

ARE YOU AN ASPIRING CHEESEMAKER?



APPLY TO BE A PART OF OUR

CURD PROGRAM PILOT



THE DAIRY PRODUCTS TECHNOLOGY CENTER (DPTC) AT CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO IS PROUD TO LAUNCH THE PILOT COHORT OF THE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERSTANDING AND REIMAGINING DAIRY (CURD) PROGRAM, A HYBRID TRAINING EXPERIENCE DESIGNED TO EQUIP EMERGING CHEESEMAKERS WITH THE SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL, AND PRACTICAL SKILLS NEEDED TO CRAFT HIGH-QUALITY ARTISAN AND INDUSTRIAL CHEESES.

APPLY HERE



Applications Open:
December 16th, 2025 - January 23rd, 2026

For the pilot offering, accepted participants will receive complimentary registration and will play an essential role in shaping the future of the program. This program is ideal for individuals focused on becoming professional cheesemakers intending to start their own and/or already working for a cheesemaking business. No prior experience is required, however the CURD program is not intended for home artisans. This highly selective program combines online foundational modules with intensive, hands-on production training in San Luis Obispo, California.



Daphne Zepos
Teaching Endowment



Sponsored by the PCC-DBII (Pacific Coast Coalition - Dairy Business Innovation Initiative), Supported by DTZE (Daphne Zepos Teaching Endowment)



Requirements

- FILL OUT [THIS FORM](#)
- SUBMIT PERSONAL STATEMENT (750 WORDS MAX)
- PROVIDE BRIEF RESUME
- NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN COMPLIMENTARY REGISTRATION:

- Tuition for prerequisite online modules
- Monthly group discussions led by experts
- Travel reimbursement to San Luis Obispo, CA (up to \$700)
- Hotel accommodations (arrive August 9th, 2026, depart August 22, 2026)
- Two-weeks of hands-on training and expert instruction at Cal Poly Creamery/Pilot Plant
- Tours of local cheesemaking businesses
- Daily lunch during the in-person program, welcome, and graduation dinners

PROGRAM CALENDAR

TOPICS	COURSE DURATION	DEADLINE & DISCUSSION
Introductory Zoom	1 Hour	February 5th, 2026
Module 1: Milk	10 - 12 Hours	March 3, 2026
Module 2: Food Safety	10 - 12 Hours	March 31, 2026
Module 3: Cheesemaking Basics	10 - 12 Hours	April 28, 2026
Module 4: Cheesemaking Styles I	2 - 4 Hours	May 26, 2026
Module 4: Cheesemaking Styles II	2 - 4 Hours	July 2, 2026
In-Person Hands-On Training	2 Weeks	August 10-21, 2026
Module 5: Commercialization	2 - 4 Hours	September 29, 2026





MEET CURD'S FOUNDER

Dr. Carmen Licon is Director at Cal Poly's Dairy Products Technology Center (DPTC), where she drives innovation for dairy manufacturers. She was an Assistant Professor for Food Processing and Engineering at Fresno State's Department of Food Science and Nutrition. She holds an M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Science and Engineering from the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain, as well as a B.Sc. in Food Engineering from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico. She is also a Certified Cheese Professional by the American Cheese Society. She is Director of the Pacific Coast Coalition, a position she has held since Fall 2021. In addition to her academic and research accomplishments, Dr. Licon actively champions innovation and empowers the artisanal cheese community. Her passion and leadership serve as a driving force, inspiring the next generation of cheese makers and dairy professionals.

SPONSORED BY



The PCC-DBII is part of a national initiative to help the dairy industry address ongoing supply chain and food system challenges by offering resources via grants to dairy businesses, technical assistance and consultancies, workforce training, internships, industry networking, promoting culturally diverse value-added products, and access to pilot plants. This initiative currently operates in six states — Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington — and is supported by collaborative partners and grant funding to steward over \$26.7 million for innovation and market expansion.

SUPPORTED BY



The DZTE started in 2012 funding the Daphne Zepos Teaching Award, as a scholarship to grow a squad of cheese professionals who teach about the history, culture, and techniques in making, aging, and selling cheese.