

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Employers Gravitate to Cal Poly Pomona Graduates

By Emily Velasco

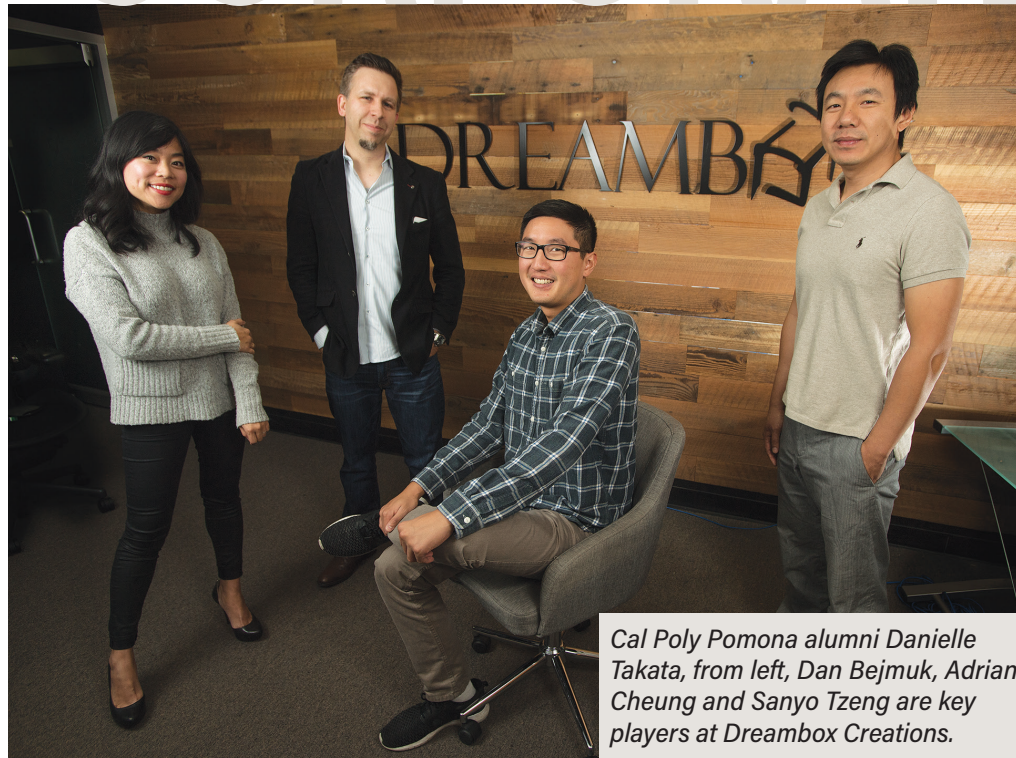
Nearly all graduating college students need to find a way to set themselves apart as they transition from the classroom to the workplace — something that screams to employers, “Hire me!” Fortunately for Cal Poly Pomona graduates, they have that something: a Cal Poly Pomona degree.

The university’s polytechnic approach to problem solving, its learn-by-doing ethos of gaining experience and the grit that its students bring to the table create an environment that cultivates out-the-box thinkers who aren’t afraid to get their hands dirty. It’s a potent combination that employers notice.

“They know the caliber of our students, the courses that our students are taking, the senior projects they work on,” says Tom Munnerlyn, director of the Cal Poly Pomona Career Center. “About 55 percent of our students work and go to school, and employers like that maturity level. Our students are showing that they’re ready on the first day to go to work.”

Melissa Riordan, executive director of alumni and external relations for the university, agrees.

“The polytechnic model provides our students with a unique experience,” Riordan says. “Our alumni are prepared for the workforce. They have the tools to succeed, and I think that speaks for itself.”



Cal Poly Pomona alumni Danielle Takata, from left, Dan Bejmuk, Adrian Cheung and Sanyo Tzeng are key players at Dreambox Creations.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

One employer that’s taking notice is Diamond Bar-based Dreambox Creations, which describes itself as a “digitally inspired full-service ad agency.”

It didn’t start out as an ad agency, though, says CEO Dan Bejmuk (’00, computer information systems), who co-founded the company with six friends while they were students at Cal Poly Pomona.

Bejmuk says the company originally focused on building websites for clients, but it quickly grew into its current incarnation to meet demand.

“What we found over time was that we built long-lasting relationships with our customers, and they wanted to see us do more. They realized

we had a level of creative, technology and business acumen,” he says. “Without really intending to, we became an ad agency.”

Since 1999, Dreambox grew from six to 23 employees, with over a quarter coming from Cal Poly Pomona. The company has also diversified its expertise, from hiring mostly workers with digital savvy to bringing in employees with backgrounds that include accounting, English, film and journalism.

Bejmuk credits Cal Poly Pomona with giving him the educational foundation he needed to keep his company nimble.

“Admittedly for many years, I was not a fan of the learn-by-doing description of

the university. It smelled like we were becoming a trade school,” he says. “But I realized there’s more to it. The Cal Poly Pomona way isn’t, ‘Here’s a problem. Here’s how to solve it.’ It’s ‘Here’s how to solve problems.’ So five years later when you have a different problem, you already have the mental tools.”

Bejmuk says Cal Poly Pomona’s educational philosophy is also the reason he stays connected to the university, participating in alumni events and making donations.

“What happens at Cal Poly Pomona doesn’t just happen, it takes money to make it happen,” he says. “One of the things my co-founder Danielle Takata (’01, graphic design) and I have been so proud of is doing our part to give back to the university.”

INDUSTRY LEADER

Compared to Dreambox — or compared to just about any other employer — Northrop Grumman is massive in scale. The defense contractor has approximately 65,000 employees in operations across the globe. But like Dreambox, its executives have taken notice of Cal Poly Pomona. The corporation ranks as the second largest private employer of the university’s alumni.

In Diane Miller’s (’81, information systems) 32

years of working for defense companies, she has risen from a senior systems analyst to director of Infosec operations and identity management. Like Bejmuk, she says her education taught her to be a problem solver. As a high school student, she knew that Cal Poly Pomona’s curriculum offered something extra.

“Cal Poly Pomona had the model curriculum that was exactly what I was looking for — somewhere with a strong technical foundation,

but with practical applications for business,” she says. “It meant we used a diverse set of analytical styles, different kinds of resources, different kinds of information.”

Miller visits the campus often to participate in Career Center events, job fairs and club meetings, and she says she’s continually impressed by the caliber of the students she encounters.

“They’re really motivated to put their best foot forward. They want to be of great value. They want to present themselves well,” she says.

That’s why Northrop

Aerospace industry giants such as Northrop Grumman have long taken notice of Cal Poly Pomona graduates.



Grumman hires so many Cal Poly Pomona graduates, she says.

“I know when I’m getting a Cal Poly Pomona grad, I’m getting a phenomenal new hire,” she says. “Every single alum who now works for the operation will tell you they had the right academic experience to meet what the industry needs.”

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