

Making Connections

The inaugural CLA Career Month helped students set a course for success

Meaningful connections, interview skills, industry discussions and career advice designed specifically for students in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) defined the inaugural CLA Career Month.

Technically spanning longer than 31 days — from Jan. 16 to Feb. 27 — CLA Career Month included more than 1,000 students attending over 30 events, such as the International Graphic Communication Week Speaker Series; specialty career fairs; talks about grad school and internships; and panels about careers in entertainment, nonprofits, government and counseling.

“I’ve never attended a career fair before. Being here, I noticed it’s important to just network with people,” said Megan Deegan, a child development junior. “Even just getting your name out there — you may not be interested in what they’re offering, but they may know someone who fits you better.”



Deegan visited the Downtown SLO booth, where the communications coordinator offered to introduce her to someone more in line with her career pursuits. “That’s really what the whole networking experience is about; it’s not only who you’re meeting, but it’s who they know,” added Deegan.

The new CLA Career Month fills a professional development void noted by CLA students, particularly in regard to representation at previous career fairs. “With a majority of attending companies from engineering and agricultural fields, CLA students didn’t feel like there was as much there for them,” said Penny Bennett, associate dean for student success in the College of Liberal Arts. “We wanted to create something that would change that.”

Hearing from CLA alumni and other professionals in their fields encourages students to formulate a path and focus on what they want to do. “Events where alumni and older students talk

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about how they got to where they are now can be really inspiring,” said Lucy Volway, a graphic communication sophomore who attended a talk on internships. “It helps me think about what my next steps should be to reach my goals in the future.”

Speakers on the Nonprofit and Policy panel talked about their career paths and offered advice on building a supportive network. “Be mindful of every interaction,” said panelist and CLA alumna Ashley Stephens (Political Science, ’15). “Each is an impression, and all are opportunities to engage with people.”

Like Stephens, many CLA Career Month panelists and speakers were Cal Poly alumni. “We ask our alumni to participate because we value their experience and insight,” said Bennett.

The panels, speakers and workshops were tailored to the wide range of interests within the College of Liberal Arts. “A lot of CLA majors are so broad, attending these events is a great starting place for career exploration,” said College of Liberal Arts Career Counselor Laura Hunkler. “At the same time, those ready to apply for jobs can make connections with panelists. CLA Career Month offers something for everyone, wherever they are in the process.”

CLA Career Month is set to return in the 2018-19 academic year. “Our hope is that it gives CLA students a sense of belonging when it comes to careers and job prospects,” Bennett said. “We also hope it gives alumni the chance to come back and share their expertise.”

Opposite page: Jordan Damron (Graphic Communication, ’14) talks with a student. **Top:** Attendees at the Careers in Counseling panel. **Bottom:** Graphic communication student Jessica Dimulias and art and design student Carlie Meyers work on their resumes.