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Mustangs nose tackle James Chen is studying to be a neurosurgeon.

A SWEET CAREER ALREADY UNDERWAY

Some Cal Poly students launch their own businesses while they're still earning their degrees. Business sophomore Leah Post started when she was still in high school. The company she co-founded, Brandini Toffee, is going strong and recently notched an appearance on



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The Food Network's "Chef vs. City" show.

WELCOME, CLASS OF '14

New freshmen and transfer students get to know Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo in this year's Week of Welcome.

A GATHERING OF GENERATIONS

More than 100 descendants of past Cal Poly President Julian A. McPhee gathered on campus for a reunion over the summer.

UNIVERSITY NEWS

Cal Poly honors displaced Japanese-American students from WWII; the Technology Park is set to open; the Concrete Canoe team takes a national championship in its own back yard; and more.

ALUMNI

PUTTING THE WHOLE (TECH) WORLD IN YOUR HANDS

Ain McKendrick, a 1994 computer science grad, helped develop the PalmPilot before he even graduated. Now, he's bringing Netflix movies and TV shows right to your fingertips.

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

From CNN International to MTV to American Idol to the Los Angeles Times and the Sacramento Bee, plenty of Cal Poly alumni made headlines this summer.

GIVING

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Employer matching gifts give more power to donors' dollars.

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University News

U.S. News Calls Cal Poly: Best in the West for 18th Year



For the 18th straight year, Cal Poly has been rated the best public-master's university in the West in U.S. News & World Report's 2011 America's Best Colleges guidebook.

Cal Poly again ranked sixth in the magazine's overall list of the West's best universities, including both public and private institutions, that provide "a full range of undergraduate and master's-level programs but few, if any, doctoral programs."

U.S. News ranks colleges that grant doctoral degrees, such as those in the University of California system, in a separate category.

"We are pleased that U.S. News has recognized the university once again for a level of excellence that Cal Poly faculty, staff and students have worked to achieve, and of which the entire university community is justifiably proud," said Interim president Robert Glidden.

Cal Poly's College of Engineering program moved up one spot to second best public master's engineering program in the country, bested only by the U.S. Military Academy.

[Click here for more on the U.S. News rankings](#)

Cal Poly Moves Up on Forbes Magazine's List of Best Colleges and Universities

Cal Poly ranks No. 177 on Forbes magazine's list of the 610 best colleges and universities in the U.S. for 2010, up 24 places from 2009. The list, released this week, puts Cal Poly at No. 21 among 50 California colleges and universities featured.

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And just as last year, Cal Poly is the highest ranked California State University campus on the list. It is the third year Forbes has produced the list. Cal Poly appeared at No. 369 on the inaugural 2008 list, and then at No. 201 in 2009.

“With our rigorous academics, bright students, dedicated faculty and alumni and focus on hands-on learning, it’s no surprise that Cal Poly continues to climb the ranks of Forbes’ list,” said interim Cal Poly President Robert Glidden. “Cal Poly is only improving on its longstanding reputation for producing committed, well-prepared professionals who make a real difference in the world.”

[Click here to read more on the Forbes ranking](#)

Cal Poly Presents Honorary Degrees to Japanese Students Interned During WWII

During a special ceremony June 7, Cal Poly administrators presented honorary degrees to four former students and the families of seven others – all of the students Japanese-Americans whose academic pursuits were halted by internment during World War II.

Cal Poly is one of six campuses in the California State University system determined to have had students who were removed from their programs and interned in 1941 or 1942. The CSU Board of Trustees voted at its September 23, 2009 meeting to award special honorary bachelor of humane letters degrees to CSU students of Japanese ancestry whose college educations were disrupted by forced internment.

The CSU-wide effort was called the Nisei Diploma Project, taking its name from the Japanese term Nisei, which is used in countries in North America and Australia to refer to children born to Japanese immigrants in their new country.

“The internment of Japanese-Americans and Japanese immigrants during World War II represents the worst of a nation driven by fear and prejudice,” California State University Chancellor Charles B. Reed said of the project. “By issuing honorary degrees, we hope to achieve a small right in the face of such grave wrongs.”

Cal Poly President Emeritus Warren J. Baker conferred the honorary degrees in a ceremony at the University House. A luncheon for the former students and family members followed, featuring remarks from former CSU Trustee Joan Otomo-Corgel and Dan Krieger, professor emeritus of history at Cal Poly.

[Click here to read more about Cal Poly’s Nisei Project.](#)

[Click here to read more on the CSU Nisei Project.](#)



President Emeritus Warren J. Baker (far left) poses with former students who were forced to leave Cal Poly during World War II because of internment. These men, and families of others, received honorary degrees during a special ceremony on campus.

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Cal Poly Students Take Top Title in Scotland Dairy Judging Competition

Three Cal Poly students earned the top two team and individual awards in an international dairy cattle judging competition in Scotland.

Cal Poly Dairy Judging Team members Mandy Brazil, Kelli Carstensen and Sam Cheda traveled to the Royal Highlands Show in Scotland to participate in the invitational competition, held in late June.

The three Cal Poly students, along with recent high school graduate Rocco Cunningham, competed under the banner of the Petaluma Future Farmers of America. All four grew up in Petaluma and are longtime members of the Petaluma FFA group.

[Click here for more on the students' achievements in Scotland](#)

Cal Poly's Technology Park Opening with Two Tenants

Cal Poly recently signed a lease with Couto Solutions Inc. for approximately 3,500 square feet of space in the newly opened Cal Poly Technology Park.

Couto Solutions is a software development firm specializing in custom social networks for businesses and online communities. The company was founded in 2004 by Justin Couto, a former Cal Poly business graduate. Couto Solutions will maintain its headquarters, which includes its core software and development team, at the Tech Park.

Phase I of the Technology Park project encompasses a 25,000-square-foot building that was completed earlier this month. The first lease was signed in February with Applied Technologies Associates Inc. (ATA) for 3,000 square feet of space. ATA designs, builds and manufactures technology products for the oil industry.

Currently 9,000 square feet of space is leased, with 11,000 square feet of space still available. Individual labs/suites range from 500 to 3,200 square feet and are available for lease.

A project of Cal Poly's California Central Coast Research Partnership (C3RP), the Tech Park will serve as a home on campus for technology-based businesses – particularly firms engaged in applied research and development. Companies located in the park benefit from the expertise and skills of Cal Poly faculty and students.

[Click here for more on the Technology Park](#)

Cal Poly Takes National

Concrete Canoe Championship

Cal Poly's Concrete Canoe team earned first place in the 'America's Cup' of Civil Engineering, held in San Luis Obispo County on June 19, pulling past 21 other



the country and Canada logged thousands of hours researching, designing and winning combination of creativity, knowledge and teamwork.

collegiate teams to win American Society of Civil Engineers' 23rd annual National Concrete Canoe Competition.

It was the first national title for the Cal Poly team, which competed in a 170-pound, white canoe named the Amazona. The victory also marks the first time that a school has hosted and won the championship simultaneously.

The annual event challenges competing teams to design, create and race canoes made of concrete. Throughout the year, teams of civil engineering students from across constructing their concrete canoes in search of the

[Cal Poly's Concrete Canoe Team Wins National Championship](#) in June at an event hosted by the university in SLO County.

Cal Poly Recognized as Best Practice Award Winner in Energy Efficiency

Cal Poly received two best practice awards and an honorable mention for energy efficiency in June at the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference. The three awards are the most of any CSU awarded.

The university received top honors for its Student Sustainability Program, called Green Campus, and HVAC Design/Retrofit on the Recreation Center renovation, and honorable mention for Lighting Design/Retrofit for the Recreation Center renovation.

The awards are given as part of the 2010 Best Practice Awards competition for the Energy Efficiency Partnership Program. The partnership includes the University of California, the California State University and the California Community Colleges.

[Click here for more on Cal Poly's energy efficiency honors](#)

Two Cal Poly Wines Win Gold in Orange County

Two Cal Poly wines received gold medals recently at the Orange County Commercial Wine Competition. The winning wines were the 2008 Mustang Red, a red blend, and the 2008 Cal Poly 'Poly Royal' red dessert wine. Both were made by student winemakers in Cal Poly's Wine and Viticulture Program from grapes grown in San Luis Obispo County. The Cal Poly wines took the gold medals in one of the state's largest and most comprehensive competitions in a double-blind judging by wine industry peers. The winning "Mustang Red" and "Poly Royal" wines were featured at the Orange County Fair in July and August.

[Click here for more on Cal Poly's winning wines](#)

Cal Poly Team Invited to Compete in Division I Rugby League in 2011

Cal Poly has been invited to participate in the 2011 USA Rugby College Division I Premier Championship league.

Cal Poly is one of 32 teams from around the country that will compete in the new intercollegiate league, according to the invitation letter from USA Rugby. Other participating schools include Army, Navy, Air Force, Brigham Young University, Penn State and Dartmouth.

The teams will be grouped into four divisions of eight squads. Cal Poly will compete in the Pacific Division along with UC Berkeley, UCLA, Central Washington, Claremont, San Diego State, St. Mary's College and UC Davis.



Cal Poly's Rugby team in action.

"Cal Poly's history of success on the West Coast makes it a natural fit, and we are excited to have them in the league," said Todd Bell, Collegiate director for USA Rugby.

[Click here for more on the new rugby league](#)

Cal Poly 'Renaissance Man' Brian P. Lawler Named Educator of the Year

Cal Poly professor Brian P. Lawler has won this year's Educator of the Year Award for Higher Education from the Electronic Document Systems Foundation.

Lawler teaches color management, digital printing, and typography at Cal Poly. He is a graphic arts and photographic expert with more than 30 years of experience in photography, typography and prepress. His specialty is color management and the integration of color systems in prepress work flows. He has also taught a humanities course, Values and Technology, for several years.

The award is presented to academic professionals who are dedicated to the advancement of the industry through education and who have made significant contributions in the classroom with their students, in curriculum development and within the document management and graphic communications marketplace.

[Click here for more on Lawler's award](#)

IN MEMORIAM

Sandra Ogren, Retired Vice President for Advancement

Sandra Gardebring Ogren, who retired in the spring after six years as Cal Poly's vice president for Advancement, died July 20 after a lengthy battle with cancer. She was 63.

Ogren was named interim vice president in 2004. Former President Warren J. Baker made her appointment permanent in 2006. However, Ogren had battled a rare form of cancer for nine years, and the disease forced her to retire this past Spring quarter.

"I greatly respected Sandee's wisdom, sound advice and tireless efforts on behalf of the university," Baker said in a statement to the campus announcing Ogren's passing. "She made extraordinary contributions during her tenure. The structure for fund raising and friend raising she put in place will serve the university well for many decades. Sandee brought a new perspective to our work and was admired by all who came in contact with her."

Ogren came to Cal Poly from Minnesota, where she had worked as vice president for institutional relations for the University of Minnesota.

Before her career in higher education, Ogren served on the Minnesota Supreme Court from 1991 to 1998 and on a state appeals court from 1989 to 1991.

Her public service in the state also included service as a commissioner with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, director of the EPA's enforcement division, and commissioner with the state's Pollution Control Agency.

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المنارة للاستشارات

Alumni in the News Roundup: Fall 2010

Skip straight to: [Headliners](#) | [Academic Honors](#) | [Politics](#) | [Career Moves](#) | [Athletics](#) | [Passings](#)

From CNN International to MTV to American Idol to the Los Angeles Times and the Sacramento Bee, plenty of Cal Poly alumni made headlines this summer. Noted architecture alum 'Weird Al' Yankovic (Architecture, 1980) is on tour on the East Coast and writing a children's book. A 2009 business grad has completed his bike trek from the tip of Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Two engineering alumni were in the news again for disseminating their dissection of Apple's latest gadgets -- and the business they launched in their dorm room now has 25 employees. A speech communication alumna is now a central part of a new MTV reality show set in New York City. A journalism alumna is leading public affairs at the Disneyland Resort. A biological sciences alumnus has been named to coordinate research on a dangerous bacterial disease that strikes livestock and wildlife. Find out about alumni who made headlines recently -- and if you know them.

Headliners



Business Alum Dane Drewis Chases the American (Idol) Dream

All Dane Drewis had was 20 seconds. Twenty seconds to impress Sacramento "American Idol" judges who've been around and heard it all. Twenty seconds to nail a bluesy rendition of Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel." Drewis (Business Administration, 2004) a 27-year-old musician, auditioned for the popular television show recently.

Photo courtesy DaneDrewis.com

[Read more about Drewis in the Sacramento Bee](#)

Business Alum Stephen Brown to Lead Research Center at University of Nevada Las Vegas

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas has hired former Federal Reserve economist Stephen Brown (Economics, 1972) as executive director of its Center for Business and Economic Research. Brown recently retired as director of energy economics for the Federal Reserve Bank

in Dallas, where he was widely recognized for his knowledge of world energy markets and the effects of energy price shocks on economic activity.

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[Read the story in the Las Vegas Review Journal \(see left sidebar\)](#)

Alumna is Glamour.com Columnist and Part of New MTV Reality Show

Shallon Lester (B.S., Speech Communications, 2003) is a writer for Glamour.com and one of a handful of women who are the subject of "Downtown Girls," a new MTV reality show. It follows the professional and personal lives of five 20-something women living in New York City.

[Read about Lester in the Orange County Register](#)

Biological Sciences Alum to Coordinate Research at University of Wyoming

Walt Cook (B.S., Biological Sciences, 1989) has been hired to coordinate brucellosis research at the University of Wyoming and among several universities across the country where research is being conducted. His research priorities are vaccine development (for both cattle and wildlife) and improved diagnostic tests for the bacterial disease. Cook worked as assistant state veterinarian and state veterinarian for the Wyoming Livestock Board before coming to UW. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Cook earned his doctorate of veterinary medicine degree in 1994 from UC Davis and his doctorate in zoology and physiology from UW in 1999.

[Read about Cook on the University of Wyoming web site](#)

iFixit Alumni in the Los Angeles Times

Alumni Kyle Wiens (Computer Science, 2005) and Luke Soules (Industrial Engineering, 2006) were in the headlines again in June for dissecting Apples -- the latest iPad, to be specific. The 26-year-olds met as freshmen at Cal Poly and created iFixit. Wiens was a computer science major looking for a Web project. Soules, an engineering major, was selling parts on eBay for spare cash. Seven years later, iFixit has 25 employees, a profit record and a company web site that attracts millions of viewers for its "teardown" videos of the latest tech gadgets.

Photo: CEO Kyle Wiens tears down an iBook G4 | Photo Courtesy iFixit.com

[Read the LA Times story on iFixit](#)



Architecture Alum Enjoys Sustainable Living Among the Clouds

In the 1970s, when Michael Faulconer (Architecture, 1977) first saw the vacant property high atop the hill in scenic Ventura, it piqued the curiosity of the budding architect. The view was perfection, the locale, paradise, but the steep hillside — now that was a challenge.

[Read the entire story in Ventura County Star](#)

Business Alum Rides from Prudhoe Bay to Tierra del Fuego

Cal Poly graduate David Sacher (Business Administration, '09) trekked by bicycle from the tip of Alaska to the bottom of South America. His seven-month journey included overcoming stomach sickness, knee pain and robbery attempts on the Pan-American highway. Sacher

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A person is sitting in a wooden chair, wearing a white shirt, grey trousers, and black shoes. Their socks are mismatched: one is yellow and the other is green. The person is holding the arms of the chair.

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began his journey from Alaska to Argentina in July 2009, a month after he graduated with a degree in business. He's got a blog full of photos and writing about the trip.

[Read about Sacher in the San Luis Obispo Tribune](#)



'Weird Al' is Writing Children's Book

Famous alumnus 'Weird Al' Yankovic (Architecture, '80) is on tour on the East Coast and also working on a children's book. He says the book is partially inspired by his 7-year-old daughter. "When I Grow Up" will be published by HarperCollins in the winter of 2011. Yankovic said the young spirit reflected in his book is what he likes most about his job. "I don't have to grow up," he told the Watertown Daily Times. "I don't have to be an adult. I've always been passionate about music and comedy and I feel blessed to be able to do both for a living."

'Weird Al' Yankovic in the new KCPR studios at Cal Poly in 2007

[Read more in the Watertown Daily Times](#)

Academic Honors

Alumni Receive Honorary Degrees

Kazunori Katayama (pictured right), Frank Suzuki, Nelson Akagi and Taro Kobara came to campus in June after 70 years to receive honorary degrees as part of the California State University's Nisei Degree Program. The four were among some 30 Cal Poly students who had their education interrupted when the government sent them to internment camps during World War II.

Kazunori Katayama talks to reporters at Cal Poly | Photo by Chris Leschinsky

[Read the story on Cal Poly's Nisei Commencement in Rafu Shimpo](#)



Journal Article by Liberal Arts Alum Bruce Ellis Wins American Psychological Association Award

An article from Springer's journal Human Nature, "Fundamental dimensions of environmental risk," has been selected as the winner of the George A. Miller Award by the American Psychological Association (APA). The lead author of the paper, Bruce Ellis (Social Sciences, 1986) will present aspects of the paper at next year's APA meeting. Ellis is an expert in neurobiological susceptibility to environmental influence.

[More on Ellis on PhysOrg.com](#)

Business Alum Receives UC Berkeley Award

Dana Nelson (Business Administration 2003), the portfolio manager at Bell Investment Advisors, Inc., has received the Richard P. Arzaga 2010 Outstanding Student Award from UC Berkeley Extension's Personal Financial Planning program. Nelson is completing his coursework in the two-year program. The Arzaga award recognizes outstanding academic performance, leadership, and participation outside the classroom.

[Read the PR Newswire Story](#)

Politics

Ag Alum Maldonado Sworn in as California's Lieutenant Governor - then Steps in as Acting Governor

It's been a big year for Abel Maldonado (Crop Science, 1988). The California state senator was sworn in as lieutenant governor April 27. Then [he appeared on Comedy Central's Colbert Report](#) to promote the "open primary" measure on California's June ballot, which he supported. (California voters approved it). Then, with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger out of state on a tour through Asia in September, [Maldonado stepped in as acting governor](#). He made international news when CNN crews filmed him helping families who lost their home in the San Bruno pipeline blast. Maldonado declared a state of emergency in San Mateo County and marshaled money and resources to the scene. He also made statewide headlines for signing legislation that gave money to schools and returned taxes to residents of the city of Bell in the Los Angeles area (which is in the middle of a scandal over pay to city executives and council members).

[Read the SLO Tribune story on Maldonado's appointment](#)

[Read the Santa Cruz Sentinel story on Maldonado's six days as acting governor](#)

Two Alumni Battling for Same California Assembly Seat Pledge to Keep It Civil

Two Cal Poly business alumni battling for the same state assembly seat may be members of opposing political parties, but they're taking the high road in their campaigns. Republican Katcho Achadjian, (Business Administration, 1976) a San Luis Obispo County supervisor and businessman, and Democrat Hilda Zacarias (Business Administration, 1989), an accountant and Santa Maria City councilwoman, have signed a 'campaign ethics' pledge as part of their race. "This is how you stop the gridlock," Zacarias said as she and Achadjian embraced at a debate after the pair were asked how they would stop gridlock in Sacramento. The duo, while philosophically opposed on many issues, have made a point of showing that they like and respect one another. They believe it to be especially important in a national, state and local political climate that has turned venomous.

[Read the entire story in the San Luis Obispo Tribune](#)

[Read The Tribune's editorial approval of the Mustang alums' campaign ethics pledge](#)

Career Moves

Finance Alum Named Investment Firm Controller

DoubleLine Capital LP has named Henry Chase (Economics, 1974) as Controller. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Chase holds a master's degree in finance from San Diego State University. He has more than 30 years of financial and administrative experience in public and private companies, including a partnership with Southern California company Tatum LLC and the 1928 jewelry company.

Merit's Welch Named Grant Thornton Leader & Innovator of the Year

Donald J. Welch Jr., (M.S., Computer Science, 1987) president and CEO of Merit Network Inc. in Ann Arbor, has been named Grant Thornton Leader & Innovator of the Year. The award is co-sponsored by Lawrence Technological University. Welch was chosen from among 46 nominees. The Leaders & Innovators program was developed by Lawrence Tech to recognize Michigan business executives who have demonstrated unique abilities or created unique products. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Welch earned a doctorate in computer science from the University of Maryland.



Architecture Alum Joins Bank Board of Directors

Henry Ruhnke Jr. (B.AR., Architecture, 1987, M.AR., 1988) has been appointed to the 1st Capital Bank Board of Directors in Monterey. Ruhnke has served on the Monterey Planning Commission, the Monterey Community Contractor Committee and the Monterey Architectural Review Committee. He is a former board member of the American Institute of Architects Monterey Bay.

Photo courtesy of Wald Ruhnke & Dost Architects

Business Alum Named Executive of the Year by California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce

Tulare-Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's Raymond Macareno (Business, 2004) was named the 2010 Executive of the Year by the California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce at its annual convention in Los Angeles. Macareno is a former small-business owner and has been at the helm of the TKHCC since November 2008.

[Read more about Macareno in the Visalia Times-Delta](#)

Planning Grad is New Mill Valley City Manager

Calistoga City Manager Jim McCann (Natural Resources Management, 1983) is the new city manager in Mill Valley. McCann had been with the city of Calistoga for 12 years, first as the city's planning director in 1998 and then as city manager since December 1999.

[Read the Calistoga Weekly story](#)

Athletics

Alumna Inducted to Rowing Hall of Fame

Alumna and Olympic medalist Karen Kraft Rigsby was inducted into the National Rowing Hall of Fame. Rigsby (Home Economics, 1992) is now in her second season as assistant coach at the University of Wisconsin, working in the women's openweight rowing program. She earned a silver medal at the 1996 Olympics and a bronze medal in the 2000 Olympics in the pair. Rigsby was named US Rowing's Female Athlete of the Year after both medals and was nominated for the United States Olympic Committee's Sportswoman of the Year award in 1996 and 2000.

[More on Rigsby on the NRH Web site](#)

Passings

Ernie Cooper (Social Sciences), a former Mustang football player, died in his sleep in July from heart

failure. Ernie was born June 17, 1985 in Tyler, Texas. He spent the majority of his life in Whittier, Calif., where he attended La Serna High School. He was an outstanding student athlete, earning numerous awards including the Student Athlete of the year, class of 2004. He was recruited by Cal Poly as a quarterback, moved to wide receiver and slotback in 2006 and 2007 and was a defensive back in his final season with the Mustangs.

[Read more about Cooper on GoPoly.com](#)

Bryan Archibald (B.S. & M.S., Kinesiology, 2002 & 2004) died in August. Archibald attended Cuesta College and Cal Poly and played rugby on the Mustang Men's Rugby club team. He traveled through Ireland and South Africa with the Cal Poly rugby team and was an All-American rugby player. He coached high school football in San Luis Obispo while earning his master's degree at Cal Poly.

[Read more about Archibald on the Cal Poly Rugby Alumni Web](#)

John A. Bristow (Electronic Engineering, 1948), a prominent Sacramento home builder and community volunteer whose values were shaped on the Bataan Death March of World War II, died in August after a battle with kidney cancer. He was 87. "He said he knew someday the war would be over, and he was going to go home and marry his sweetheart," said his son Richard Bristow. John Bristow married in 1946 and moved to San Luis Obispo.

[Read more about Bristow in the Sacramento Bee](#)

Nikki Smith Blose (Psychology, 1996), died June 13. She was born in Modesto and raised in Stockton and was a child welfare worker for 13 years in Santa Barbara County. In addition to her Cal Poly degree, she earned a master's degree from Antioch while raising three daughters as a single parent.

[Read the obituary in the Stockton Record](#)

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Crossing the Divide



San Luis Obispo resident John Lee and Cal Poly Kinesiology student Johanna Pfeiffer paddle through Morro Bay harbor in May.
(Photos by Aaron Lambert)

New Beginnings for Local Residents Thanks to Cal Poly Adapted Paddling Program

By Scott Roark

A silent mist hovers over Morro Bay, touched by a sunlight that highlights the idyllic view taken in by a young woman with paraplegia – only this woman is in a kayak paddling smoothly across the water.

She stops amid a group of paddlers, gazing back toward the shore where often before she had parked her car to admire the beauty of the

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setting.

Surrounded by Cal Poly students and instructors from the Adapted Paddling Program, the woman excitedly talks about how this experience has changed her life, allowing her to overcome a fear of the water and move in ways she never thought possible.

“Community based learning programs like this one provide a powerful learn-by-doing experience” said program founder and director Kevin Taylor. “Students apply knowledge gleaned from their studies to improve the quality of someone’s life. They learn to see past the disability and connect with the human being.

The Adapted Paddling Program is one lab option for Kinesiology students in Taylor’s Adapted Physical Activity class, a required course for all Kinesiology majors. Students learn how to modify kayaks for use by people with a wide variety of disabilities before offering a free paddling clinic to local residents who are disabled. Many of the participants are paralyzed, some from the waist down (paraplegia), some down one side of their body (hemiplegia), and few from the neck down (quadriplegia). All have profound challenges to their physical movement – until they get on the water.

Paddling is easily adapted for many people with a physical disability and can be incredibly empowering for them, Taylor said. If a person with paralysis goes from a wheelchair, where they encounter daily physical barriers, to a kayak, where everyone has the same movement, it changes their perceptions of what they can and cannot do.



Lee (right, in kayak) and Pfeiffer are launched in a kayak into Morro Bay with the help of the Adaptive Paddle Launch Vehicle at Tidelands Park in Morro Bay.

Many of the modifications needed for participants to paddle are simple, made with foam, duct tape and other fairly common everyday materials. Old bicycle inner-tubes, for example are used to make paddles easier to grip for people whose disability impacts their grip strength. The inner-tube is attached to the paddle with electrical zip-ties and then covered with duct tape. The user’s hand can then be inserted between the inner-tube and paddle shaft for an assisted grip.

Students frequently tell Taylor this lab work is an invaluable part of the learning experience, letting them see first-hand how concepts and theory from lectures are applied in a practical setting.

Kinesiology major Kevin Bezerra said the class allowed him a glimpse into his future career. “I was able to be a part of a movement to

eliminate stereotypes and preconceived notions about people with disabilities,” he said. “When we’re all out on the water, there is no distinguishing between participants, students and instructors.”

To Taylor this human impact is also critical to academics. “Students remember how these experiences make them feel,” he said. “They often form a bond with the individuals they serve. This helps students to remember the content and message of inclusion I try to get across in the class.”

Attitudes are the biggest barriers Taylor hopes to help remove. “The average person doesn’t see someone with a disability as being able to engage in physical activity,” he said. “Only one thing really stops people with disabilities: socially constructed expectations. Attitudes are the real disability. My students and I are working to change that.”

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In the future, Taylor hopes adapted paddling will be a part of a viable, self-sustaining nonprofit called Activity4All, allowing increased community participation and acting as a partner with Cal Poly's STRIDE program to get people with disabilities more physically active.

"My vision for Activity4All is to have fully inclusive activity programs where people with and without disabilities participate together to remove the barriers that prevent those with disabilities from being more physically active," Taylor said.

He sees Activity4All continuing to provide Cal Poly students with learn-by-doing experiences but with greater community participation and fundraising efforts. The population of people with disabilities is not wealthy, Taylor said, so any cost can be a barrier to participation.

Taylor's collaboration with the local community extends to three other physical activity programs: the Friday Club, a Special Olympics Program; EyeCycle, a tandem bicycling program for people with low-vision and blindness; and Envision Tango, a dance class, also for people with blindness or low-vision.

Collaboration

The Adapted Paddling program was founded in fall 1999 when Taylor came to Cal Poly from the University of Northern Colorado. Taylor and his wife met a local physical therapist whose husband was paddling instructor. The couple – Cal Poly alum Jeff Clark and his wife, Monica – was interested in the idea of adapted paddling but lacked volunteers and a suitable venue. That started Taylor thinking about his students.

The Clarks moved away soon after the program started, so Taylor reached out to the community. "Our program would not be possible without individuals such as paddling instructor Tom Reilly and occupational therapist John Lee, both of whom volunteer their time and expertise to the program," he said.

The Adapted Paddling Program was extended when Taylor began collaborating with Cal Poly's College of Engineering. With a \$10,780 grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, Taylor and Mechanical Engineering Professor Frank Owen worked with senior project students from both Kinesiology and Engineering to design and build a kayak for someone with full quadriplegia.



Cal Poly Kinesiology professor Kevin Taylor launches Lee and Pfeiffer into Morro Bay with the help of the Adaptive Paddle Launch Vehicle.

During this so-called "SoloQuad Conversion Project," students outfitted a kayak from the Adapted Paddling Program with an electric trolling motor and a "sip and puff" control.



Cal Poly alum Bryan Gingg, who is unable to move his arms or legs, sipped and puffed on a plastic straw to independently pilot the kayak through the estuary at Morro Bay.

According to Taylor, this was just the beginning. “An exciting part of the SoloQuad Conversion project,” he said, “was how it spawned a wonderful collaborative relationship with the College of Engineering.”

Engineering and Kinesiology students recently finished an Adapted Paddling Launch Vehicle (APLV), including a lift that allows users to control their transfer from the chair to the kayak. One idea now being considered would turn the APLV into a joystick-controlled “shuttle vehicle” which participants could use to drive into the water before

floating away in their kayak. The current projects are supported by a \$125,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, awarded to Taylor (left) and Kinesiology student Casey Ormond (right) help Nancy Nelson into her kayak before she is taken down to the launch ramp on Adaptive Paddle Launch Vehicle at Tidelands Park.

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Between imagination and realization

Dear friends,

Cal Poly's newly developed strategic plan – [which I encourage you to review here](#) – boils down to this concept:

In “Learn by Doing,” Cal Poly has a great tradition. In our collection of distinctive colleges, we have great parts. And now, in the second decade of Cal Poly's second century, the real world demands that we bring it all together – that we prepare our graduates not only to master their chosen major but also to function effectively across multiple disciplines.

Already, Cal Poly is putting this concept into practice.

Take, for example, our story on Professor Kevin Taylor's Adapted Paddling Program. Kinesiology majors from the College of Science and Mathematics are working with students from the College of Engineering in one of Cal Poly's unique laboratories – the Morro Bay estuary. Together, they are making a real, permanent difference by improving the lives of disabled people through an unlikely medium – kayaking. Through the equipment modifications and mechanical innovations springing from these students' brains, people who've lost the use of their legs are experiencing a new kind of freedom in the Morro Bay harbor. And Taylor has an even more ambitious goal for his students – changing the world's attitude about people with disabilities.

As any Cal Poly alum can testify, Cal Poly's learn-by-doing tradition demands that students apply classroom learning to real-world challenges, and it's a powerful process.

An alumnus who thrived on that process, and who is a classic example of the resourceful and innovative alum we love to brag about, is 1994 computer science grad Ain McKendrick. Before he even left campus with his degree, McKendrick played a part in the development of the PalmPilot handheld computer. Since then, he's developed crucial pieces of several technologies that are now part of our everyday lives, including TiVo and Netflix, where he is currently helping to bring streaming movies and TV shows, literally, to your fingertips.

Among other inspiring stories we've assembled for you:

- An interview with Robert Glidden, our new interim president, who shares his views on Cal Poly's short-term needs, and his thoughts on the kind of leader the university needs to continue its tradition of excellence.

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- A look at an important piece of the university's past, with the recent on-campus reunion of more than 100 descendants of former Cal Poly President Julian McPhee.



And finally, a chance to meet some extraordinary current students: football player James Chen, who is studying to be a neurosurgeon, and business student Leah Post, whose toffee business is already thriving in Southern California – even though she's only just starting her sophomore year here.

I hope you enjoy reading these and more stories about what makes Cal Poly special. Our goal in preparing Cal Poly Magazine is to help you stay connected to Cal Poly, and we'd welcome your suggestions. Please tell us what you like – or don't like – about what we're doing. You can contact me at mlazier@calpoly.edu.

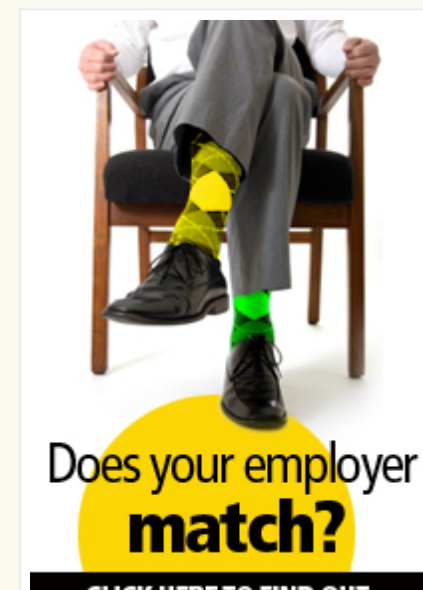
Matt Lazier

(Journalism, 1997)

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Born for the job

Interim President Robert Glidden brings a Broad Background Well-Suited to Cal Poly

By Stacia Momburg



He may only be our interim president, but Robert Glidden brings a background that seems tailor made for Cal Poly.

Growing up on an Iowa farm, showing an early interest in math and science, and finally studying and teaching music for decades, Glidden's personal and professional biography reflects many of the keystones of Cal Poly's broad academic palette. Plus, there's his service in higher education administration that culminated in 10 years as president of Ohio University. ([Read Glidden's full biography here.](#))

Glidden, 74, became Cal Poly's interim leader Aug. 1, following the retirement of President Emeritus Warren J. Baker.

Glidden came out of retirement because he was intrigued by the university's academic reputation, he said – and by the prospect of living and working on the West Coast.

"It's something I had never done," he said. "And now, as I've begun to get acquainted with the university and its people, I'm more and more pleased. I made the right decision."

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Glidden's journey began in Greene County, Iowa, where his father taught him the family business on their farm. When Glidden was still a high schooler, he said, his father gave him a heifer.

"I had to care for it, pay my father breeding fees and sell the bulls and steers. I made enough money to pay for college and I had a \$50 scholarship. Tuition was \$78 per semester and \$550 per year room and board," he said, laughing at the amount. "Back then, you could buy the fanciest Ford for \$1,800."

When it came time to go to college his choices were either pursuing an engineering degree at Iowa State University, just 35 miles from home, or heading three hours away to the University of Iowa for a degree in music.

"Engineering was something I considered because of my love of math and science," he said. "The fact is, though, that I had more confidence in my ability as a musician. Besides that, half my friends went to Iowa State and were flunking out. I've never been sorry about my decision."

He was groomed as a college woodwind teacher by his professor, Himie Voxman. A well-known music educator, Voxman transcribed and published chamber music for woodwinds and was co-author of several Rubank method books for woodwinds and brass instruments – books that are still used today. ([Read more about Voxman here.](#))

"I was fortunate that Himie took a personal interest in me," Glidden said. "It made a difference in my education and ultimately my career."

At age 36 he was recruited to head the National Association of Schools of Music in Washington, D.C. Glidden said the experience provided him with a national perspective on education. However, he left the job three years later because something was missing.

"Working at the NASM was almost like earning another graduate degree. The problem was that I missed the vitality of a campus," he said.



At the time he was recruited for a dean's position at Bowling Green University. Having led an organization of about 400 schools and departments of music, being a dean seemed like the next logical career challenge.

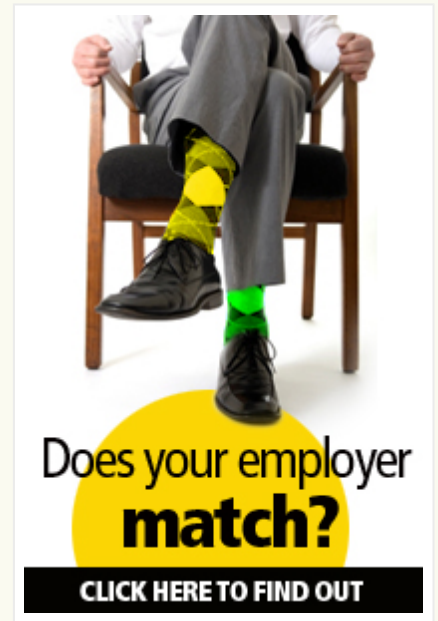
The would-be engineer cum sax player likes being an administrator because, he said "I like to make things work, and I enjoy working with people."

Glidden's landing on campus couldn't be more perfectly timed as Cal Poly completes its strategic plan and continues its bid for reaccreditation. He is the former chairman of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, and the founding chairman of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

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“Cal Poly’s strategic vision of being a 21st century comprehensive polytechnic university is exceptionally strong and aligns beautifully with the themes, goals and metrics of the WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) Self-Study,” he said.

So what does the former Ohio University president hope to realistically do while here? “Hopefully, no harm,” he said, grinning. “Seriously, I intend to make decisions supported by people who know the institution, its history and culture better than I do.”

He wants to help the university prepare for a new permanent president by making decisions that the campus community feels confident a new president will embrace.

“I’m committed to leave Cal Poly just a little bit better than when I arrived,” he said, “even though my time here is short.”

Mostly, though, Glidden is looking forward to meeting students.

“I like sitting down with 15 to 20 students to discuss topics and issues that are important to them. They have to be our No. 1 focus, as administrators; they are the reason we’re here.”



On the Agenda

In a recent speech at Cal Poly’s Fall Conference, Glidden noted several goals he’d like to see the university meet prior to his departure.

The first, and in Glidden’s opinion the most important, is the selection of a new permanent president. The search committee appointed by California State University Chancellor Charles B. Reed and the Board of Trustees begins its work immediately, with plans to announce a new president Dec. 13. On-campus interviews are scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving.

Glidden went on to suggest additional goals and tasks he believes should take place prior to the new president’s appointment.

“I’d like to see us align learning objectives for every program and ideally every course within the program with the university learning objectives,” he said. “Second, we need to clearly define who we are as a comprehensive polytechnic university. And third, we will seek a clear definition of the teacher-scholar model as we see it at Cal Poly.”

Also on the agenda for 2010-11 is improving information security in the centrally controlled network and working with departments to implement security standards and support them with appropriate tools and services.

Academically, Glidden wants the campus to continue to seek ways to help students facing the many necessary challenges Cal Poly puts before them.

“Students admitted to Cal Poly have the tools necessary to succeed, but not all have those tools in equal measure,” he said. “Our challenge is to match our efforts of help to those who need them most, and that will require unprecedented team work.”

Finally, the interim president wants to seek broader collaboration across campus.

“Someone asked me recently what one thing I would like to change if I could accomplish it in the brief time I’ll be at Cal Poly,” he said. “That one thing would be to break down the silos so that we’re all cognizant of this being one university.”

“I don’t say that because Cal Poly has more silos than other large universities. I say it because it’s true of universities in general. Part of that has to do with specialization within disciplines and with modern technology, which allows and even encourages people to have closer relationships with colleagues in their own discipline around the globe than with colleagues of other disciplines on their own campus.”

“I would like us all to wear bigger hats and to think of ourselves as one great university team.”

“Few people will say no when you ask them for help, and collaboration is after all a two-way street,” Glidden said.

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Expert Aid in the Real World

Cal Poly Professors Travel to Quake Sites in Chile and Haiti

By Matt Lazier

After powerful earthquakes rocked Haiti and Chile this year, the world took action. Among those rushing to the disaster sites were three Cal Poly professors who lent their expertise to studying the effects and learning to better prepare for and respond to such catastrophes.

Architectural Engineering Professor James Mwangi, Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor Robb Moss and City and Regional Planning Professor William Siembieda all are connected with organizations that study various physical and societal impacts of major earthquakes, and all were invited to the recent quake zones to study several perspectives of the aftermaths.

Mwangi spent two weeks in Haiti in March, a few weeks after the magnitude-7.0 quake that devastated the island nation Jan. 12. Moss went to Chile in early March, just days after a magnitude-8.8 quake struck Feb. 27, and Siembieda followed a week later.

The three collected stories from victims; gathered knowledge to share with students; and helped shed light on how similar quakes could impact California.

Their research is featured in reports on the disasters. All have given presentations on their findings. And Mwangi returned to Haiti in July to work for the next year.

“It was a tremendous opportunity, on several levels, for all of us,” Siembieda said. “We were able to share our expertise in a humanitarian way. We’ve brought back real-world stories to recount to our students. And by continuing to give presentations on our findings, we help to bolster Cal Poly’s already strong reputation.”



An aerial view of the damage left in the wake of the Chile Earthquake in early 2010.

All photos courtesy Robb Moss, William Siembieda and James Mwangi

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James Mwangi



Cal Poly professor James Mwangi (right) works in a mine in Haiti shortly after the country's devastating quake in early 2010. Mwangi identified mines in Haiti that were providing poor materials for the country's construction industry and urged officials to switch to other, better mines.

Nevertheless, Mwangi found most of the people he encountered to be in high spirits – just thankful to have survived.

Mwangi spent his first week inspecting buildings and identifying the reasons for the mass collapses (in short, sub-par materials and shoddy workmanship and quality control).

He then met with Haiti's minister of Public Works, suggesting that the country close mines where low-quality sand and gravel were being harvested for use in construction. "This was done the same day," Mwangi said, "and we were able to suggest the use of the better quality river sand and river rock for the concrete mixes."

By his second week, Mwangi was leading workshops with architects, engineers and contractors on how to construct quake-resistant buildings.

Back at Cal Poly, Mwangi shared his experience and observations with his students and discussed the issue of quake-resistant, confined-masonry construction in Third World nations such as Haiti.

But as the spring quarter ended, the professor was on his way back to Haiti, where he will spend the next year.

"I intend to extend the training program I started, with additional learn-by-doing demonstrations on construction and proper design theory for earthquake-resistant buildings," he said.

And there may be an opportunity for some students to experience the disaster zone. Mwangi has talked with Cal Poly's chapter of the

A certified disaster safety worker through the California Emergency Management Agency, Mwangi volunteered for a two-week stay in Haiti, sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee, a non-governmental agency helping coordinating relief efforts. What he saw in the capital city of Port-au-Prince was beyond anything he expected.

"Words can not describe the devastation," he said. "It was much worse than what people saw on the news. Most buildings in Port-au-Prince and surrounding cities were destroyed. Most multi-story concrete buildings had upper floors that pancaked onto floors below, killing the occupants.

"Most of the people I saw were living outside in tents. There were no jobs, and most people spent their days in long lines waiting for handouts of food, water and blankets from the United Nations and NGOs."

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Structural Engineers Association of California about student members visiting during the coming Spring Break.

Robb Moss

An earthquake engineer specializing in liquefaction, Moss is accustomed to visiting international quake sites. His longtime involvement with the Geo-Engineering Extreme Events Reconnaissance Association has sent him to Mexico, Turkey, China and India, as well as sites in California and Alaska.

In February, GEER offered his first chance to visit Chile – an opportunity he seized in part because of the familiarity of the coastal nation.

“It’s a spitting image of California – the coastline, the Mediterranean climate, the geology, the topography,” Moss said. “Because of that, the area affected looks a lot like what California could look like the next time we have a big earthquake.”



Cal Poly professor Robb Moss in a plane as his team of experts survey the Chile quake damage from the air.

Moss was shocked to find a disaster area running 600 km north to south and about 150 km east to west. An equivalent area in California would stretch nearly from San Francisco to Los Angeles. “I’ve never seen such a massive area impacted,” he said.

For two days, Moss worked with the Chilean Air Force to fly over the affected area and survey the damage. Then he and other GEER team members drove to local communities.

Their work happened after rescue efforts but before recovery began in earnest – the perfect time for what they hoped to examine. “Soon after a quake, there is an immediate effort to repair infrastructure damage, buildings and telecommunications. But that can cover up evidence of what caused the damage.”

For its intensity, the Chile quake killed relatively few people (about 520, compared to roughly 250,000 in Haiti). But economic losses from structural damage were huge.

“It’s what we call ‘performance issues,’” Moss said. “For example, about every 10 kilometers along the interstates, they had bridge failures that impacted traffic flows and commerce.”

GEER published a report on the Chile quake that includes research and observations from Moss and the other experts.

And the experience gave Moss real-world stories to share with students in his Quake Engineering courses. This helps Cal Poly’s budding

engineers see the immediate impact of the discipline they're studying.

"Seismic codes are boring to talk about," Moss said. "But when students see pictures of this kind of thing, the concepts behind the codes click. When I got back from Chile, I immediately gave presentations on my research and worked photos into my lectures."

William Siembieda

Just days after Moss, Siembieda joined a team with the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, tasked with examining Chile's disaster area from the perspectives of social science policy and recovery. Specifically, his group sought impacts the quake might have on Chile's urban planning policies.

"We rented a car and drove from town to town," Siembieda said. "We took pictures, and we talked with people on the streets about their experiences."

They found self-sufficient residents in tightly knit communities. Not wanting to leave their neighborhoods, people displaced by quake damage frequently pitched tents together in nearby parks. And people moved quickly to fix their properties, he said, rather than waiting for government aid.

"Recovery was moving a lot more quickly than what we usually see," he said. "There was much less bureaucracy."



Cal Poly professor William Siembieda (far left) speaks with Chilean residents who were forced from their homes by earthquake damage and set up temporary residences nearby.
Fulbright specialist.

Damage was widespread in the affected area, Siembieda said. But much of it was fixable, not catastrophic. The exception was the immediate coastal area hit by a quake-caused tsunami. There, entire homes were wiped away by waves and debris, and structures, cars and boats were moved great distances.

Siembieda's trip was quick, but the work he began there continues. His findings were included in an EERI newsletter after the quake, and he is working with a researcher at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, studying potential improvements to land-use planning in two states hit by the tsunami.

Siembieda has given several presentations on the quake since returning, including a National Science Foundation workshop in August. He is advising an NSF research project on the quake, and he is planning a return trip early next year for further research as a

In the meantime he, like Moss and Mwangi, is sharing his experience with students to help breathe life into the theories they are studying. And like Moss, Siembieda believes the Chile quake is providing a wealth of knowledge applicable to California.

“There are lessons to be learned here, and that’s why California wants to study Chile. We know that by looking at their experience, we can know how we should react here.”

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Making an Impact

By Stacia Momburg

Since he was very young, James Chen has wanted to make a difference in his world. Listening to the senior Cal Poly nose tackle and would-be surgeon, you find his desire for a career in medicine and his love of football easily define his resilient and altruistic nature.

Chen simply wants to help people. "I know it sounds cliché but it's true," he said. "I love a challenge. I love being hands-on and having the largest possible impact possible on everything I do."

At 6-foot-2-inch and 270 pounds, his impact is almost immediate. The Irvine native is just big.

Knowing his career goals, one immediately wants to look at his hands to see what damage playing football has had on his plans for a career in surgery. "I've broken my fingers a lot, but my hands have remained surprisingly dexterous," he said, laughing.

Chen said he was inspired to go into medicine by his uncle, a family practitioner in Southern California. "He works closely with the Thai community in his area, donating services and consistently giving back to his community," Chen said. "I've seen him help a lot of people. He's really amazing and I want to be able to do what he does."



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Chen's mother and grandmother are both registered nurses. "I guess being surrounded by medical professionals really influenced me. I don't think I ever thought of doing anything else," he said.

His other love, football, also speaks to his character. A nose tackle since his sophomore year of high school, he said, "I like that the position allows me to be both extremely physical and completely selfless at the same time."

The team sport also provides him with a sense of family – something he struggled with early in his life.

Chen's parents divorced when he was 11 and tensions in his family grew when his mother remarried and two families attempted to blend. He has four brothers, two sisters and two step sisters.

"Without going into a lot of detail, it was just a really big clash of personalities," he said. "When I turned 16 I realized emancipation was my only option."

Chen slept a couple of nights on the street but wound up taking refuge with his high school counselor's family. "Not having to worry about a roof over my head or food in my stomach took a lot of pressure off me," he said. "Those were outside stresses a kid shouldn't have to deal with."



James Chen
(Photo by Stacia Momburg)



Chen shows no love for his opponent on the field.
(Photo Courtesy Cal Poly Athletics)

He remained with his counselor's family. In 2006, former Cal Poly football coach Rich Ellerson recruited Chen and provided him with a full scholarship. He says he took the offer most importantly because of Cal Poly's focus on academics; he knew he could begin his journey to a medical career at Cal Poly.

This proved to be wise insight, given the rigors of his sport.

Chen was a traveling red shirt his freshman year and managed a 3.2 GPA. During his first season with the Mustangs, though, he tore the anterior cruciate and lateral collateral ligaments in his left knee during the first game of his first year.

"That's when I realized my football career wouldn't be exactly what I expected and I started buckling down academically," Chen said. "I needed better grades to get into med school."

He began employing time-management skills he learned in high school and started tackling academics as hard as he tackles centers and guards. As he enters his fourth year at Cal Poly, Chen's GPA is 3.65 overall and 3.75 in sciences – grades that allow him to apply to pre-med programs at Georgetown University, a few Chicago Schools,

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New York University and Boston University.

Balancing his love for sports and his love for science, Chen keeps a grueling schedule. A typical fall includes taking 12 units, working a few hours a week for the Environmental Biotechnology Institute in the biology department, and practicing for two hours a day, lifting weights for an hour and watching at least an hours worth of football films. His weekends are consumed with games and studying, though he always makes time for a girlfriend and numerous campus friends.

He also makes time for work, be it painting houses, serving as a security guard or tutoring other students in science.

Phil Bailey, dean of Cal Poly's College of Science and Mathematics, said he's encountered few students in his career as remarkable as Chen.

"James overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles in his path the college and has excelled in athletics, academics, and in scientific research – an unusual and amazing combination," Bailey said. "He also has a sincere and dedicated focus on the welfare of those around him and in his community and intends to carry this into his future."

Always focused on his next goal, Chen said he's looking forward to eight more years of schooling. "I absolutely love the sciences. Medicine is what I want to do," he said.

He knows it will keep him busy. But, his thoughts as always on others, he wants his actions to serve as a model for his younger brothers and sisters.

"I always tell them they can do anything they want if they put in the work," he said. "If you work hard, you can achieve anything you can imagine. If you give a lot of yourself, it makes you a richer person."



Chen and fellow students in Cal Poly's Environmental Biotechnology Institute lab.
(Photo by Aaron Lambert)

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A Sweet Career Already Underway

Business Student's Candy Company Featured on Food Network

By Teresa Mariani Hendrix



Cal Poly student Leah Post (right) and business partner Brandon Weimer at their Brandini Toffee outlet in Southern California

Photos courtesy Leah Post

developer of their expanding gourmet product line.

For their July 23 "Chef vs. City" appearance, the duo hosted some of the network's and nation's top chefs in their Brandini Toffee kitchens and judged them as they made toffee.

Some Cal Poly students launch their own businesses while they're still earning their degrees. Business sophomore Leah Post started even earlier: when she was still in high school.

The company she co-founded, Brandini Toffee, is going strong four years later – and even recently notched an appearance on The Food Network's "Chef vs. City" show. And Post and her partner have plans to continue expanding their business after they earn their degrees.

Post is heading into her second year of classes at Cal Poly's Orfalea College of Business this fall.

She and lifelong friend Brandon Weimer (a business sophomore at University of Arizona) launched Brandini in 2006 to pay their way on a class trip when they were 15-year-olds in La Quinta, Calif.

Post is now the business, public relations and marketing face for the company, and Weimer is the chef and

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“The chefs came to our shop, and we had to make sure they made toffee up to our standards,” Post said. “We have really high standards.”

It wasn't the first national TV appearance for the duo. They appeared on the Martha Stewart Show in 2008 and taught her to make their toffee. And Brandini has more publicity lined up: Post and Weimer have been named to the Palm Springs Life magazine's "40 Under 40" list.

Back in 2006, the duo used Weimer's toffee recipe and baked and packaged the gourmet treat in the kitchen of a local hotel managed by Weimer's father.

After making their first batches, they set up a web site and sent family and friends a link to the site to order. Their e-mails got forwarded far and wide. They started working after school and weekends to fill orders and then began selling at street fairs across Southern California.

In 2008 their toffee beat out 2,500 other entries and won the Gold Sofi Award – a specialty food industry Oscar – in the category of “Outstanding Chocolate.”

Last December – during Post's winter break from Cal Poly – they opened a manufacturing plant and gourmet candy shop in Rancho Mirage. Their web-based business ships candy around the world and puts together custom tins and packages under corporate logos for company holiday gifts. They employ about two dozen people during peak candy sales season in the fall. Their products are also sold in locations across Southern California.

Their mothers now work for Brandini Toffee while Post and Weimer are away at college, and Post's father helps with their Web site. “We're all learning as we're growing,” Post said.

Cal Poly's learn-by-doing philosophy is one of the reasons Post chose the Orfalea College of Business.

“My dad was a big influence. He really wanted me to go here,” she said. “Once I started reading about the Orfalea College of Business and how Mr. Orfalea donated the money to the college, and then when I saw the campus and heard more about learn by doing, everything seemed to fit together here.”

Pre-toffee, Post thought she wanted to be an engineer. “I was really into robotics,” she said. Her booming candy company, though, changed her path to business. Now, she and Weimer want to graduate and see if they can continue to grow Brandini Toffee.

“We don't know what's going to happen to the business in the future,” she said. “We're just trying to get the name out there. But we've only been in business four years, and we've already accomplished more than a lot of small businesses ever have.”

Read more about Post on her company web site at www.brandinitoffee.com.



Post during a news interview at Brandini Toffee

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Find out more about the Chefs vs. City episode at <http://www.foodnetwork.com/chefs-vs-city/index.html>.

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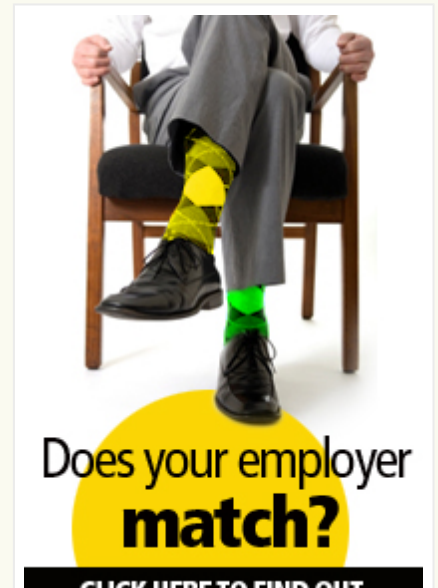
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A Gathering of Generations

More Than 100 Members of the McPhee Family Reunite at Cal Poly

By Matt Lazier



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More than 100 children, grandchildren and other relatives of past Cal Poly President Julian McPhee gathered on campus in July for a reunion that included a visit to the former President's Residence, tours through campus and University Archives displays of memorabilia from the McPhee era.

Children and grandchildren of McPhee (Cal Poly's president from 1933 to 1966) organized the campus visit as part of a larger family reunion in San Luis Obispo County, where many of McPhee's descendants still reside. The event allowed several generations of McPhee family members to gather, reminisce about their experiences on campus and celebrate their ancestor's impact on the university.



Carol McPhee Norton (front left) and Jule Ann McPhee Taber (front right) look through the University House, where they lived when their father, Julian McPhee, was president of Cal Poly.

(Photos by Aaron Lambert)

the reins at Cal Poly. He had a clear vision for the future of the flagging campus – 1,400 acres and 117 students strong and in danger of being closed by the state.

McPhee guided Cal Poly through the Great Depression and into the booming post-World-War-II era, when the school's hands-on educational model was a key in efforts to offer education to returning veterans. Through McPhee's tenure, the campus grew to nearly 5,000 students, more than doubled in acreage and evolved into a four-year college in what was then the California State College system.

Having so many members of the former president's family gathered on campus was a familiar experience for one of his daughters, Carol McPhee Norton. She said her parents often held large gatherings of extended family on campus, in the President's Residence.

"Summers when I was a child, whole families of my cousins would come to visit us," she said. "During World War II, two of my older sisters married. For long periods while their husbands were in the service, they came home to live with us. Later as we all married and left home, we gathered at special times — my father's birthday, July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas — usually at the house on the campus."

"Cal Poly is as much a part of my childhood as anyone's grandparents' homes would be," said Greg Beck, grandson of Julian McPhee and one of the reunion organizers. "In such a large family, all of us have memories of Christmases, Thanksgivings and other gatherings on campus.

"So the idea to bring the family back to Cal Poly for this reunion was just a natural."

Three of Julian McPhee's four surviving daughters were on campus July 17 (a fourth attended parts of the family reunion off campus; two other daughters have passed away). As well, Beck said, there were 28 of McPhee's 32 grandchildren, along with many younger members of the extended family.

McPhee was chief of the state's Bureau of Agricultural Education and a strong proponent of the learn-by-doing model when he took



The extended McPhee Family poses for a portrait on campus

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Norton lives in San Luis Obispo and earned a master's degree in English from Cal Poly in 1972. She said she still visits campus frequently. Still, the reunion brought back many long-dormant childhood recollections.

during their July visit.

[- Click here or on the image for full view](#)

"My trip through the house where I grew up brought back memories I hadn't indulged in for years," she said. "There was the route I used to take when I was 10-12 out my bedroom window and down a tree outside the den; the games of hopscotch my sister Claire and I used to have on the patterned living room rug; and my father waking me up early in the morning by shaking my bed and telling me it was an earthquake like the one he'd experienced in San Francisco."

The reunion reminded Carol McPhee Norton how her father's memory endures on the campus he so significantly shaped.

"I was pleased," she said, "that Cal Poly seemed to remember my father with so much honor and affection that they would play host to our reunion."

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Alum Ain McKendrick is Putting the Whole (Tech) World in Your Hands

By Teresa Mariani Hendrix



Palm Pilot PDAs. Hand-held, streaming MP3 players. TiVo. Cal Poly alum Ain McKendrick (Computer Science '94) has helped design and bring all of these technologies to your fingertips.

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Reader Survey

Talking with McKendrick about his career at a string of successful Silicon Valley startups is like a quick walk-through of this era's "must have" gadgets. His first project was working on the design team for the original Palm PDA (personal digital assistant). It launched in the early 1990s – when phones were still attached to cords and walls.

"All of the technology was already there," McKendrick said. "The cool thing is taking all of the existing technology components and combining them in a way that's never been done before. It's all in how you combine those technological components to create something. That's where the innovation comes in."

Now, as the senior director of Partner Products at Netflix, McKendrick is doing it again. His team is bringing movies and entertainment straight to TVs, game consoles, laptops, smartphones and any other electronic screen anyone can dream up – no DVD disc required.

McKendrick took time out to answer some questions in July after his return from a business trip to South Korea and Japan for meetings with consumer electronics manufacturers.

What are the next five things in your Netflix queue?

I tend to use our search feature with instant streaming these days, not a mailing queue. But as a motorcycle nut (*McKendrick was a member of the Poly Penguins motorcycle club while he was a student*), I'm in the middle of watching "Long Way Round" which isn't out on streaming just yet. It's a three-disc series, so I have the next couple discs lined up in my queue.

I'm hooked on streaming. Once you have more than 25,000 TV shows and movies available at your fingertips, there's no going back.

Netflix subscribers can stream movies on their video game systems now. What else will be able to stream Netflix soon? Smartphones?

Absolutely! We released a version of Netflix on the iPhone over summer. We launched the iPad version this past spring. While a lot of our content is suited to watching in your living room, giving our subscribers the ability to watch Netflix any time and anywhere is one of the partner products team's focuses.

Netflix instant streaming is available on all the major gaming platforms – Xbox, PS3, and Wii. You'll also find it available on TVs, BluRay players, set-top-boxes and more from all the major consumer electronics brands. The team has helped our partners launch Netflix on more than 200 products so far. We're launching more products here more quickly than I ever have at any other time in my career.

You designed something called a "Pistol Mouse" in 2004. It's a joystick that looks like a cool water pistol on a mouse cord, and it helps video gamers shoot people on screen better and faster.

I would say that falls into the "crazy side project" category. It actually grew out of an idea from friend who was getting carpal tunnel syndrome from playing too many video games. He showed me a prototype, and I thought it was great. We'd both done startups before, so we figured: Why not do a "mini" startup? Since it was targeted at gaming, we figured it had to have a cool look. It was not only a lot of fun, but it was great learning experience, since it was the first time any of us had tried launching something in the gaming space.

Is playing video games a good way to launch a career? And if your kid is playing them all the time, are you the perfect example of why parents should let them keep playing?

When I was younger, I probably would have given this a resounding "Yes!" But the adult in me now would probably say "within reason."

When I was a kid, we had to learn basic computer skills just to launch a game. Gaming consoles these days have made it as simple as

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dropping in a disc. A game console doesn't force kids to learn more about the device in order to get to their end goal of playing the game. Plus, everyone needs to get out of the living room sometime.

But I have to say I look forward to beating my own kids at video games someday – or showing them a thing or two.

Did computer games get you into computer programming and design?

Actually, yes; it all grew out of a kid's desire to get out of class the last 30 minutes every day. When I was in sixth grade, there was a retired guy who came to our school and taught simple programming to students for a couple hours at the end of the day. If you took the class and you finished the assignment, you got to play games on the library computers. That's what I did.

You were part of the team of engineers that designed the screen and controls used by TiVo viewers. What was the biggest challenge in doing that?

We really wanted to make sure it worked for everyone – not just a bunch of technology types like ourselves. Up to that point, the most complex user interface built into TVs was channel up/down. If we made TiVo too geeky, we knew the product wouldn't be a success. I think the moment I realized we had it right was when I was giving a demo to a friend's 94-year-old great uncle and he just "got it." We knew if we had a user interface that worked for everyone from kids to 90-year-olds, we were set.

So far in your career, what's the accomplishment that's been the most fun?

The original PalmPilot – nothing beats seeing something you've helped to design and build show up in retail and seeing real customers buy it. One of my favorite memories was walking into Fry's Electronics in Palo Alto and seeing a stack of shrink-wrapped PalmPilots at the end of an aisle. I picked one up to look at, and a guy walked up to me and said "You should buy that thing. It's a great product!" That's an awesome feeling.

How did you get on the team that created the Palm?

When I was at Cal Poly, I did a summer internship in 1991 at GRiD systems, which developed the first laptop computers and the original pen computer. While I was there, I got to know Jeff Hawkins (one of three co-founders of Palm Computing). He gave me a call in the fall of 1991 and said "I'm starting a company to do super portable pen computers. Are you interested?"

I didn't want to do it without planning to come back Cal Poly to finish my degree. I found out I could do a two-year leave of absence without having to re-apply for admission, so I called Jeff back the next day to let him know I was in.

Palm was my first "real" job out of college. It's where I caught the startup bug, which led to a string of them over my career. I used part of my experience at Palm as my senior project. It's probably still on a shelf in the library somewhere.

Why did you pick Cal Poly as an undergrad?

I had a chance to visit Cal Poly before applying, and there were a couple key things that stood out. I knew what I wanted to do, so starting directly in the major of your choice was attractive. Also, the learn-by-doing philosophy resonated with me.

What class(es) at Cal Poly helped you get where you are today?

Software Engineering, with Dan Stearns – it spanned two quarters, and students had to take a project from concept through design and implementation. It's that learn-by-doing thing. You roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty and gain an appreciation for what you can get done in a fixed amount of time.

I know a lot of people with a great background in computer theory from other universities, but learning what it takes to plan and execute a project is critical for technology businesses. And software engineering is really a needed art in the industry these days. I think the whole learn-by-doing philosophy at Cal Poly definitely helps train people for the startup environment.

So does the quarter system. You're working on a slightly faster schedule. You have less time to assimilate the material, and you're under the gun to get something done during a quarter instead of a semester. Cal Poly's pace is good training for people who are going to be in an industry that moves very quickly.

What's your advice for Cal Poly students (or alumni) who want to succeed in the entertainment or computer gaming industry?

First, find a company or a project you're passionate about. If you're not excited about what you're working on, it becomes just a job. You start to lose your creativity.

Second, you need to look at the roles you'd want to play in the industry, since there are many ways to fit in. Are you an engineer, a business person, a designer? Learning what each of these careers entails allows you to go after the experience needed to get yourself in the door.

People look at my experience and ask me if I had a blueprint to get to all these places, and I really don't. It all comes back to doing what you're passionate about. Everything I've done and every place I've worked has been the result of hearing about a product concept and thinking: I've *got* to get one of those.

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Don't Miss Fall Enrollment in Your Company's Matching Gift Program

Through matching gift programs, many companies will match contributions of cash or securities made by an employee to a qualifying charity or educational institution. Also called a community giving program, the concept helps companies support causes important to their staff and enables employees to maximize the impact of their gifts.

Mike Avella (Civil Engineering, 1980), a gas transmission planner with PG&E, has a contribution deducted from his paycheck every month. "I owe where I am to the education Cal Poly gave me," Avella said. "It's such a simple way to say 'Thank you.'"



Mike Avella deduction, but others match contributions made with a wider variety of assets or financial tools. Mike B. Smith (Construction Management, 2004), makes a monthly donation billed to his credit card. To take advantage of the matching gift, he enrolled in the program offered by his employer, Walt Disney Imagineering.

PG&E automatically matches Avella's contribution and donates the total amount to Cal Poly quarterly. The advantage to payroll deduction is that there isn't any matching gift application that needs to be completed. "It's a simple, painless way to donate," said Avella, a resident of Santa Rosa, Calif.

"I used to make inconsistent contributions, but this is so much easier," he said. "And it's like giving away free money if you're not taking advantage of your company's matching contribution."

Avella has increased the size of his gifts as his financial situation changed but the real difference, he says, is that he is giving more because he is giving consistently. "It's easier to spread the gift over time than if I had to make a lump sum payment."

Some companies only match contributions made through payroll

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"I pay by credit card so I can float the balance," said Smith, who lives in Long Beach. "I have all of my fixed bills charged to one credit card that I pay off every month, so I get access to my money longer or make interest on the money while it's in my account, and I only have to make one electronic payment every month."

To match gifts made in ways other than automatic payroll deduction, the employee must apply to the matching gift program during his or her employer's annual enrollment period. Enrollment periods typically range from September through November.

With more than 1,300 matching gift programs offered by employers across the country, the details of each are different. For instance, Pepsico has a one-to-one matching rate, but if employees perform volunteer work in the community, the company matches the gift two-to-one. Exxon-Mobil matches employee contributions three-to-one.

There are other creative ways to make the most of the situation. When both spouses work for companies that have matching gift programs, a single gift can be matched by both employers. Matching Gifts Specialist Linda Stark said she has worked with couples who were "absolutely gleeful that they tripled their donation."



Mike B. Smith

"Our biggest barrier," Stark said, "is persuading people that every gift counts. I think we lose \$150,000 every year because people don't take advantage of their employers' matching gift programs."

Stark said the majority of missed opportunities are gifts of less than \$200. "Some people think a \$10 or \$20 donation isn't a big deal so it's not worth the time. But when you add up a bunch of recurring gifts under \$200 and then match that with an equal amount from their respective employers, it adds up."

To find out if your employer has a matching gift program or for help establishing a matching gift, go to: <http://www.giving.calpoly.edu/matching.html>.

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