

Broadcasting in

HIGH DEFINITION

An alumnus's donation raises the standard for student journalists



One are the days of blurry newscasts and clunky camera equipment — journalism students at Cal Poly are now broadcasting in high definition.

Last March, the university's on-campus, student-run TV studio was outfitted with the latest in video production technology. New cameras; a Chroma Key wall; and prompting, captioning and audio equipment helped Cal Poly transition from standard-definition (SD) to high-definition (HD) broadcasts.

The studio serves as a broadcast lab that gives students the opportunity to work in a traditional TV newsroom setting. Student reporters produce numerous interview and talk shows, a weekly sports update, and a live 30-minute weekly newscast that airs on campus, online and on local channel 2.

"This [upgrade] is monumental for so many students," said Leah Horner (Journalism, '17). "When we shot in standard definition, we were decades behind the industry. But now with HD, students will learn on exactly the same equipment used by TV stations across the country."

The renovation was made possible by a \$100,000 donation to the Journalism Department from Bill Swanson, a Cal Poly industrial engineering alumnus, and his wife, Cheryl. The Swansons learned of the need when they stopped by a booth for student-run media group Mustang News, and Horner explained the benefits an upgrade would bring to students.

"We chose to make this donation because we believe in Learn by Doing, and Cal Poly students deserve the best," said Swanson, who is chairman of Cal Poly's Foundation Board and retired chairman and chief executive officer of Raytheon Co.

HD has a higher resolution than its SD predecessor. This creates a clearer, more detailed and extra vivid picture. Most modern televisions display HD, so SD



looks outdated on many screens. Students who had worked in the studio prior to the renovation experienced the enhancement in quality immediately.

"Standard definition was not as polished, and stories wouldn't transfer well to web," said Peter Gonzalez, a journalism senior with a broadcast concentration. "Now, all our hard work comes across as it should in visual media."

"The old equipment also didn't translate into the workplace," he added. "But the new Cal Poly studio equipment is very similar to what I'm using in my internship at the ABC affiliate in Palm Springs."

Working with state-of-the-art equipment gives Cal Poly students an edge in the competitive and evolving world of journalism, enabling them to submit more impressive reels to prospective employers.

"Sending a reel in standard definition would be like sending a résumé in Times New Roman, single space, versus one created in InDesign," said journalism senior Megan Schellong.

The equipment also solves logistical challenges, making for a simplified broadcasting process and an organized studio. "Now, the director does it all from one station. It allows for multiple angles, and the new board is super simple to use," said Gonzalez.

This streamlined studio experience encourages students to be more innovative. All aspects of media can now be integrated, such as incorporating live-stream interviews with the on-campus radio station, KCPR.

The impact of the updated studio will extend beyond current journalism majors. "It will hopefully attract more students and entice them to study journalism and pursue their passions," said Gonzalez. "The studio makes a statement; it shows the industry that our school is going forward."

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— Bill Swanson

Previous page (top to bottom): Megan Schellong at the anchor desk; Shirin Beroukhim gives the weather forecast. **This page:** Mary Glick, Leah Horner, President Jeffrey Armstrong, Bill and Cheryl Swanson, and Thomas Morales during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Bill and Cheryl Swanson Broadcast Studio.

TOP: BRITTANY APP; LEFT: KRISTA SMITH

BRADY TEUFEL