



CAL POLY COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

# impact

LEARN / LEAD / LIVE / FALL 2021

**Inside**

Summer Undergraduate Research  
Program Launches / Bridging Ethics and  
Technology / Honoring John Russell

**Connected and Inspired**  
Peer mentors help  
underrepresented students find  
community and opportunity



**CAL POLY**



## Message from the Dean

This past year was a challenging one for the College of Liberal Arts. With a few exceptions, the global health pandemic prompted the shift to a mostly virtual learning environment. Our faculty and students responded with amazing resilience and creativity, both inside and outside of the classroom. Our dance and music concerts, our senior art exhibit, and research competitions went



ahead, albeit in a virtual format. Some of our faculty developed virtual international exchange opportunities in their classes in lieu of canceled study-abroad programs.

Despite numerous challenges prompted by the pandemic, the College of Liberal Arts remains committed to a vision of liberal arts *sin fronteras*: without borders, boundaries or barriers. Even in the face of significant budget cuts, the college continued to make progress on key priorities. We launched the college's first-ever Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP), providing opportunities to engage undergraduate students in faculty-led scholarship. The college developed a five-year Diversity Action Plan that lays out clear goals and metrics to guide us in achieving a more diverse, equitable and inclusive college. And we created the Access, Community and Equity (ACE) Program to provide first-generation and low-income students with stipends to support their participation in high-impact Learn by Doing experiences.

I'm confident that we'll emerge from these uncertain times with a greater sense of shared values and purpose that will propel us to new heights in the future. I hope you'll join us in this effort!

Best regards,  
Philip Williams  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts



**CAL POLY**  
College of Liberal Arts

## impact

Fall 2021

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**On the cover:**  
Students from the USN and MSP programs enjoyed each other's company as they returned to campus for fall quarter.



Outdoor campus spaces provide safe social outlets.

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## INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS CREATE CONNECTIONS



As virtual learning became the “new normal,” CLA professors saw an opportunity to embed virtual exchange programs within online classes, allowing students to participate in cross-cultural dialogues. History students studied the Middle East along with peers and faculty at the American University in Kuwait;

students in Spanish classes worked with students in English classes at Universidad Nacional de San Martín in Buenos Aires, Argentina; and ethnic studies students studied diversity and immigration in contemporary Italy in partnership with a nonprofit in Palermo, Sicily. These courses

were taught and orchestrated by history Assistant Professor Farah Al-Nakib, world languages and cultures Associate Professor Silvia Marijuan and ethnic studies Professor Elvira Pulitano, respectively.



## MUSTANG MEDIA GROUP WINS 37 AWARDS FROM MULTIPLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mustang Media Group (MMG) won a total of 37 national and state awards at this year's College Media Business and Advertising Managers (CMBAM) and California Collegiate Media Association (CCMA) virtual ceremonies. The student-run media organization won first place for Best College Media Sales and Marketing Program and third place for Best Newspaper and Best Newspaper Website. MMG also took home a total of 18 individual awards. MMG won eight first-place awards, two second-place, five third-place and three honorable mentions from CMBAM. Meanwhile, it took home 13 first-place and six third-place awards from CCMA.

## New Cal Poly Arts Director

Molly Clark joined CLA in July as Cal Poly Arts' new director, after Steve Larian's retirement, and has started to build strong campus and community collaborations. Clark is curating a new series of performances with the hope of further diversifying the artists, cultures and identities represented. Previously, she served as artistic director at University of California San Diego's ArtPower.





## Epigenetics Sociology Course Studies Inequality's Effects on Pandemic Health Outcomes



For years, sociology Assistant Professor Martine Lappé has been studying how environmental factors rooted in systemic inequalities could play a role in a person's susceptibility to diseases. Lappé launched a new course on the sociology of health and illness, which happened to coincide with the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Students began learning how race, class, gender, sexuality and other axes of oppression influence health and immunity as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention actively released new data. Assigned readings from the popular press were integrated into class discussions of core sociology texts, giving students the unique opportunity to watch events shape sociology in real time.

## Graphic Communication Team Wins E-Journal Competition

The Cal Poly Technical Association of the Graphic Arts (TAGA) chapter won the grand prize in the TAGA 2021 Student Electronic Journal Competition. This year's e-journal competition included five contending schools from all over the world. The journal was written, designed and produced by a team of graphic communication students to showcase student-written research, engaging design and modern production technologies.



## Political Science Student Earns Panetta Institute Internship

Desiree Nunes, a third-year political science major from Fremont, California, will serve as Cal Poly's 2021 representative to the Panetta Institute's Congressional Internship Program. After a two-week training period at the Panetta Institute at California State University Monterey Bay, she will work in the Capitol office of a California congressional representative in Washington, D.C., for 11 weeks in the fall. The program is open to all academic majors and is recognized as one of the leading internship courses in the nation because of the rigorous training it provides.



## NEW NAME BETTER REPRESENTS WOMEN'S, GENDER AND QUEER STUDIES DEPARTMENT

The Women's, Gender and Queer Studies Department (formerly "Women's and Gender Studies") has changed its name to more accurately represent the undergraduate minor programs offered. The new name also provides important visibility and inclusion for LGBTQ+ communities on Cal Poly's campus and more closely aligns with the department's commitment to addressing the interrelated forces of gender and sexuality.



## CLA Students and Faculty Receive President's Diversity Awards

The Office of University Diversity and Inclusion (OUDI) honored members of the campus community during the annual President's Diversity Awards Ceremony, celebrating achievements in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The CLA Student Diversity Committee was awarded the Student Group Diversity Award for its advisory role in enhancing DEI efforts in the college. Psychology Assistant Professor Amber Williams received a faculty award for her work on the CLA's Faculty Diversity Committee; the Academic Senate Diversity Committee; and the university committee on Recruitment and Retention of Underrepresented Faculty, Staff and Students.

## 'TECHNICALLY HUMAN' PODCAST EXPLORES TECHNOLOGY ETHICS ISSUES

English Assistant Professor Deb Donig studies literature's influence on technology and hosts the "Technically Human" podcast, where she discusses what it means to be human in our modern, tech-focused world. Her conversations with industry leaders dive deep into the nuances of topics like surveillance technology, humane design in fashion and civil discourse on racism. Donig and interdisciplinary studies Associate Professor Matthew Harsh co-founded the Ethical Technology Project at Cal Poly, alongside other faculty from across campus committed to grounding innovation in humanistic principles.



## Four CLA Research Projects Awarded RSCA Grants for 2021-22 Research

Cal Poly's Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education (R-EDGE) division recently awarded funds to 14 projects for the Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities (RSCA) grant's 2021-22 cycle, four of which are from CLA. Communication studies Assistant Professors Anuraj Dhillon and Megan Lambertz-Berndt, Spanish and applied linguistics Associate Professor Silvia Marijuan, political science Assistant Professor R.G. Cravens, and psychology and child development Associate Professor Kelly Bennion all received grant funding to pursue their research projects.







## 2020-21 BLACK LIVES MATTER SPEAKER SERIES

In 2020-21, CLA presented the “Black Lives Matter Speaker Series” to highlight scholarly and creative work on issues of racial justice. This virtual speaker series featured 10 guest lecturers who spoke to Cal Poly students, faculty and staff about their work on the intersections of race with social institutions including health care, education, policing, technology and literature. *Learn more at [cla.calpoly.edu/blm](http://cla.calpoly.edu/blm).*



### Ethnic Studies Department Prepares for New General Education Requirement

In August 2020, Gov. Newsom signed California Assembly Bill 1460 into law, requiring every CSU student to meet an ethnic studies graduation requirement beginning in the 2021-22 academic year. Ryan Buyco, Dan Castilow and Lydia Herberling joined the faculty to accommodate the increased course demand, bringing new depth of expertise in Asian American studies, African American studies and Indigenous studies, respectively.

### TWO PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT CAL POLY ON WPA STUDENT COUNCIL

In October 2020, psychology students Rebecca Luenser and America Romero were selected by the Western Psychological Association (WPA) Student Council Executive Committee to represent Cal Poly on the WPA Student Council for the 2020-21 academic year. Their roles include speaking to students about WPA resources, hosting workshops to prepare for the WPA's annual conference, attending the WPA Student Council meeting at the convention, and innovating new methods to highlight what the WPA has to offer.



## CLASS ACTS

Get to know these new department chairs outside the classroom.



### BRADY TEUFEL / Journalism

Brady Teufel has taught at Cal Poly for 15 years, during which he has also been actively involved in student media as one of Mustang Media Group's advisors. Teufel especially enjoys participating in the Journalism Department's annual end-of-year banquets, where students are recognized for their contributions to the department. In his free time, Teufel likes to surf and play ultimate frisbee.



### CHRISTY CHAND / Theatre and Dance

Christy Chand is currently entering her 10th year working at Cal Poly. Her favorite courses to teach at Cal Poly are DANC 345 and 346, both of which involve participation in an Orchesis Dance Company production. In addition to teaching dance and choreography, Chand also writes articles for the global online network DancePlug.



### KAREN MUÑOZ-CHRISTIAN / World Languages and Cultures


Karen Muñoz-Christian has taught at Cal Poly for more than 15 years, specifically focusing on Caribbean, Latinx and Afro-Hispanic literary and cultural studies. She also loves to travel, especially to places where she can converse in Spanish. Her favorite getaway locations include northern New Mexico, the Russian River in northern California and just about anywhere in Spain.



### TOM TRICE / History

After 19 years at Cal Poly, Tom Trice has greatly enjoyed his time teaching in the History Department. He fondly remembers how one year his HIST 216 teaching assistants decorated his office with inflatable orcas on the eve of his birthday, a tactic once used by Greenpeace to protest corporate investment in the whaling industry.





Rebecca Harding (Anthropology and Geography, '19) helped faculty with preliminary field research in 2019 on the impact of pine plantations in Peru. Despite their canceled 2020 travel, social sciences faculty utilized SURP to continue engaging students with the project.

# LIBERAL ARTS SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAM LAUNCHES

A new program supports hands-on student research opportunities across a range of disciplines.



The College of Liberal Arts held its first Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) in the summer of 2021 with funding from the Office of Student Research; Cal Poly Provost's Office; and the Circle of Giving donors, who focus on faculty and student research opportunities. Eight faculty-led research projects allowed 10 students to learn more advanced research techniques in a hands-on setting while building mentor relationships. Student researchers received \$3,500 stipends, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the process and increasing the overall accessibility to hands-on research and industry connections.

When anthropology and interdisciplinary studies Professor Dawn Neill, director of research engagement and internationalization, began developing the program for CLA, she used other Cal Poly colleges' successful programs as a model. However, special care was taken to intentionally include a broader range of disciplines. "The word 'research' may sound limiting, but in the College of Liberal Arts, we see scholarly engagement as encompassing the breadth of disciplines in our college: everything from hard science or social science, all the way to visual and performing arts," Neill said.



Digital art differentiated between "Black-owned" and "white-owned" homes in a study on racial discrimination in housing.



Eucalyptus plantings flourish at a plantation in Peru.

"All of these things are considered scholarship as relevant to participants' interest and disciplinary areas. This is a fully inclusive program."

CLA had originally planned to launch SURP in the summer of 2022. However, funding unexpectedly became available, so plans were accelerated to launch a year early. Despite the many reasons why interest among faculty and students was lower than a typical year, applications still outnumbered available funding 3.5 to 1, showing a strong demand for more broadly available undergraduate research opportunities.

SURP was specifically designed to support new research projects, as opposed to continued scholarship, so that students without much previous research experience were more likely to be accepted to the program. As part of their application, students shared a personal narrative including their background, experience (whether formal or informal) and how participating in SURP would contribute to their overall academic success. The College of Liberal Arts used this information to build an environment of inclusivity by making accommodations based on students' unique backgrounds and challenges. Students were considered based on their less traditional experience and ability to share unique perspectives, along with any relevant research experience.

SURP's hands-on Learn by Doing opportunities accelerate students' growth and development, providing them with valuable faculty mentor relationships. Meanwhile, faculty benefit by connecting students with their passions. Neill shared her perspective: "It's fair to say that faculty walk into SURP with eyes wide open, knowing that working with an undergraduate student requires adjusting how they work. However, many of us came to Cal Poly because we enjoy working directly with students and recognize the wider set of benefits. You'll still get findings, but you'll also see a fire lit in a student who will engage in the world differently than if they didn't have that experience. Working in a lab with an undergrad who is already trained in lab methods doesn't have the same impact."

In 2022, SURP will likely see even higher demand as faculty and students returning to campus increase productivity closer to pre-pandemic engagement levels. CLA would like to expand the program with additional funding for ongoing projects so that long-term faculty-student collaborations sparked by SURP projects can continue, with a hope to support 30 to 40 projects.

*For more information, or to get involved with SURP, email [cla@calpoly.edu](mailto:cla@calpoly.edu).*

## Learn More About CLA's 2021 SURP Projects



**From left:** Philosophy Professor Francisco Fernflores and history Professor Christina Firpo.

### TikTok Videos as a Stimulus Set for Generalizable Experiments

Psychology and child development Associate Professor Kelly Bennion; SURP student researcher Kunhua Cheng; and two additional students, Taylor Eng and Hector Reyes, studied the effects of TikTok videos on subjects' mood and desire for social reinforcement.

Bennion said: "Working with my SURP student, Kunhua, has been incredible. She has contributed to it in ways that faculty likely couldn't because we don't know much about the TikTok platform, nor social media in general. She's made a number of suggestions to the experimental design that we've adopted, and the project is truly better being able to collaborate with her than if we had decided everything on our own. She has been absolutely invaluable to the project from the beginning!"

### José Vasconcelos, Chicanx Philosophy and Lugones' Logic of Curdling

Philosophy Professor Francisco Fernflores and student researcher Luca Simplicio analyzed the writings of Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos to determine how Vasconcelos' work relates to a feminist-supporting, humanist, anti-racist, pragmatic philosophy.

### Beauty and the Nation: Race, Capitalism and Modernity in Vietnam, 1920-1945

History Professor Christina Firpo and student researcher Téa Tran investigated how French beauty standards and fashion impacted women in French-colonized Vietnam from 1920 to 1945 and how debate around women's faces and bodies reflected the greater debate about modern Vietnamese identity.

Firpo said: "I hope to provide my student researcher with intense tutoring in research

methods and professional advice. They will leave this project as a resourceful researcher and skilled writer, equipped with the tools of professionalism. I will give them inside guidance on the conference and publishing processes and identify university resources that will be useful throughout their undergraduate career. My hope is to maintain a lasting mentoring relationship with my student research partner."

### Captured Slave Ships and the Abolition of the Slave Trade

History Professor Matthew Hopper and student researchers Nishanth Narayan

and Jessica Smith worked to create the first comprehensive database of illegal slave ships captured by the British Royal Navy between 1808 and 1897.

### Who's in Control? Pandemic-Related Impacts on Locus of Control

Social sciences Professor Stacey Rucas and student researcher Sophie Klitgaard studied the effects of coronavirus vaccines, past COVID-19 infections and decreased face-to-face socializing on students' internal versus external locus of control.

Rucas said: "Many students began reporting at the beginning of the pandemic a sense of loss of control over events in their lives related to everything from classes to housing to economics and rites of passage. This led to questions about how the pandemic might be impacting the psychological orientation of locus of control, especially as extreme externality on this trait is nearly universally associated with negative life outcomes. The opportunity for mentoring students interested in learning how to conduct original scientific research formed the basis for the plan and process of work."



**From left:** History Professor Matt Hopper, social sciences Professor Stacey Rucas, and psychology and child development Assistant Professor Amber Williams.





**From left:** Philosophy Assistant Professor Ava Wright, Social Sciences Department Chair Benjamin Timms and Social Sciences Professor James Keese.

### **An Experimental Study of Racial Discrimination in Housing Perceptions**

Psychology and child development Assistant Professor Amber Williams and student researcher Yazmeen Norwood studied the effects of housing discrimination against Black homeowners through the subjects' assessment of a home's worth based on ownership by a Black or white family.

Williams said: "The ability to work on a research project from the ground up and be an important part of collecting and analyzing data is especially valuable for students wanting to go into doctorate programs. While they take research methods classes, working on a fully formed research project and going through the process of getting funding, setting up preregistration, setting up surveys, developing materials, and of course, writing up the results is an entirely different experience."

**"The ability to work on a research project from the ground up and be an important part of collecting and analyzing data is especially valuable for students wanting to go into doctorate programs."**

**—Amber Williams**

### **Mapping Part of the Fair Machine Learning Debate: An Application of a New System for Dialectical Argumentation Diagramming**

Philosophy Assistant Professor Ava Wright and student researcher Benjamin Cornell created a system for mapping debates surrounding the fairness of AI decision-making systems, and then manually mapped a portion of the extensive debate surrounding the topic.

### **Forest Plantation Transitions in the Peruvian Andes**

Social sciences Department Chair Benjamin Timms, Professor Jim Keese, Assistant Professor Andrew Fricker, and student researchers Danielle Gerger and Edson Morales studied the impact of both eucalyptus and pine plantations in the Cuzco region of Peru. Both have been used to replenish forests in

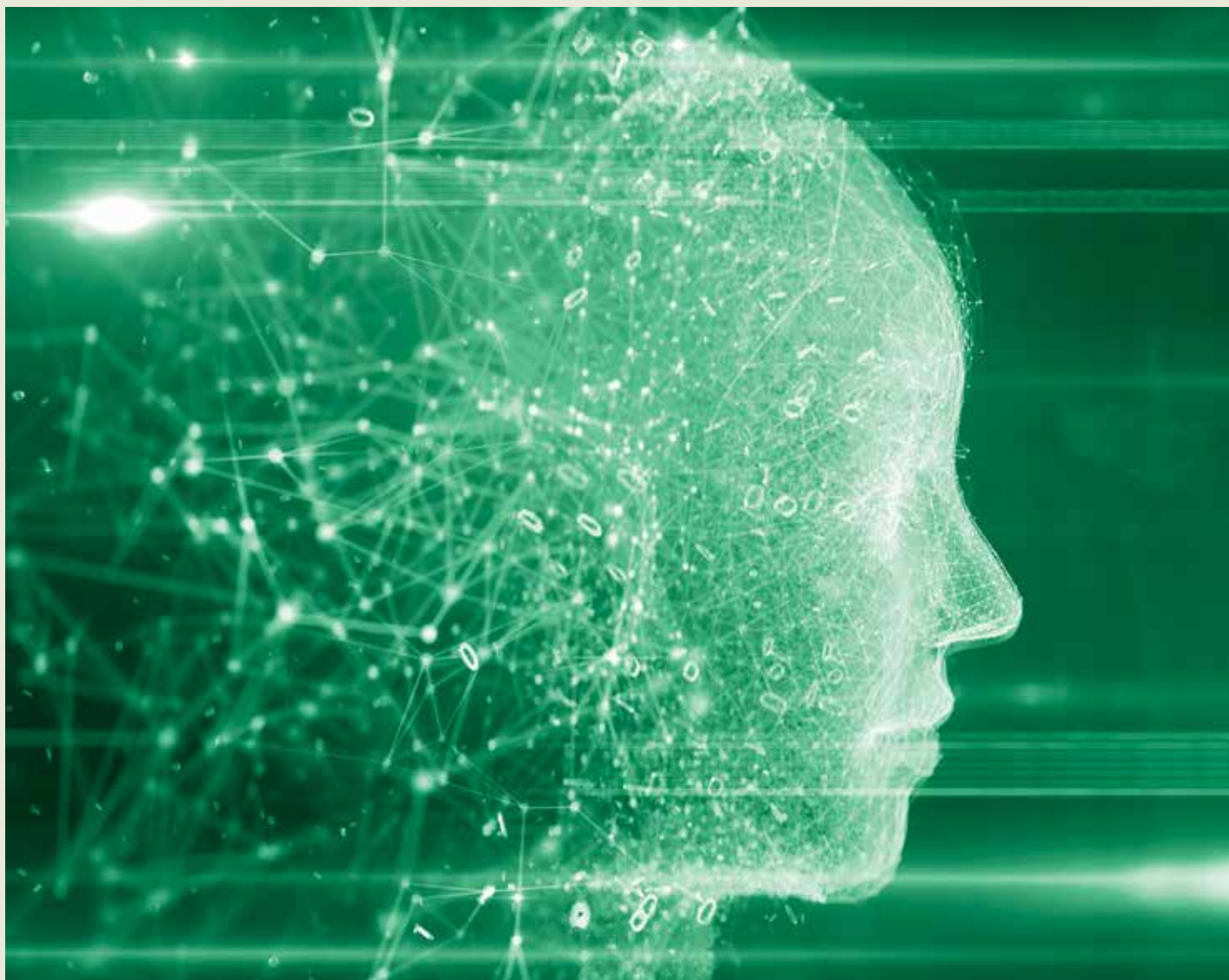
## **The purpose and mission of CLA's SURP initiative are to:**

- Promote diverse and equitable engagement for CLA students in faculty-led research and creative activities.
- Enhance faculty participation in scholarship.
- Build lasting student-faculty mentoring relationships.
- Enrich a culture of scholarship in the CLA.

the Andes Mountains with differing effects.

Timms said: "Working with the students has given us an extra incentive to invest time and energy into this project. The students are so motivated and excited, it inspires us to make the project a success. They are gaining exposure and experience with advanced topics and going through the peer-reviewed publication process while collaborating across disciplines (one student studies anthropology and geography, while the other studies political science). Given success in the project, they may be able to earn scholarships for study and research in Peru during spring 2022 with one of the professors. Hence, it is a win-win situation for professors and students alike."

*For further details, visit [surp.calpoly.edu/cla](http://surp.calpoly.edu/cla).*



# Early Detection Systems for Technology Ethics

Cal Poly's Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group  
bridges the gap between morality and technology.



For much of history, a divide between the humanities and the sciences has worried many great thinkers. As technology developed at dizzying speeds, law, philosophy and ethics have often lagged behind. Cal Poly's Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group (EESG), however, applies ethics to new technologies and technological concepts before they have a significant impact on society. Situated within the Philosophy Department, the group asks "Should we?" in tandem with scientists asking, "Can we?" Its work tips the scale back in favor of humanity's ability to develop moral frameworks more quickly than new technologies.

When EESG formed in 2007, very few U.S. researchers were studying technology ethics. Philosophy Professor Patrick Lin and Lecturer Keith Abney were poised to meet the substantial demand for technology policy and innovation expertise, and they found the perfect environment for their interdisciplinary exploration at Cal Poly. "Who can better understand the demand and the need for technology ethics than a polytechnic university?" Lin said. "Typical universities can be much more siloed: Philosophers do philosophy and engineers do engineering, and there's not a lot of cross pollination there. But we're grounded in theoretical ethics, and we connect the dots from theory to practice. That's where philosophy can make a real impact on the world. It's not just this ivory tower discipline. It's up to ethics to provide the direction and moral compass to ensure that we're aiming technology in a beneficial direction."

The group has grown since then, adding Associate Professor Ryan Jenkins in 2015 and others more recently. With six to eight core researchers, it is now the largest cluster of technology ethicists in North America with expertise in both theoretical and applied ethics. The faculty have expanded their research to include "frontier ethics," studying an impressive range of emerging technologies that can be used to develop the Arctic, outer space and other frontiers. Studying nanotechnology led to examining human enhancement technology, which segued into robot ethics, AI, military technologies, cyberwarfare and policing technology. Many of these topics require researchers to ask similar questions, and as a result, their moral framework can be applied to new technologies as they become relevant.



Philosophy Professor Patrick Lin explores the ethical questions and thinking around emerging technologies.

Despite increased interest in recent years, the group's interdisciplinary approach is still uncommon. "Deep and prolonged collaborations between philosophers and technologists are exceedingly rare. We have seen an accelerating interest in having this kind of ethical deliberation be part of development and deployment, and not just an ad hoc checklist that you run through right before you market what you were going to market anyway," Jenkins said. "What we do is very important in that respect. We are a voice in this ongoing conversation about how to create potentially harmful technologies, but instead harness their benefits and mitigate their negative consequences."

Being on the cutting edge of ethics and technology has allowed Lin and Jenkins to shape the field through research contributions and by training students to become future leaders. They have incorporated technology ethics into the curriculum, often assigning industry-applicable tasks like writing reflective memos for a tech company's analysis of a new product. Students learn critical thinking skills and enter their careers with highly desirable ethics training that can be applied to virtually any industry.

There is great potential to expand engagement with students and the local community around these issues, and the faculty stand ready to grow as their reputation brings more funding partners to the table. Still, as a passion project, EESG has significantly impacted ethical discourse at Cal Poly, nationally and globally. "We're often the first in these fields to pioneer this work," Lin said. "We look for green fields where these questions are underexplored, and where we can make a difference. I think it's not an exaggeration to say we've launched thousands of careers in technology ethics over the years. There are a lot of capable people building out details in AI and robot ethics, but we're looking at the big picture. We're looking at the future and what we might want to start thinking about right now."

*To learn more about the Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group, or to get involved, email [cla@calpoly.edu](mailto:cla@calpoly.edu).*



Associate Professor Ryan Jenkins has worked with the Ethics + Emerging Sciences Group since 2015.

# CREATING COMMUNITY: BY STUDENTS, FOR STUDENTS

CLA's Underrepresented Students Network and Multicultural Scholars Program are transforming the college experience.



Students Angelo Lozano, Silvia Alvarez, Esmeralda Vasquez, Mylissa Weymer and Iman Laique enjoy fellowship with Multicultural Scholarship Program Advisor Alejandra Cebreros on Dexter Lawn.

JOE JOHNSTON



Christine Lam knew Cal Poly would be challenging when she began her studies as a political science major in 2017. However, as the first person from her family to attend college, she did not know exactly how to find the resources she needed. “I didn’t know basic terms like ‘room and board’ or ‘rushing,’” she said, “and I never had clear expectations about what college would be like, so all the new information at once was pretty overwhelming.”

While Lam described her early Cal Poly days as feeling “isolated,” many students were experiencing similar struggles. She would eventually find community within a small group of friends, also from underrepresented backgrounds, who banded together to share resources and support each other. Some from the group would later join the CLA’s Student Diversity Committee and pitch the idea of a formal peer mentoring program for underrepresented students to Jennifer Teramoto Pedrotti, associate dean for diversity and curriculum.

“It was a fantastic idea, and at the same time we had been noticing that a lot of the students from underrepresented groups were members of numerous campus clubs,” Teramoto Pedrotti said. “It looked to me like these students were trying hard to find community wherever they could. They would keep joining student groups until many of them were spread really thin. I thought that if we brought that sense of belonging to an academic setting and built community in the classroom right off the bat through peer mentors, those students wouldn’t have to look everywhere just to find community. Combining social support and academic support leads them to community right away, and then they’re set up to succeed in their studies as well.”

Once the Underrepresented Students Network’s (USN) first student mentors were trained and paired with mentees, the group continued to grow naturally through word of mouth. Victoria Siaumau, a third-year student at the time, was invited to a mentor training in 2019 by a friend and quickly realized the USN’s potential. “Cal Poly is difficult for many students to navigate, and I saw how I could pass along some of the things I struggled to figure out on my own so that others wouldn’t have to learn the hard way,” she said. “The program ensures students can talk to other students who have experience with the specific issues they’re facing. My experiences were validated by hearing others’ stories, and knowing I wasn’t alone made a really big difference for me.”

The success of the USN, along with additional student input, informed the college’s creation of a new multicultural advising role within the CLA’s Academic Advising Department. When Alejandra Ceballos was hired in 2018, she helped create the Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP). Through MSP’s programs, students can find academic support, career planning tools, and activities to connect with other students and faculty.

MSP joined forces with the USN in 2019 to pair as many first-year and transfer students with mentors as possible. Both programs have had small-scale yet very encouraging effects in a few short years.

“We’re always going to be here for you. There will always be a community here for you, whether you join now or later. Sometimes we just need someone to talk to, and a mentor helps you do things outside your comfort zone, which could be anything from any area of life.”

—CHRISTINE LAM



Political science student Christine Lam was one of the first mentors in the Underrepresented Students Network.

## CREATING COMMUNITY: BY STUDENTS, FOR STUDENTS



Recently sampled USN students had GPAs significantly higher than their counterpart CLA students not in the program. Additionally, out of the 10 USN graduates this year, all graduated within four or two years respectively, depending on their entry to Cal Poly as first-time freshmen or transfer students.

Looking beyond the numbers, prospective student mentees often share that they are looking for community with students and faculty they can relate to, supplemental knowledge to navigate their academic career, and emotional support to overcome impostor syndrome. Student mentors are trained to provide flexible support based on individual needs, so they can help their mentees with any of these challenges.

Siaumau learned a great deal about overcoming her own personal challenges through mentoring others. “Understanding that different folks need different types of support has made me much more empathetic, understanding and communicative,” Siaumau said. “Through these programs, I learned that I belonged at Cal Poly. In

**“Understanding that different folks need different types of support has made me much more empathetic, understanding and communicative.”**

**—VICTORIA SIAUMAU**



all honesty, if I hadn't found those places of community and support, it would have been much more difficult to graduate and do well. Lots of students find different support systems and communities. This was mine."

Siaumau would go on to mentor multiple students and take on a student assistant role within the program, coordinating mentor trainings and expanding its reach to more students. With encouragement from the USN and MSP, Siaumau applied to Cal Poly's BEACoN Faculty Research Project program and was paired with a faculty mentor. She is still a **part** of that research lab, which has connected her with her passion. "Both the support and the information I received were critical. I didn't know I could study science and technology through an ethnic studies lens, but now it's my goal to get into a Ph.D. program for science and technology studies," Siaumau said.

As one of the first USN student mentors, Christine Lam learned confidence through her relationships with other student mentors and through watching USN alumni succeed. "When I first joined, I struggled with impostor syndrome," Lam said. "Seeing others from similar backgrounds succeed made me believe I could succeed as well. This program has made me into a much more confident person, unafraid to pursue opportunities. I know that I will be welcomed there and feel a sense of belonging," Lam was awarded the Panetta Congressional Internship in 2019, became a BEACoN research scholar in 2020, and is currently launching her own business. She said, "I knew it was time to push myself more."

*For further information, contact Jennifer Teramoto Pedrotti at [jpedrott@calpoly.edu](mailto:jpedrott@calpoly.edu) or Alejandra Cebreros at [alcebrer@calpoly.edu](mailto:alcebrer@calpoly.edu).*



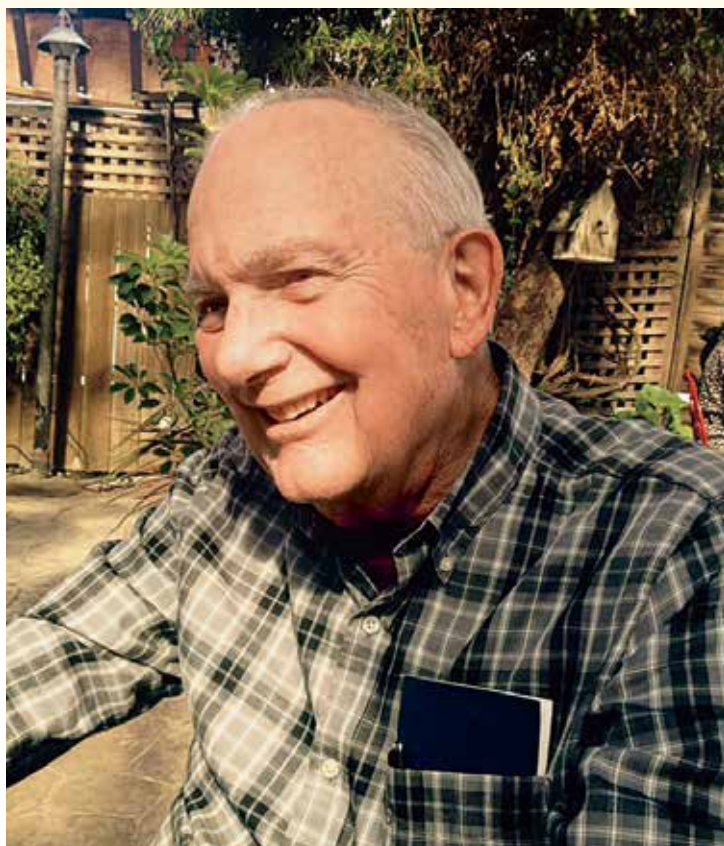
Victoria Siaumau finds community, support and academic inspiration through her USN and MSP mentorships.

## HOW CAN STUDENTS GET INVOLVED?

Students can sign up for MSP and/or the USN by filling out an interest form on the CLA website:

- [cla.calpoly.edu/msp](https://cla.calpoly.edu/msp)
- [cla.calpoly.edu/usn](https://cla.calpoly.edu/usn)





# THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS REMEMBER JOHN RUSSELL WITH A SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT.

**P**rofessor Emeritus John Russell joined Cal Poly's music faculty in 1968, teaching music theory, piano and voice until 2005. He independently created the College Singers in 1969, Cal Poly's first vocal ensemble including both male and female voices, and co-founded San Luis Obispo's Mozart Festival in 1971. In 1996, Russell was awarded the Cal Poly Distinguished Teaching Award. He also served as chair from 1996 to 1999, leading the music department with a quiet attention to detail and a willingness to listen.

Russell was soft-spoken yet had a natural ability to connect with students on a personal level and inspired a long-lasting love of music in many. He was highly esteemed by colleagues and students, and beloved by his wife, Carol, and two children, Kelly Trost and Bryan Russell. After he passed away in 2019, Carol, Emeritus Music Professor Clif Swanson, and former students Gary Rust and Karen Worchester (Biological Sciences, '92) established the John Russell Scholarship Endowment. Their goal is to support future generations of music students in pursuing their passions, as Russell had supported so many.

With many others adding their support, the John Russell Scholarship Endowment surpassed the initial fundraising goal of \$25,000, with a

new goal set for \$50,000. The fund will remain open for new gifts so that anyone wishing to honor Russell's memory may contribute. Just as John Russell quietly made a difference in so many lives, these gifts—both large and small—will make a difference for many students for years to come.

Below, some of the endowment's supporters share memories about Russell.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES ABOUT JOHN?

"John had the ability to really connect with his students. Except for time with his family, he was happiest in the classroom. He spent exceptional amounts of time with his students, and his office door was always open if a student needed additional help. He was able to inspire and encourage his students to strive to reach higher expectations of themselves." —Carol Russell

"I remember first meeting John in the halls of the music building, probably during my first week of college as a 17-year-old. I had been



practicing my flute, and he stopped to talk to me. I mentioned I had sung in high school, though I wasn't enrolled in choir at Cal Poly. He reached out and invited me in, to join the University Singers. I was shy, and something about the way he did that opened that door for me that day, and singing in his choir may have been one of the most cherished experiences of my life. He saw my potential long before I did!" —Karen Worcester

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST VALUABLE LESSONS HE TAUGHT YOU?

"John set a level of quality that I don't think has ever been exceeded. He was a phenomenal conductor and set very high standards. He would record every rehearsal and take it home to take notes on what could be made better. His choruses were at a professional level. He specialized in picking people with clear voices and blending them." —Clif Swanson

"The seeds for my own devotion to music were all planted in the music department at Cal Poly. In the late '70s, the department didn't offer a major, but the professors, including John, Clif Swanson, Ron Ratcliffe and Bill Johnson, were passionate educators who knew exactly how to provide very high-level musical experiences that have informed every aspect of my life that followed. I have traveled the world hearing



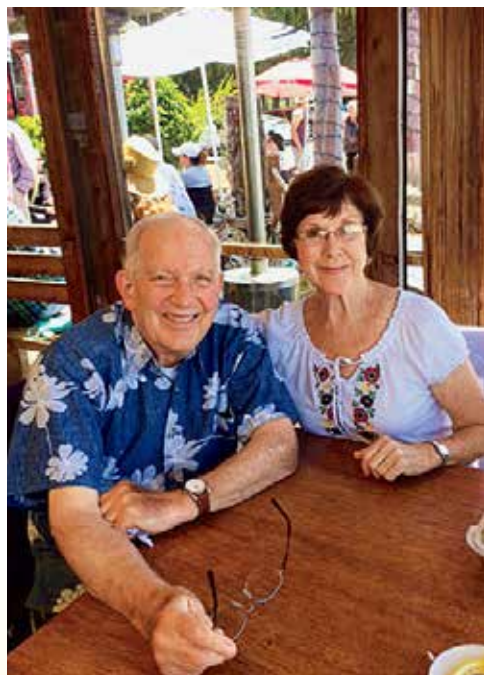
From left: The Russells' son, Bryan, and daughter, Kelly Trost.

music everywhere, and my own tastes and interests all stem from these early experiences. It is my hope that the endowment will give similar opportunities to present and future students, that may touch their lives in such deep and enduring ways. I can think of no better way to honor John's legacy than ongoing scholarship to support lives filled with the study of music." —Gary Rust

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO CREATE A SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT IN JOHN'S HONOR?

"It was John's fondest wish to leave a scholarship endowment for future music students. After he passed away, several students and friends asked about making donations in his name. Clif Swanson was instrumental in organizing and helping to create an endowment in John's name. I know it would have made John very happy to know that the endowment is now possible." —Carol Russell

*To learn more about the John Russell Scholarship Endowment, contact Adam Jarman at [ajarman@calpoly.edu](mailto:ajarman@calpoly.edu).*



Professor Emeritus John Russell and his wife, Carol.

**"John had the ability to really connect with his students. Except for time with his family, he was happiest in the classroom. ... He was able to inspire and encourage his students to strive to reach higher expectations of themselves."**

**—Carol Russell**

## Enabling Excellence

Annual gifts from donors and alumni enable the College of Liberal Arts and its departments to provide timely support for Learn by Doing projects and extracurricular programs, and the CLA endowment generates lasting income. Together, these funds allow the college to sustain the margin of excellence that Cal Poly students and alumni expect and deserve.

Scan this code with your smartphone camera to give online.



Make a one-time or recurring gift online at [giving.calpoly.edu](https://giving.calpoly.edu).

## 2020-21 Giving Statistics

A numerical look at donations to the College of Liberal Arts

The College of Liberal Arts is impacted by new commitments

➤ **\$1,247,722**

Every gift counts!

➤ **82%**  
is from gifts  
under \$1,000

➤ **370 LOYAL DONORS** gave for 10 or more years consecutively, including 104 who have given more than 25 years

In total, 1,433 people and organizations supported CLA

47%  
**alumni**

26%  
**Cal Poly families**

27%  
**other generous  
friends and  
organizations**

The College of Liberal Arts' total endowment

**\$12,680,494**

Paid out from endowment to the College of Liberal Arts

**\$367,034**



The Mustang Band's brass section rehearsed at Alex G. Spanos Stadium with modified masks and instrument covers.



## Thank you to the 2020-21 members of the Dean's Advisory Council, who have provided invaluable guidance and support to the College of Liberal Arts.

### James W. apRoberts

(Art and Design, '02)  
CEO/Co-founder, Subplot Studio

### Ernie Chapa

(Graphic Communication, '92)  
Business Development Director,  
Moebius Solutions Inc.

### Hon. Eugenia A. Eyherabide

(Political Science, '81)  
Superior Court Judge,  
San Diego County

### John Hinton

(Speech Communication, '96)  
National Accounts Sales Manager,  
The Hartford

### Sarah Carvalho Khan

(English, '98)  
Director, Global Talent Development & Performance,  
Align Technology

### Howard A. Lim

(Art and Design, '89)  
President, HOW Creative

### Richard L. Pinckard

(Political Science, '80)  
Senior Partner,  
Bobbitt, Pinckard and Fields, APC

### Christopher Trapani

(Political Science, '90)  
Founder and CEO,  
Sereno Group Real Estate



## RECOGNIZING THE CLA'S HONORED ALUMNA, LAURA LAWTON

Laura Lawton (Graphic Communication, '90) was recognized as the 2020 CLA Honored Alumna. Since earning her degree, Lawton has become the owner and president at Lawton Printing Services as the fourth generation in her family to lead the Spokane, Washington, business.

Lawton has worked at the family business for more than 30 years since starting in the screen printing department in high school. As a transfer student to Cal Poly her junior year, Lawton found her place on campus by forging friendships in the Graphic Communication Department while working for University Graphic Systems (UGS) and learning valuable skills for her career. She applied her practical hands-on experience running printing presses when she returned to Lawton Printing Services after college, proving that she was well qualified to run the business, regardless of her family name.

During Lawton's time studying graphic communication, the department had a majority male faculty and student body. However, demographics have changed dramatically in 40 years to include mostly female students. As one of the few women to be inducted into the printing hall of fame, Lawton is a vital role model for current students beginning their careers. "We need more thoughts and ideas from all different people to come into our industry and continue to elevate what we do," Lawton said.

Lawton has led her company through many changes, adapting to new technologies and offering a variety of personalized digital printing, offset commercial printing and marketing solutions. She has made sustainability a large priority at Lawson Printing, implementing sustainable printing with Forest Steward Council certification, use of recycled paper and soy-based inks.

In addition to running her business, Lawton is very involved in the printing industry and at Cal Poly. In 2016, she was inducted into the Printing Impressions/RIT Printing Industry Hall of Fame, and she served as chair of Young Print Professionals Group from 2004 to 2016. Lawton has served on more than 10 national printing industries and boards, serving as chair on four. At Cal Poly, Lawton has been a member of the Graphic Communication Advisory Board since 2014, and as of 2021, she serves as chair of the board.

"We need more thoughts and ideas from all different people to come into our industry and continue to elevate what we do."

—Laura Lawton



## 1990s

**Robert Tanner** (Political Science, '92) recently served as the lead negotiator for the Telecommunications Services chapter in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

## 2000s

**Heather Lee** (Child Development, '08) decided to close her bioenergetics office as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and is currently writing a book.

## 2010s

**William Thompson** (Psychology, '12) returned to campus to pursue a master's degree in business administration. During his graduate education, Thompson was introduced to Cal Poly biomedical engineering alumna Sidney Collin and together they co-founded De Oro Devices.

**Lauren Castro** (Music, '13) moved to the mountains in Quebec, Canada, where she currently works as the knowledge and content manager for the travel app Hopper.

**Jenna Watson Gudgel** (Journalism, '14) recently married longtime friend and Cal Poly engineering alumnus Garrett Gudgel. They now live together in the Bay Area where Watson Gudgel works as the PR and communications manager at HR.com. In her free time, she is also serving as the 2020 president of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and reflects fondly on her days in the Cal Poly chapter.

**Sean Bird** (Journalism, '18) created Everjourney as his senior project in 2018. Since then, Everjourney has grown into a full-fledged philanthropic organization. Everjourney sells apparel and cycling kits to raise money for One Bicycle Foundation, a nonprofit organization that purchases and provides bicycles to an orphanage in Kenya, as well as youth in other developing nations.

**Antonio Flamenco** (Art and Design, '18) works as a product designer at Workday. In his free time, Flamenco is also a mentor on the ADPList, helping young designers navigate their careers.

**Irebid Gilbert** (Master of Public Policy, '18) created and co-founded Herencia Indigena. The organization trains trilingual individuals to facilitate communication between health care providers and Indigenous communities throughout the Central Coast.

**Sierra Hyland** (Graphic Communication, '18) recently competed in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics on the Mexican national softball team.

**Molly O'Brien** (Journalism, '18) is working as a freelance writer for a variety of publications such as *The Washington Post*, *Business Insider*, *Travel + Leisure*, and more. In the past year, she created a series of stories called "The COVID Chronicles," which feature the resilience of humanity worldwide through personal stories. These stories are collected from around the world, including from people in New Zealand, Japan and South Korea, detailing the struggles that they have overcome during the pandemic.

## 2020s

**Cameron Pedretti** (Sociology, '20) is pursuing a Master of Science in Social Research Methods at the London School of Economics.

**Annie Margolis** (Communication Studies, '21) is working as an assistant dance coach for the Calabasas Dance Team.

**Brandon Roul** (Political Science, '21) is a J.D. candidate at Stanford Law School, and plans to pursue a career in civil rights.

## CLASS NOTES

Share your recent news in the next Impact magazine at [cla.calpoly.edu/update](http://cla.calpoly.edu/update).





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# STAY IN TOUCH WITH US

THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS COMMUNITY

## ATTEND

Check our calendar at [cla.calpoly.edu/events](http://cla.calpoly.edu/events) for the latest updates on CLA events and performances.

## MENTOR

Provide support to students and expand your network through Cal Poly Career Connections, Cal Poly's exclusive online and mentoring platform at [careerconnections.calpoly.edu](http://careerconnections.calpoly.edu).

## PARTNER

To learn more about CLA partnership and volunteer opportunities, contact Adam Jarman, assistant dean for development, at [ajarman@calpoly.edu](mailto:ajarman@calpoly.edu).

## RECRUIT

Connect with Cal Poly's exceptional students and alumni at [careerservices.calpoly.edu/recruit-here](http://careerservices.calpoly.edu/recruit-here).

## UPDATE

Make sure we have your current contact information, or share news and highlights with us at [cla.calpoly.edu/update](http://cla.calpoly.edu/update).

