



Music Professor David Arrivé
making video podcasts for
his History of the Symphony
course last spring.

TAKING LEARN BY DOING ONLINE

COURTESY OF DAVID ARRIVÉE

When the coronavirus pandemic necessitated a switch to online learning, students, faculty and staff came up with creative solutions to keep Learn by Doing alive in the College of Liberal Arts.

JOURNALISM

In the Journalism Department, radio and TV broadcasts continued, and Mustang News navigated the process of putting out news without a print product or their on-campus newsrooms. Students learned to report stories and work together remotely — an experience that mirrors that of many professional newsrooms.

In the Advanced Broadcast Practicum class, students shot video on their smartphones from a safe distance and conducted interviews via Zoom. The class also put together newscasts, in which the anchors, sportscaster and weathercaster were on Zoom, and individual reporters, working from home, introduced the stories they created.

Mustang News continued to break news online and even expanded its coverage beyond campus into the city of San Luis Obispo.

“They’ve stepped up like champs,” said Patrick Howe, a Mustang News advisor. “They will emerge from the other side of this as more flexible and adept journalists.”

To keep the radio station operating, Journalism Department Broadcast Engineer Thomas Morales set up a studio in the San Luis Obispo home of journalism junior and KCPR News Director Maya MacGregor. It served as the local, distanced control room for the radio station, which allowed a team of 16 reporters to produce a one-hour daily newscast.

The reporters sent their audio stories from their different locations, and MacGregor mixed everything for the broadcast, which went live daily at 9 a.m. Monday through Friday.

CHOIR PERFORMANCE

On June 8, the Music Department streamed Cal Poly’s first virtual choir performance. The concert featured PolyPhonics, the University Singers and the Women’s Chorus, and included “If Ye Love Me” by Thomas Tallis, selections from Mozart’s “Requiem in D Minor,” and “Sleep” by composer Eric Whitacre. To prepare for the concert, Director of Choral Activities Scott Glysson recorded videos for the vocal parts of each song, showing himself directing each part and a lead performance by the respective choral section leader. The performers then followed the directions to record their own parts. From there, Glysson worked individually with all 110 singers to give

feedback and refine their performances to fit in with the rest of the ensemble — a vastly different process compared to a traditional choral experience. When the individual recordings were ready, adjunct music faculty members Laura Kramer and Dave Becker compiled and edited the final performance video. While it’s impossible to perfectly replicate the experience of a traditional choir performance, Glysson said that he ultimately sees the virtual performance as a win. “The only other option was to give up, and we were just not going to do that,” he said. “Whatever the challenges are, we’re just going to keep making music.”

PRESCHOOL LEARNING LAB

The Preschool Learning Lab is a functioning preschool for children ages 3 to 5, and it is part of a lab class for child development majors. In addition to facilitating the course for Cal Poly students, the staff wanted to provide structure for the preschoolers and their families, with whom they had built relationships since the fall. Patty Clarkson, director of the Preschool Learning Lab, and the preschool’s two full-time teachers, Kari Applegate and Shondrela Braggs-Jones, came up with a plan to emulate the foundational building blocks of a typical day as much as they could. They decided on a virtual group



Preschool student Evelyn poses with artwork she made at home as part of the Preschool Learning Lab.

Top: Music professor and choir director Scott Glysson recorded a welcome in front of the Performing Arts Center for the virtual spring choir concert.

Bottom: Dancers rehearsing for the spring concert.



meeting every morning, along with music and movement time, which lasted about 30 minutes to an hour. In the afternoons, teachers would read to the class from a chapter book before rest time. They also offered the children simple “challenges” to complete between classes, which included tasks like drawing a family portrait to show everyone the next day. The child development students participated in the Zoom sessions and debriefed with staff afterward. By the end of the quarter, they were also helping to develop challenges for the children.

DANCE CONCERT

Preparation for the annual Spring Dance Concert was in full swing at the end of winter quarter. Directors and choreographers had been selected, dancers had been cast, and plans to fill an auditorium were underway. Instead, the cast of more than 100 students helped to create 16 separate dance films to form the online concert titled “Vitalis.”

The students were disappointed they wouldn’t perform live, but they adapted — learning skills such as filming and editing in preparation for the virtual show.

To teach the dancers the choreography, some students created video tutorials and others held Zoom meetings. Each week, individual dancers submitted rehearsal videos to the choreographers, who then edited the videos together and submitted drafts for the directors and advisors.

Dance Professor Diana Stanton was impressed week after week with how the videos were overlaid to create a collective effect. She said that one unique aspect of a video format in dance is having control over what the viewer sees. For example, at an in-person performance, viewers can choose where to focus, like on a friend they may have come to watch. However, in a virtual format, the choreographer can direct the viewer’s eye.



“I knew it would be challenging,” said Alyssa Gatan, one of the student directors. “But we were ready to take it on because we knew we had to preserve something so special, which is being able to dance as a community.”

SENIOR ART SHOW

Typically, art and design seniors see their work hung on the walls of the University Art Gallery before they graduate. Since that wasn’t possible last spring, studio art Professor Elizabeth Folk and the 2020 graduates moved the show online.

Each student took photos of their own artwork and uploaded those photos along with an artist statement to a shared folder. A subgroup of the students built the web gallery, which was launched on June 5 with a virtual opening reception. “These seniors have produced this work in the nooks and crannies of their homes, on dining room tables, in bedrooms, in corners of their garages, and on back patios,” Folk said in the introductory video to the exhibition. “They have practiced creative problem-solving. They have gone through disappointments. They have shown resilience and passion in bringing this work to you.”

The online exhibit, titled “Reconnecting...”, can be viewed at www.calpolybfa.com. The website includes videos of each artist talking about their work.

Folk said, “To say that I am proud of these seniors for their accomplishments this quarter during this difficult time politically and with COVID-19 is a gross understatement.”

COMPETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

For social scientists, presenting research to other scholars is an important piece of Learn by Doing. Although travel and in-person conferences and competitions were canceled in the spring, CLA students still had the opportunity to present to their peers.

Two CLA students were selected to represent Cal Poly at the CSU Research Competition this year: Fionna Fahey and Maddie Roman, both interdisciplinary studies majors. Instead of in-person presentations, Fahey and Roman submitted their research digitally and completed Q&A sessions via video conference. Fahey won first place in the competition’s Undergraduate Humanities and Letters category for her research on the erased histories of sex workers in San Luis Obispo.

Five political science students and four communication studies students presented papers at the Social

KCPR News
Director Maya
MacGregor at her
home studio in
San Luis Obispo
in April.



Science Research and Instructional Center’s annual Social Science Student Symposium, held via Zoom on May 7. Communication studies seniors Alayna Short and Sophia Minhas presented “The Effects of Corporate Giving Marketing on Brand Image and Purchase Intention,” which won the second-place McCall Award for Best Undergraduate Paper.

In addition to the research presentations, a team of graphic communication students presented their first-place winning Phoenix Challenge project to a national audience at the Flexographic Technical Association Virtual Forum on May 6. The Phoenix Challenge is a yearlong project in which students help a local company market its business with materials using the flexographic print process. This year, they rebranded and created packaging solutions for Tails Pet Boutique in San Luis Obispo.

INCLUSION STARTS WITH ME TEACH ON!

The College of Liberal Arts hosted a virtual “Teach ON!” — a series of both pre-recorded and real-time virtual lectures devoted to issues of equity and justice surrounding COVID-19. The pandemic has magnified structural inequities — as well as strengths — that exist in many communities, and the Teach ON! organizers recognized the need for scholars to speak to the complexity of the coronavirus response and its intersections with issues of race, gender, class and equity.

Faculty across campus were encouraged to use the lectures along with other curated resources in their courses. Presenters covered topics such as anti-Asian racism, self and community care, global responses, health care disparities, the redeployment of survival strategies for marginalized communities, issues of equity in a pandemic, fear and privilege, the social toll of social distancing, and laboring in the time of coronavirus.

The Teach ON! was offered in the same spirit as the Teach In, said Jennifer Teramoto Pedrotti, CLA associate dean for diversity and curriculum. “It’s a way for faculty, staff and administrators to model how we can engage in intellectual discourse around issues of social justice, particularly in times of great social need.”

Nearly 700 attendees, including students, staff and faculty, logged in to the live events, and even more accessed the provided learning material throughout the quarter.



“Classtime,” a painting by Kelli Bonafede (Art and Design, ’20), appeared in the online BFA 2020 Exhibition.