In 2015-16, the Honors Program recognized 400 students from 59 majors across all 6 Cal Poly Colleges.

165 first-year Honors students with an average GPA of 3.62 will complete HNRS 100 this year.

The program offered 43 Honors courses and seminars in 2015-16.

Over 100 students will be admitted to the Honors Program in fall 2016.
Choosing a college is a difficult, daunting, and sometimes stressful task. That said, for me, Cal Poly was an easy choice. The campus quickly felt like home and the surrounding town was friendly. In addition, the Honors Program provided encouraging support and academic challenges. San Luis Obispo is accurately referred to as “the Happiest City in America.” As a student at Poly, I have enjoyed the downtown area, Farmer’s Market, and fantastic cafes and restaurants. I have especially enjoyed exploring the Central Coast by camping in breathtaking locations like Big Sur and Montana de Oro. Cal Poly students live in such a beautiful place, and as an added bonus, classes provide opportunities to take full advantage of the local surroundings. For example, a botany class takes weekly hikes throughout the surrounding canyons and foothills, and a marine science class regularly completes dives off the Cal Poly pier, each a perfect example of Cal Poly’s Learn-by-Doing philosophy.

Transitioning to life in college will likely result in some culture shock, as students may not be accustomed to living on their own and being responsible for deadlines, cooking their own meals, dirty clothes, etc. I cannot recommend Cal Poly more highly. That said, when you tour potential universities, pay close attention to the feel of the campus and the surrounding community (this is where you will live for the next four to five years!). Also, investigate different opportunities that will be available through programs, clubs, and co-curricular activities. Lastly, relax and enjoy the moment; this is a special time in your life. You’ll find a home.

Amanda Schafer, Economics

As a first-year student, I prioritized involvement and academic success. These priorities greatly influenced my decision to join the Honors Program at Cal Poly. I am so happy with this decision as the program has exceeded all of my expectations. With support from the Honors Program, I have performed well academically, gained experience as a peer mentor and teaching assistant, and participated in more activities than I thought possible. Being a part of Honors has also contributed to my social life at Cal Poly as I have met many dedicated students from programs across campus.

I wish luck to the soon-to-be first-year college students as they review their pro-and-con lists. I cannot recommend Cal Poly more highly. That said, when you tour potential universities, pay close attention to the feel of the campus and the surrounding community (this is where you will live for the next four to five years!). Also, investigate different opportunities that will be available through programs, clubs, and co-curricular activities. Lastly, relax and enjoy the moment; this is a special time in your life. You’ll find a home.

We have a winner!

Congratulations to Ross De Vito on his winning t-shirt design!
The Honors Program is proud to announce completion of the first quarter of its Peer Mentoring Program. Serving over 50 participants, the Peer Mentoring Program pairs first-year students with Honors Program student mentors who provide guidance, coaching, and friendship. Academics is not the only focus. The program provides social opportunities, which help the students to achieve their full potential while becoming active members of the Honors community. Our program kickoff, which occurred during winter term, is just the beginning. Starting in spring, the peer mentoring program will reach over 100 Honors students, doubling in size and activity. Be on the lookout for upcoming social activities and group study periods, which are open to all students in the Honors Program. We look forward to continued improvement of the Peer Mentoring Program with support from a dedicated group of Honors students.

If you would like to become involved with the Peer Mentoring Program, or want more information, feel free to email honorsmentor@calpoly.edu.
Student Spotlight

Over the summer, second year Environmental Management and Protection major, Benjamin Christensen, worked at Sandia National Labs in their renewable energies department. He and his team set out to find a way to efficiently access more hydrogen as a cleaner option for energy transportation. Though hydrogen is the most prevalent element in the universe, there is hardly any on earth. For example, Ben noted “if you poured two nalgene bottles into an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and then needed to find those same water molecules in the whole pool, that’s how much hydrogen there is in the earth’s atmosphere.”

So where can we get hydrogen? The most common technique is hydrolysis, the process of using electricity to break the bonds between the hydrogen and oxygen in water to separate and use the hydrogen gas. To do this, one needs a catalyst to lower the activation energy to break the bond. But today’s industry standard catalysts are platinum and iridium, both very expensive rare earth metals.

This is where Ben and his team come in; they worked to find non-rare earth metals that were just as efficient catalysts (and nearly 1000 times cheaper than platinum and iridium). Through this research, they discovered a way to make the hydrolysis process more efficient. The catalyst is bifunctional, meaning it works on both of the reactions necessary for hydrolysis, and is effective in seawater. Ben and his team didn’t reinvent the wheel, but they certainly added to the scientific community’s understanding. Ben has submitted the project to the Journal of Materials Chemistry A, where acceptance and publication are pending.

Ben’s freshman year he lived in Honors House where he met some of his closest friends at Cal Poly. The community fostered his intellectual growth. “I think some of my most engaging and enjoyable classes have been Honors” such as Public Speaking (Honors 101) and Reasoning, Writing and Argumentation (Honors 145). Ben also utilizes the Honors study space in Kennedy Library quite frequently. The Honors Program is proud to have wonderful students like Ben who are fully engaged in the program and using their Honors education to help create positive change in the world.

Ben Christensen

JOIN US WEDS MAY 11TH FOR THE 7th Inning STRETCH During the 7TH WEEK OF THE QUARTER 10am to 2pm · · · · · · Frozen Refreshments Provided
Have you heard? The Honors Program has partnered with Cal Poly Study Abroad and the International Center to create an Honors experience in London this summer! Travel to London is very popular with Cal Poly students, offering the unique opportunity to study in one of the world’s greatest capitals. This year, over 50 Cal Poly students will participate in the 6-week summer program, and eight of these students will represent the Honors Program! Faculty members teaching in London typically forgo the traditional lecture, offering fantastic opportunities for students to explore and learn about the city. This summer promises to offer similar experiences. We are extremely fortunate to have partnered with Professor Josh Machamer to teach an Honors seminar linked with this Global Theatre course. As part of the seminar, Honors students will work in small teams with Professor Machamer to investigate community theatre productions throughout the city. Most certainly a once-in-a-lifetime “learn by doing” experience! The summer promises the opportunity to enjoy and discuss MANY theatre productions. Upset that you missed out on this opportunity? Don’t fret. The Honors Program is elated to announce we will be providing more Honors Abroad opportunities in 2017. Please stay tuned for more information about the land down under. G’day!
Honors students Alex Campbell (Sophomore, Biological Science), Michael Cantrell (Sophomore, Computer Science), and Chase Hemming (Junior, Civil Engineering) have been accepted to present research findings at the upcoming Western Psychology Association (WPA) conference. The three began conducting a cell phone separation anxiety study in their Honors seminar attached to General Psychology (PSY 201). The students were advised by Dr. Laura Freberg. Prior to this course, Campbell, Cantrell, and Hemming had never conducted a research study, which made this seminar “a really cool opportunity [where] we all learned a lot,” as Cantrell says.

Their investigation is a response to an east coast study on cell phone separation anxiety which concluded that millennials do, indeed, feel anxiety when they are prohibited or unable to answer a ringing phone. However, this study had many flaws, not the least of which was a lack of control group. That’s where our trio comes in; they responded to...
this study with one of their own. The findings are probably surprising to some. They found no correlation between a user’s anxiety levels and reacting to their personal cell phone ringing. Instead, the study suggests that a rise in anxiety stems from the fact that cell phone ringing is a disruption.

This awesome group of students will not be the first Honors group to present at the WPA conference. Last Spring, we featured Zachary Glazer, whose Google Glass study was also accepted. Outstanding Honors faculty member, Dr. Freberg, helps foster these experiences. “I have taught everything from community college up through Ivies and everybody learns, but it is especially fun to work with students who are already really good at picking up the nuts and bolts and take it quickly to the next level and start thinking creatively about the material.” Dr. Freberg is well respected by students in her classes because she focuses on student potential and growth. “From the start, I thought Dr. Freberg was awesome. She was really easy to work with and was able to get us all involved,” says Hemming.

Hemming also really appreciated the critical thinking required as part of the Honors seminar. “This gave us the opportunity to do hands-on research and do the experiment on our own,” Hemming says. “The experience has really helped me feel like I am a step ahead in the research I need to conduct in my other classes and group projects.” This sentiment is echoed by many of the Honors students completing the seminar. “I want to do research in the future and I had the opportunity to make a research proposal a couple weeks ago and this project helped me have an idea of what I was doing for that,” says Campbell.

Overall, Cantrell has enjoyed the Honors classes where he can be with other Honors students who are really focused on what they are learning. He appreciates the opportunity and is impressed with the commitment of his peers. Cantrell is quick to point out: “in every single Honors section I’ve been in, everybody cares.” When surrounded by ambitious, academically-driven students, Cantrell feels like he performs better. “The Honors Program has given me more of a drive to stay on top of things and maintain my GPA,” Cantrell says.

Dr. Freberg is continuing the study with her current group of PSY 201 students. The current Honors seminar section, with Dr. Freberg’s guidance, is looking at time perspectives and how that may affect risk of anxiety and depression. Stay tuned! Interested in participating yourself? The Honors PSY 201 seminar is typically offered during Winter quarter.
It’s a special time of year in the Honors Program, witnessing our first-year students successfully transition to life on campus, celebrating with our graduating seniors, and recruiting new students for next fall. The Honors leadership team continues to focus on its members and improving, which means many more activities and learning experiences. What a fantastic time to be in the program! You have such a great opportunity to leave a legacy. I encourage you to brainstorm ways to improve the program for future members. Please share your ideas with us. I also encourage you to seize available opportunities. There are many ways you can build your legacy right now, with ongoing initiatives related to study abroad, the Honors journal, mentoring, Honors House in Cerro Vista, Honors Council, and the Honors curriculum. Please visit the office to learn about more ways to become involved. Have a great spring!

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