



COMMUNITY NEEDS



STUDENT PROJECTS



LEARN BY DOING



CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP CAN BE LEARNED

Mathematics professor Erin Pearse is heading up the Initiative for Climate Leadership and Resilience, a new interdisciplinary group focused on implementing solutions to climate change. Below he explains the initiative and why it's important.

WHAT IS THE INITIATIVE FOR CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE?

We're a group of faculty who are working to build an organization that's addressing climate change and sustainability issues on the academic side of campus. The campus is doing a great job of decarbonizing its own facilities operations, but in terms of educating students to become the next generation of climate leaders, there's more that needs to be done.

WHO'S INVOLVED IN THE INITIATIVE?

Most people think that in order to do something substantive, you need to be an environmental science major or something similar, maybe an electrical engineer. But it turns out that the types of jobs that need to be done and the skill sets for them are much broader. Right now, we actually have all the technology we need to solve the climate crisis. What's missing is the human part of that solution — the ability and willingness to implement those solutions.

And that means educating people, building consensus, getting political reforms passed and then doing the ins and outs of daily work to develop plans and make infrastructure changes. This requires people who are in communications and education and English, people who are in political science and marketing and graphic design and music, people from all over campus, including disciplines you wouldn't necessarily think of.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DO THIS WORK AT CAL POLY?

Climate change is the biggest problem humanity has ever faced, and it will be the defining challenge for the next generation. Any university that doesn't educate students in this area will be left behind. Cal Poly is in a great position to lead in this area because of our Learn by Doing approach, our comprehensive polytechnic nature and our location.

San Luis Obispo is a climate leader. We're ahead of the curve in many respects, and Cal Poly students and faculty can support the work the city is doing with targeted research projects. It also helps people with their climate anxiety, to see that there's actually a lot of work being done and they can contribute.

There are a lot of ways to get involved, regardless of your background or training. Look at what you're good at, what needs doing and what brings you joy. I guarantee you there is a common point of intersection for those three things that lies in climate work. //

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— ERIN PEARSE