



# LIFELONG LEARNER

## Advice and reflections of teaching from one of Cal Poly's best

When Anne Marie Bergen (Biological Sciences, '85) returned to Cal Poly 10 years ago as a faculty member, she had received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics and advised state leaders on STEM education. Bergen will retire in June. Here she passes on the wisdom she gained as a passionate teacher and champion of Learn by Doing.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE AS A TEACHER?

The philosophy that I realized I had as a young teacher has three components to it: active learning, meaningful experiences and compassionate teaching.

### HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THAT PHILOSOPHY?

When I was a Cal Poly student, I did a co-op internship as a naturalist, an environmental educator. That experience was a real pivot point in my entire career. I hadn't considered teaching as a profession, but being with young people in the environment was such a match and inspiration — I was hooked! Being out on the trails with students, exploring, having an experience that connected them to the world around them and noticing how strongly the active and meaningful learning experience affected them has totally directed my entire career.



### ANNE MARIE'S PHILOSOPHY

ACTIVE LEARNING

MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

COMPASSIONATE TEACHING

### HOW DO YOU INVITE STUDENTS TO USE LEARN BY DOING IN THEIR FUTURE CLASSROOMS?

What's extremely important is for them to have that learning experience themselves. We don't just tell them, "This is how we want you to teach." They experience it in a way that they're drawn into the content, drawn into the learning, drawn into asking questions and being curious. They are able to understand how powerful those learning experiences are and transfer them to their own classrooms.

### WHAT'S YOUR FONDEST TEACHING MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AT CAL POLY?

Often I facilitate the first class our liberal studies students ever have in college. And four years later, they walk into my class again as seniors. Seeing their progress, their passion and their ease has been a fantastic gift. To watch them through this learning arc has been tremendous for me.

### WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR FUTURE TEACHERS?

Teachers who are energized and successful are really open to understanding who they have in their learning environment and excited about using different methodologies and pedagogies to engage them. It's about having doors open for all who walk in and being that curious learner alongside them. //

**Pictured: (top)** Anne Marie Bergen's STEM Learning and Teaching class creates Rube Goldberg designs and newscasts in a technology workshop led by middle and high school students. **(below)** Bio 211 students observe insects from egg or larva to adult. **Photographer (bottom):** Sean Galusha