about



becoming an architect then she needed to attend Cal Poly. “I knew I had to follow my dream and at the same time get a degree that would lead me to a solid career. I owed my parents that,” she remembers. Cal Poly’s reputation as graduating very employable students was attractive.

Dean George Hasslein made a big impression on her first day as a college freshman. “He gave a welcoming speech. It was in a big theater and he talked about attrition.” All of these years later Helen still remembers that the statistics were grim. Undaunted, she was one of only a few in her class who completed the program on time in five years.

Bachelor’s degree in hand, Helen went on to complete her master’s degree in Architecture. Following this she worked on a variety of projects that allowed her to explore her interests in both the engineering and artistic sides of architecture. Her projects included work with an engineering firm that created numerous ride systems and action equipment for Disneyland and Universal Studio Tours.

Later she was project manager on an Entertainment Center in her home country. It was on this job that she first came into contact with WET, who was her consultant. Today Helen is a vice president of the company.

WET is a creative force in the use of water combined with other elements in architectural features worldwide. Their projects are legendary, including the Fountains of Bellagio in Las Vegas and The Dubai Fountain in the United Arab Emirates. In addition to designing and installing these water-focused features, WET has been an innovator in water technology and sustainable practices.

“At WET we bring a smile to people’s faces using a ubiquitous element. We create happy, forceful, romantic, memorable moments, all with water.” Of course, that is the end result. The effort to get to that point involves a talented team.

“Architecture was a solid foundation, a good platform,” Helen says. “WET has allowed me to use both the design and engineering sides of my background.”



The McCormick Convention Center (left)

The Bellagio in Las Vegas (below)



Illuminated waters at the Beijing Finance Center (left)

She credits her education at Cal Poly with equipping her to engage successfully with the many disciplines involved in her work today. While WET’s public face is high-profile design, behind its success is innovative technology, including energy-conscious propulsion.

“Even 18 years ago we were working on air-powered water expression instead of hydraulic pump-driven fountains. We were pioneers in ways to save energy and water.” Other inventions include an open joint paver, which reduces water evaporation and less taxing water filtration.

“It’s a dynamic environment,” adds Helen. “We have architects, landscape architects, interior designers, product designers and graphic designers in addition to experts in textiles and production. We enrich one another. To design a fountain is one thing, but here we choreograph the water, and understanding how visual expression comes together is much more complicated.”

She pauses for a moment then adds, “We defy the laws of physics and create a sense of magic.” A far cry from building with pharmacy boxes.

Decidedly Modern



**Lorcan O'Herlihy's
early interest in the style
inspires the architect's
award-winning work**



Formosa 1140
exterior perspective
(above)

Lorcan O'Herlihy

PHOTOS COURTESY
LAWRENCE ANDERSON

Lorcan O'Herlihy (B.Arch '81) began his study of architecture at an early age, coming to Cal Poly at 16. Born in Dublin, Ireland, he lived in Los Angeles between the ages of one and six before returning to his native city. After that it was back to California for college.

"Interesting times" is how Lorcan characterizes his years as an architecture student. Many of his classmates were returning veterans, and their life experiences and age were vastly different from his. He was also conscious of having one eye and one ear on Europe, firmly believing that "you are where you grow up." He remembers the Dublin of his youth as a city where modernism played a solid role. At the same time modernism was not part of the

Cal Poly culture. It was the space between these two beliefs that formed his work in school.

After graduating from Cal Poly, Lorcan wanted to "go East" and seek a different place and different culture. He worked for Kevin Roche, then the Louvre addition and renovation project was awarded to I.M. Pei, and "like every other 23-year-old," Lorcan wanted to work on it. He applied on a Friday and started work with Pei on Monday. Lorcan still remembers how supportive Kevin Roche was about his abrupt departure. "There was a spirit – an 'of course you have to go work on this project.'"

Surprisingly, although Pei's firm was large and corporate, the project didn't feel



Gardner 1050 courtyard perspective (above)

that way. Lorcan believes these years taught him how to be a professional. “Pei was a true gentleman who had a generous spirit, even with the young apprentices.”

Next on his professional agenda was a transition to a different New York firm, this time a small one: Steven Holl.

“Steven was a mentor and ultimately gave me the confidence to move to Los Angeles and start my own firm.” This, plus the diverse experiences gained at Roche and Pei.

Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects (LOHA) is a creative architecture and design firm committed to a collaborative approach. “We are a team of creative architects,” says Lorcan. Their creative bona fides were established 19 years ago with residential projects but the team has since taken on a variety of challenges, from a motion capture studio in San Francisco to cafes and dormitories. Accompanying the list of projects is a sizeable list of prestigious awards, including 16 AIA Design Awards. They have also been published and exhibited widely.

“It’s a great time to be an architect now. I hope that the economy will mean the opening of other core avenues. Maybe it’s a time to give back and be community-driven. We can tighten belts to be socially relevant.” Possibly even the emergence of a new paradigm of social relevance for the profession.



Habitat 825 courtyard:
detail (above) and
perspective (right)



Beyond the Curve

Michelle Kam-Biron touts wood's longterm renewable and sustainable qualities

Michelle Kam-Biron (ARCE '87), P.E., S.E., is out to change minds and dispel myths: engineers aren't only about the numbers, and using wood doesn't mean deforestation.

Two years ago she accepted a position as technical director with WoodWorks as a means of doing this. Prior to joining WoodWorks she spent two decades in the



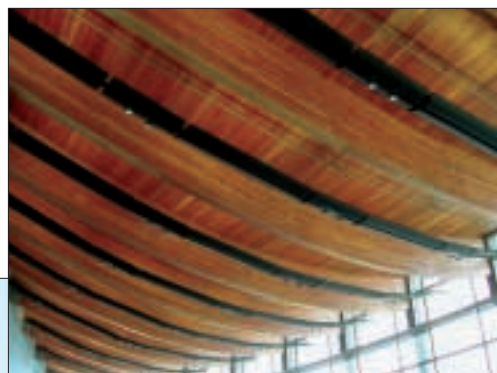
Michelle Kam-Biron

profession as a civil and structural engineer on a full range of projects with Jerry Tucker & Associates, Martin & Kelsen, Howard Stup & Associates, Nabih Youssef & Associates and Harris Engineering, where she was executive vice president.

"At Cal Poly I moved from the Architecture Department to Architectural Engineering because I felt I would directly apply more of the courses in ARCE to the profession, but I always had an interest in architecture in a larger sense."

This was another part of Michelle's decision to move out of traditional practice into her current role. As a technical director at WoodWorks, she is an advocate for the structural use of wood in projects, a technical expert who lectures on the subject across the country and a critical eye in determining if wood can find its way into the structure in new and innovative ways. This combination of engineering knowledge, interest in people and market-

The Great Hall at Eleanor Roosevelt College (left) and a detail of the ceiling (top).





Asante Hall at Eleanor Roosevelt College (left). Michelle worked as project manager on buildings at the college when she was with Nabih Youssef Associates in Los Angeles. The architects were Moshe Safdie and Associates, Boston, and Safdie Rabines Architects, San Diego.

ing ideas made WoodWorks' mission attractive: to help engineers and others design non-residential buildings in wood more easily and at less cost. An initiative of the wood products council, WoodWorks is a cooperative venture of most of the major wood associations in North America, as well as research organizations and government agencies.

The Simpson Strong-Tie Materials Demonstration Lab, now under construction on Cal Poly's campus, is an example of Michelle's interest in finding technical solutions that are also sustainable.

"Anytime a new facility is built at your alma mater it is exciting, and because we are designers and constructors we have an added interest in what that building looks like and how it performs." The CAED was interested in a building that showcased building methods and materials, and it would have been easy to stop at steel and concrete. That's where Michelle and WoodWorks played an invaluable role.

"There is a myth across the country that the use of wood means deforestation," she says. "In truth, we at WoodWorks are about sustainable growth paired with the benefits to the environment from using wood." The benefits of trees to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is well known. Less known is that this ben-



For the Simpson Strong-Tie project, WoodWorks provided information from tests performed by Douglas R. Rammer USDA Forest Products Laboratory to determine the effect of end spacing on wood splitting failure mechanisms (above and left).

efit continues once a tree becomes sawn lumber or an engineered wood product and is used for construction.

"People hear recycled steel studs and think it's a sustainable choice, but it takes

more than twice as much energy to produce and results in more than twice the release of greenhouse gases and other pollutants than wood studs. Wood is also the only major building product that's renewable and sustainable over the long term."

Michelle was instrumental in securing the donation of wood products for the Simpson Strong-Tie Demonstration Lab. This led to the groundbreaking use of a heavy timber braced-frame lateral resisting system in a commercial/institutional project in California.

"Was it an easy process?" Michelle asks, reflecting on the extensive peer reviews that led to the decision. "Maybe not easy, but it went smoothly, thanks largely to the support we received from our partner organization, the American Wood Council (AWC). It was also well worth it."

What does the future look like? Michelle hopes for improvements in the green building rating systems. She currently prefers Green Globes because of its on-line interactive system, which is effective but affordable, provides suggestions for improving a building's design and includes review at the Schematic Design phase and construction phase.

And, of course, she sees more wood being used as part of creative and sustainable building solutions!



Livable Communities

Third-year Architecture student John Vierra placed 1st in the AIAS Livable Communities Design Competition.



Ambitious CRP Students

For their senior project, CRP students (from left) Tyler Hartrich, Donald Nielsen and Sean Tiedgen are creating a planning firm and developing the North Avenue Specific Plan for Ventura.



Learn By Doing

Faculty member David Watts took LA students to South Africa to work on an orphanage for children orphaned by AIDS. The visitors from Cal Poly planned and executed construction and planting work.

Visioning the Future

Faculty and students engage stakeholders and neighbors in community visioning and planning. The new Planning, Design and Construction Institute (PDCI) will allow the CAED to do more of these projects. For details, visit www.caed.calpoly.edu/pdci.



Expanding Horizons

Cal Poly Landscape Architecture students enjoy an off-campus learning experience in Bruges, Belgium.



Illuminating Project

Students in Implementing Sustainable Principles present their final project: an organic herb garden intended to serve as an educational setting for foster children and provide support for the program.



Interdisciplinary Mission

Architecture faculty member Margot McDonald worked with two ARCE students, three ARCH students and two local firms in a co-op project to restore Mission San Miguel. The historic property was damaged in the 2003 San Simeon

A photograph of a man, Fred Sweeney, standing outdoors next to a bronze statue of an older man sitting in a chair. Fred is wearing a dark blazer over a green polo shirt and light-colored trousers. He is smiling and has his hand on the statue's shoulder. The background shows trees and a brick path.

LEAVING A LEGACY

GIFT ANNUITIES

"FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS Jane and I have planned to make a significant bequest to Cal Poly. Now we realize that we can invest for our retirement and at the same time establish our gift to the CAED during our lifetime."

A charitable gift annuity can be an excellent way to increase retirement income and reduce taxes, while at the same time providing important financial support to Cal Poly and the CAED. Charitable gift annuities allow donors to make a gift of cash or securities in return for a guaranteed fixed income for life.

Fred (B.Arch '74) and Jane Sweeney (BS '72) feel Cal Poly is intertwined with their lives. Both are Cal Poly alumni, and Fred currently serves on the College of Architecture and Environmental Design Advisory Council and Development Committee. He is also president-elect of the Cal Poly Alumni Association.

"We are first-generation college graduates. Jane's father and mother both came to this country because of religious persecution. I was born in SLO and have wonderful childhood memories of being on campus at football games and always knew I wanted to go to college and become an architect."

Their memories of Cal Poly have extended beyond the formal classroom and strengthened their interest in and support for education.

Cal Poly is proud to offer a variety of giving vehicles that allow donors to benefit from a stable income while making a charitable contribution. For more information and sample bequest language, please contact:

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The Hasslein Medal

CAEDF invites nominations of alumni and benefactors for new honor

The College of Architecture and Environmental Design Foundation is accepting nominations for candidates to receive the George Hasslein Medal.

Designed in memory of George J. Hasslein, FAIA, the founding dean of the CAED, the medal will be given to a Cal Poly alum or benefactor who demonstrates a commitment to George's passion for interdisciplinary learning and teaching.

Nominations may be made to Foundation Board President John Maple at jmaple@maplearchitects.com. Applications must be received by Jan. 26, 2010. If a nominee is selected for the award, the medal will be presented at a special dinner and ceremony on May 8, 2010.

For additional information about the award, visit www.caed.calpoly.edu/alumni/hasslein-medal.html.