

A Voice for Collaboration

8 new minors added

Bidding a fond farewell to Dean Douglas Epperson, who is retiring after six years

This summer, after six years of serving as the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Douglas Epperson will retire. One of the many factors that originally drew Epperson to Cal Poly was the institution's commitment to being a comprehensive polytechnic university. "The College of Liberal Arts is central to the 'comprehensive' component of this goal," he said.

"Departments in the College of Liberal Arts teach students to think critically, contextually and reflectively about issues and problems; communicate effectively orally, visually and in writing; understand and value people from different cultures; work constructively in teams; and engage in lifelong learning," he said. "These skills are so universally essential that it is not an overstatement to assert that liberal arts students are educated for success in whatever they pursue — in their careers or personal lives."

Since taking the helm in 2012, Epperson has been a strong proponent for interdisciplinary collaboration. He believes that it's important not only for students to work with people from a variety of backgrounds, as they will in the real world, but also that students in the liberal arts are critical partners — if not leaders — in efforts to address the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. Under Epperson's leadership, the college introduced a new science, technology and society program, which includes four minors that allow liberal arts students to work with science and engineering students to study and address problems at the intersections of science/technology with ethics and public policy, social and creative media, gender and race, and communication of risk and technical information.



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— Douglas Epperson

Left: Dean Douglas Epperson is retiring this summer.

Top: Dean Epperson speaking at the 2015 commencement.

Dean Epperson's Lasting Legacy

Epperson has also been committed to diversity and inclusion at Cal Poly. He formed a standing inclusivity and diversity committee for both students and faculty and hired the first associate dean for diversity and curriculum. “I felt it was important that we make a concerted effort to address some of the problems related to diversity, inclusivity and equity on campus,” he said. “These committees will help generate goals and action plans for the CLA, enabling our college to continue to provide leadership for the university in this important domain.”

It’s no surprise that Epperson leaves behind a legacy of encouraging people to work together. One thing he values most about Cal Poly is the team he has worked with to advance the college. “I have never worked with a more collaborative and effective group,” said Epperson. “My only regret is that I wasn’t able to spend more of my career with such a fine college at such an excellent university.”

17 new online classes developed



“Under Dean Epperson’s leadership, the College of Liberal Arts has achieved a new level of excellence. He has been instrumental in understanding and promoting the critical role of the arts, humanities and social sciences in our polytechnic environment.”

— Kathleen Enz Finken, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs



“Doug is open to change while being mindful of history — that’s a unique combination in a leader and a very helpful one, particularly with regard to diversity and inclusion efforts.”

— Jennifer Teramoto Pedrotti, associate dean for diversity and curriculum



\$8 million raised for CLA

“Dean Epperson highly values research activity and consistently supports faculty efforts to develop themselves as teacher-scholars.”

— Taylor Smith, psychology professor and licensed psychologist



4,000 additional square feet of research space

“We’ve really enjoyed getting to know Doug, and we are sad to see him leave. We chose to create a full-ride scholarship because we believe in his interdisciplinary vision for the College of Liberal Arts.” — Kathryn Weinrichter (Journalism, ’70) and Leonard Sundeen



“Doug — working in partnership with students, staff and faculty in the college — transformed how the college is seen and valued by the campus and community and how we see and value ourselves.”

— Jane Lehr, chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Department



135 students currently pursuing science, technology and society minors

1. Epperson discusses college activities with staff. 2. The CLA sponsored an exclusive screening of “The Last King of Scotland” at the Palm Theatre in 2013 for students studying the history of East Africa. 3. Epperson makes the CLA case to CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White. 4. The dean welcomes students to an event celebrating diversity. 5. Epperson with CLA alumni during Homecoming Weekend 2014. 6. English Department Chair Kathryn Rummell and Epperson during a 2016 visit to China to explore study-abroad opportunities. 7. The dean chats with Josh Holland (Graphic Communication, ’12). 8. Epperson speaks to new students during Week of Welcome.



“The CLA dean plays a critical role in the success of Cal Poly Arts. Doug was a tireless advocate, and Cal Poly Arts is a much stronger organization now than it was when he arrived.”

— Steve Lerian, Cal Poly Arts director