To the Campus Community:

I am writing to share a number of important updates with you. As you may have heard during my Fall Convocation address, there are many reasons to be optimistic about Cal Poly’s future. However, realizing our full potential requires us to take some important actions today.

**Campus Fees**

I have long advocated that improving our financial aid and scholarship programs is essential to fulfilling our ambitious student success goals. Currently, we are more expensive for low-income California students than UC campuses, after adjusting for financial aid and scholarships. This prevents many high-achieving, low-income students from choosing to enroll at Cal Poly. This is not a sustainable situation, and it requires action. We have a responsibility as a public university to act to become more accessible to all Californians. In addition, we must enhance our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff, and strengthen our overall financial stability as an institution.

Given these needs, we will be initiating a shared-governance process through the Campus Fee Advisory Committee (CFAC) to review and significantly revise our campus fee structure for new students starting Fall 2022. Additional information will be provided following review by CFAC, the Academic Senate Budget and Long-Range Planning Committee and ASI leadership.

The positive impacts of this additional funding would be experienced by all students and colleges while increasing the diversity of the student body and improving the quality of their Learn by Doing education.

Information provided in the future will also detail the relationship of this proposal to Cal Poly Scholars and the Cal Poly Opportunity Fee. For a report on this program, [please select this link](#).

**Quarters to Semesters**

On a different but equally important topic, many of you are aware that almost a decade ago the CSU Chancellor’s Office asked all quarter-calendar campuses to transition to a semester calendar. Today, Cal Poly is the last CSU campus remaining on a quarter system.

Chancellor Castro has informed me that he expects the university to transition to semesters by
the 2025-26 academic year. The communication below from the chancellor details the rationale and provides direction for Cal Poly.

The chancellor outlines three primary reasons why a semester-based calendar will be beneficial to our students. First, a semester calendar will better allow us to address some important articulation and equity issues; second, it will enhance student success in several areas, such as summer internship start and end dates and study abroad; and third, we can achieve greater administrative efficiency both locally at Cal Poly and more widely as part of the CSU system.

I believe Chancellor Castro raises valid points regarding the benefits of adopting semesters. I share his concern about Cal Poly being perceived – rightly or wrongly – as needing to address issues of equitable access and student success. In addition to the considerations he raises, I see this as an opportunity to: achieve greater pedagogical depth in courses at all levels; retain some fast-paced courses by having terms of variable lengths, as we do during summer; rethink how to balance teaching and research for faculty; and revisit curricular priorities across the curriculum.

For all of those reasons, I support the chancellor’s requirement that Cal Poly begin the process of adopting a semester-based calendar.

Transfer Students
As part of our effort to serve the people of California, I am also announcing that we are beginning an effort to enhance Cal Poly’s accessibility to transfer students. I have every confidence that we can expand opportunities to a broader spectrum of qualified students while continuing our tradition of excellence, our focus on student success and our emphasis on Learn by Doing.

Executive Vice President and Provost Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, Interim Vice President Terrance Harris and our academic deans will lead this initiative, which will include an enhanced partnership with Allan Hancock Community College, the community college in our region that serves the highest percentage of local students.

We are hopeful that this partnership will serve as a model that can be expanded to other community colleges throughout the state. It should be noted that alignment with our community college partners to facilitate transfer is another reason it is important for us to
support the chancellor’s direction that we move to the semester system.

Summary
I realize the initiatives announced today are significant and will in some way impact every member of the campus community. I urge you to carefully read and review the chancellor’s letter and additional documents we will provide in the future. In doing so, I think you will agree that, collectively, these efforts, along with financial support from the CSU, will provide the groundwork to catapult Cal Poly toward an even brighter tomorrow — with enhanced student success driven by Learn by Doing and a fully implemented teacher-scholar model with additional tenure-track faculty (allowing for more time in research and other experiences with small groups of students).

As previously noted, campus leadership will engage in deep and collaborative conversations with CFAC and in accordance with shared governance as these initiatives are discussed and take shape. I will regularly communicate additional details as they become available.

In closing, I want to emphasize that while change can initially feel uncomfortable, these significant changes are essential to Cal Poly’s brightest future. Indeed, they are part of our path forward and upward.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Armstrong