

# AGRIcolumn

DON B. HUNTLEY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

## *Our Urban Farm:*

### Spadra Farm Trains Generations of Students



SPRING 2024





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## AGRIcolumn

Don B. Huntley College of Agriculture  
Cal Poly Pomona

3801 West Temple Avenue  
Pomona, CA 91768-4039  
(909) 869-2201

email: [HuntleyCollege@cpp.edu](mailto:HuntleyCollege@cpp.edu)

Martin Sancho-Madriz, PhD  
Dean (Interim), Editor  
[mfsancho@cpp.edu](mailto:mfsancho@cpp.edu)

Dr. Peter Kilduff, PhD  
Associate Dean  
[pkilduff@cpp.edu](mailto:pkilduff@cpp.edu)

Dan Lee  
Communications Specialist II  
[dblee@cpp.edu](mailto:dblee@cpp.edu)

Nafiseh Sehat  
Graphic Designer  
[nsehat@cpp.edu](mailto:nsehat@cpp.edu)

Tom Zasadzinski  
Photographer  
[tzasadzinski@cpp.edu](mailto:tzasadzinski@cpp.edu)



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COVER STORY  
Learning at Spadra Farm

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Greetings!

The future continues to be bright for the Don B. Huntley College of Agriculture.

We are working on adding seven new tenure-track faculty to the college for the 2024-25 academic year: two in animal science; one in animal health science; two in nutrition; and two in plant science. That would bring our total to 11 new faculty hired in the last and current academic years.

We started executing projects supported by the State of California's \$18.75 million unprecedented one-time funding program to support much needed equipment and facilities upgrades with a legislative focus on climate resilience, regenerative agriculture, animal welfare, food processing, and water and natural resources management.

We have significantly expanded student recruitment efforts by investing non-State resources generated by the college, including restoring and strengthening our relationships with high school and community college counselors that were interrupted during the pandemic. We have been taking advantage of fairs and other events, including Pumpkin Fest and the LA County Fair, to promote our college programs. We are optimistic our efforts will yield increased enrollments.

I am proud we launched the **Student Faculty Research Fund** to support faculty to conduct scholarly activities that provide research "learn by doing" opportunities for our students. The initiative specifically supports new probationary faculty to engage in research and scholarly activities required to achieve tenure and promotion by providing matching funds required for grant applications. To date, we have been able to raise \$222,260 through the generosity of our donors. In addition, the college is allocating \$100,000 of revenue generated by Pumpkin Fest to support this effort.

In 2022, we began Pumpkin Fest with our new signature fundraising event: **Preview Night** – an event that features food from local restaurants and our own award-winning Innovation Brew Works beer and Horsehill Vineyards wine. We are planning our third Preview Night for 2024 and we

are looking for sponsors, please contact Patricia Tucker at [pjtucker@cpp.edu](mailto:pjtucker@cpp.edu).

As I look forward to another graduation ceremony, I am thankful for the opportunity and the honor that has been leading the Huntley College these three years. It is a wonderful way to celebrate my 27 years of service to Cal Poly Pomona and its students. Special thanks to the Dean's Office team, Associate Dean Peter Kilduff, Executive Assistant Jenifer Cazares, and Business Analyst Rebecca Keong, for their hard work, dedication to the college, and team spirit. My appreciation to our Advancement team, including Interim AVP for Development, Pamela Jones-Tintle, and Senior Director of Development, Patricia Tucker, for their efforts to support the college. My deepest appreciation to all who have impacted the college by volunteering, advocating, and donating time and resources so that we can better serve our students and keep changing lives.

Martin Sancho-Madriz, Ph.D.  
Dean (Interim), Professor of Food Science and Technology





# NEWS Briefs

## Farm Contributes Produce for Ice Cream

A new Cal Poly Pomona-branded ice cream features ingredients fresh from the campus farm.

The ice cream is a partnership between Cal Poly Pomona Enterprises, the Huntley College of Agriculture, and Coney Island Creamery, and it is sold in the Farm Store and select Dining Services locations on campus.

Made with produce from the campus farm, the flavors include Satsuma Mandarin, Pumpkin, and Avocado.



## Horse Show Returns

After a three-year absence, the Sunday Horse Show returned in May to the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center.

The horse shows were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attempts to revive the shows in the 2022-23 academic year were initially stymied by the heavy winter and spring rains. The monthly horse shows resumed in October 2023 for the 2023-24 academic year. For more information, visit the newly launched W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center website at [cpp.edu/wkkelloggarabianhorsecenter](http://cpp.edu/wkkelloggarabianhorsecenter).

## Students Study Abroad in Spain & Africa



Summertime offered Huntley College of Agriculture students the opportunity to study abroad.

**Mackenzie Ricker**, a third-year pre-vet student worked alongside veterinarians

and animal experts for four weeks in South Africa as part of the Loop Abroad program. She studied, observed, and tracked cheetahs and lions at the Selati Game Reserve, worked with birds of prey, reptiles, other big and small cats, and primates at the Lory Park Animal and Owl Sanctuary.

Meanwhile, Associate Professor **Gabriel Davidov-Pardo** and Lecturer **Jasmin Ilkay** took ten students from the food science and technology and nutrition programs for a four-week study abroad experience in Spain along with FST alumna Christianne Yapor. The group immersed themselves in food culture and visited leading food industry facilities in Pamplona and Northern Spain, observing techniques in nutrient analysis, food preservation, packaging, and 3-D food and meat printing.

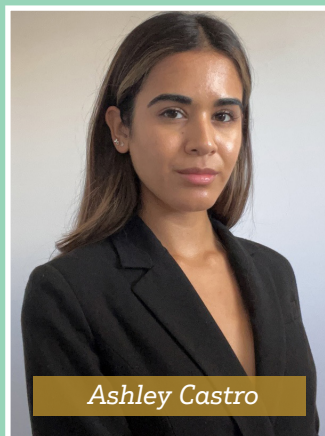
Picture: From left to right top to bottom: *Andrez Sanchez, Juan Hernandez, Raleigh Burns, Jasmin Ilkay (instructor), Francisco Sierra, Gabriel Davidov-Pardo, Abigail Rodriguez, Christian Harrison, Marina Hernandez, Kyli Jones, Christianne Yapor, Tiffany Ngyuen, Helen Lopez. Pamplona, Spain 2023*

# Annual Huntley College Student Awards



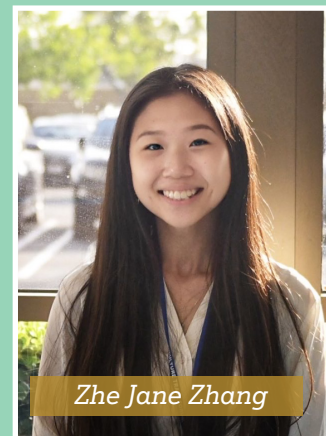
Jillian Henson

Animal Science Julian A. McPhee Outstanding Student Scholar Award



Ashley Castro

Apparel Merchandising and Management John E. Andrews Undergraduate Student Leader of the Year



Zhe Jane Zhang

Nutrition and Food Science John E. Andrews Graduate Student Leader of the Year





## Farm Facilities Get Safety Improvements

Several farm facilities received more than \$1 million in deferred maintenance funds from the university.

The work included lead abatement and re-painting of the Sheep Unit barn, two Beef Unit barns, an internal area of the Fruit/Crops Unit, and the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center's bleachers.

In addition, the bottom portion of support beams in the animal units was given Trex beam wrapping to prevent the animals from rubbing off paint or wood.

The Sheep Unit also received funding to upgrade fencing and replace 30-year-old feeders. The university provided State funds for the improvements.

## Horsehill Vineyards Wins Medal, Produces New Wine

It was a good year for Horsehill Vineyards! The wine label won a silver medal in the 2023 LA International Wine Competition for its 2018 red blend plus a gold medal for the label design.

Horsehill Vineyards debuted its 2022 Zinfandel Rosé at the Huntley College's Pumpkin Fest Preview Night in September.

Horsehill Vineyards is a partnership between Cal Poly Pomona and South Coast Winery in Temecula. Students grow and harvest the grapes and South Coast Winery produces and bottles the wine. Students also design the wine label and packaging, and market.



## Swiss, Californian Leaders Discuss Future

The Huntley College of Agriculture and the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce's Southern California Chapter co-hosted a panel discussion of the problems facing food processors and farmers worldwide last February at AGRIScapes.

A.G. Kawamura, a third-generation Orange County farmer who served as California secretary of food and agriculture, was a panelist along with Plant Science Professor David Still, executive director of the California State University's Agricultural Research Institute.

Swiss panelists and others participated via Zoom. Associate Dean Peter Kilduff served as the event moderator. About 90 people participated altogether.



## AVS Students Elected to National Organization

Animal Science students **Arely Navarro**, **Jazmin Delgado**, and **Karen Hung** were elected president, vice president, and webmaster, respectively, for the American Pre-Veterinary Medical Association (APVMA), last March.

Navarro takes the place of Christine Berry, another Cal Poly Pomona student who served as the 2022-23 APVMA president.

Lecturer **Kathleen Earle**, who attended the symposium with more than 30 students with the Cal Poly Pomona Pre-Veterinary Club was awarded the APVMA Advisor of the Year.







## AM2 New Fashion Line

AMM students created a new fashion line to sell at the Bronco Bookstore.

The fashion line is the result of a year-long capstone class in. The students conducted market research, designed products, developed prototypes, created patterns, and sourced fabrics contractors in the Los Angeles Fashion District to assist in production.

The garment line includes a hoodie, tank top, shorts, denim bag, and the Bronco Crossbody Bag.

## AMM Student Wins Scholarship



**Ryan Perez**, a second-year AMM student, won a \$1,500 scholarship from the California Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Perez's future goals include repurposing waste/excess garments and providing food, clothing, and, eventually, housing and shelter to displaced and homeless individuals.

## NFS Department Earns Distinction

The Nutrition and Food Science Department was ranked #14 on a list of "Best Bachelor's Degree Programs in Nutrition," according to the college ranking website Best Accredited Colleges. Hundreds of programs across the country were reviewed and ranked using data around financial aid awards, quality of education, faculty, campus resources and other indicators.

## Plant Science Student Accepted by National Program

**Michelle Solis-Alatorre** was named a Golden Opportunity Scholar by the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America.

The Golden Opportunity Scholar Program annually recognizes outstanding contributions to agronomy, crop science, or soil science through education, national and international service.

Solis-Alatorre aims to obtain a doctorate in soil science or related field and work as a conservationist or agricultural scientist for the federal government.

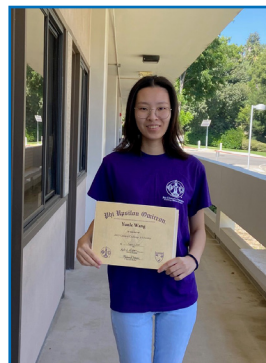
## Nutrition Students Celebrate National Nutrition Month

As part of National Nutrition Month, students offered nutrition and wellness tips to fellow students, faculty, staff, and visitors in March at University Park.



Lecturer **Sangeeta Shrivastava** and her nutrition education and counseling class also successfully petitioned the city of Pomona to proclaim March 2023 as National Nutrition Month in the City.

## Dietetics Student Wins Scholarships



Dietetics student **Yunle Wang** was awarded \$2,400 in scholarships from the Phi Upsilon Omicron national honor society for family and consumer sciences that consists of nearly 100,000 members.

Wang is the current president of Cal Poly Pomona's Beta Psi Chapter of Phi Upsilon Omicron.



# Huntley College Students Shine in *Competitions*

Alexander Mathios, Jeremie Javellana, Estrella Mandujano, Daniela Moore, Nancy Siridachanon, and Ziyu Zhang took first place in March at the Pacific Southwest Regional College Bowl competition, which tests students in their food science knowledge. It was the first time a Cal Poly Pomona team has won the event. Lecturer Karoline Harrison was the team's advisor.



Plant science grad student Lara Amiri-Kazaz took first place in her section at Cal Poly Pomona's Student Research, Scholarship & Creative Activities (RSCA) Conference. She presented her research project, "The Valorization of Pistachio Shells as an Alternative for Perlite and Vermiculite in Greenhouse Basil Production." Her faculty mentor is Associate Professor Anna Soper.

Daniela Moore took first place in July at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) 2023 Annual Conference in Chicago in the graduate research competition of the Refrigerated and Frozen Foods Division for her work, "The effect of using coconut oil, avocado paste and pistachio in the elaboration of a chocolate plant-based ice cream." Associate Professor Gabriel Davidov-Pardo was Moore's thesis chair.

Tiffany Nguyen and Megan Wong won first place in the student food packaging development competition at the IFT Annual Conference for their essay entitled "Design and development of take-home laboratory test kits for measurement of physical properties of packaging materials." Professor Olive Li was their advisor.

Elvis Garcia, Anna Kaufman, Jocelyn DuBois, and Raul Hernandez finished second in the Smart Snacks for Kids IFTSA (IFT Student Association) Product Development competition with their product "Jungle Clusters", Associate Professor Davidov-Pardo was their advisor.

Students in the Livestock Show Team - advised by Lecturer Amber Freeland and Cattle Unit Manager Efrain Loera - performed well at two local competitions.

## At the Chino Fair in July

- Max Horan placed 1st in collegiate showmanship and received Reserve Champion Fullblood Doe.
- Javier Ramirez and his pig Gordo placed 2nd in collegiate showmanship.
- Jane Rumpak and her lamb Cherry placed 3rd in collegiate showmanship and Jane received Outstanding Collegiate Showman!



## At the LA County Fair in May

- Cattle Team members Irvin Ayon, Javier Ramirez, and Monserat Gonzalez-Wences placed first in their respective classes with their animals.
- Sheep Team students Ariana Robles, Tristin Manning, Jane Rumpak, Margot Garcia, and Trinity Pedregon all placed first in their individual classes.
- Sol Hernandez had a lamb that placed as Reserve Supreme Champion, putting her in second place amongst all the sheep that showed that day.



# Our urban farm: Spadra Farm trains generations of students

## Essential Training Ground

**Bryce Stevenson** remembers working at Cal Poly Pomona's Spadra Farm.

As an undergraduate, he had course labs and conducted a thesis project at the farm. As an employee on the farm crew, he built a filtered irrigation system, planted, and grew crops there. As a graduate student, he taught some labs.

Today, Stevenson ('18, plant science) has built on his experience working at Spadra to become the R&D agronomy manager for Grimmway Farms Potato Division in Bakersfield.

"If I did not have my Spadra experience, I would not have had the opportunity to learn so much about agriculture and farming right there, close to campus, amidst a major metropolitan area," he said.

For more than 60 years, the 150-acre Spadra Farm has served as a laboratory and classroom for thousands of Cal Poly Pomona students, training them in everything from agronomy to soil science and serving as a research space.

Just off Pomona Boulevard near the Cal Poly Pomona campus, the farm provides priceless learning opportunities, said Professor **Eileen Cullen**, chair of the Department of Plant Science. Without it, students would have to leave the Pomona area and go far away to get the same learning experience elsewhere, she said.

"Our students wouldn't be workforce ready," Cullen added. "They wouldn't have the knowledge of how agriculture systems are integrated or affected by climate change or to be able to study these things and conduct experiments."

## Part of Local History

Originally, the farmland was part of the then-Pacific State Hospital (later named the Lanterman Development Center), which was run by the State Department of Mental Hygiene.

The California State Polytechnic College Kellogg-Voorhis campus, had leased the hospital's farmland since at least 1955 as it did not have sufficient land to meet its instructional needs.

The hospital farmland was an integral part of the agricultural education program, hosting courses in crop production, weeds and weed control, soil science, citrus production, pomology, and even beef production.

When college administrators learned that the farmland was to be declared surplus, they petitioned state legislators and California State College trustees to transfer the land to the college.

"Because of pressures from continued community growth this may be the last opportunity to add irrigable farmland to the Kellogg campus," they wrote.

State officials authorized the land transfer in 1971. The farm takes its name from the former village of Spadra that became part of the city of Pomona. The village was established in 1866 and itself was named after a town in Arkansas, according to the book, "Early Pomona," written by Mickey Gallivan and the Historical Society of Pomona Valley.





## Valuable Variety

Adam Mason ('15, plant science) started volunteering at Spadra as a student in 2011. But he really wanted to become a paid member of the farm crew.

So, he begged **Dan Hostetler**, the then-plant science department chair, and then-Farm Manager Dave Matias for the opportunity. Mason spent the next four years working on the farm. The experience was invaluable.

"We grew every crop you could think of from here to New York. That's unique in the U.S.," Mason recalled. "We had over 110 different varieties of crops there: tree crops, vegetable crops, seed crops, forage. It was so huge. And you could go through all the processes: planting, irrigation, fertilizing, to harvest."

Having experience going through the full process with such a variety of crops helps students hit the ground running in the industry after graduation, he said.

"Without hands-on experience, you're not going to excel," Mason said. "It's going to take so long to catch up to what the industry demands of you – maybe a decade."

In addition to Spadra Farm, Mason also managed pastures in the animal units, an experience that continues to be helpful today. He owns HEAL Farms near Pittsburgh, PA., where he raises beef cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys on pastures.

Also valuable was the experience using the different tractors – some donated, others purchased – and farm equipment at Spadra.

Students never know where they will wind up working – a multimillion-dollar operation or a small farm – and what kind of equipment they will use, Mason said.

"Having that experience with every piece of equipment you can think of is incredibly useful," he said. "All my tractor skills I used on a daily basis here I practiced on the farm. Make your mistakes at Cal Poly Pomona, and when you get into the real world, you are at the highest level."



## Research

In addition to providing students with practical experience growing crops to sell to the Farm Store and other customers, Spadra Farm has an important role in academic research.

**Bryce Stevenson** gained precious research experience while working at Spadra. He learned how to plan, conduct, and analyze research trials, developing meaningful information to improve production systems. Today, he specializes in trial designs, data collection, and analytics for growing potatoes.

"The Spadra experience fostered my career development by providing me the foundational tools and experience," Stevenson said.

Research at the farm is not limited to the Huntley College of Agriculture. As an example of inter-college collaboration, Aerospace Engineering Professor Subodh Bhandari and Computer Science Professor **Amar Raheja** have worked with the plant science department to test how effectively drones equipped with sensors and machine learning can detect crop stresses.







## Going Organic

In 2019, a nearly 10-acre section of Spadra Farm received organic crop production certification from the nonprofit California Certified Organic Farmers agency, providing students additional learning opportunities.

To receive certification under USDA standards, the farm had to document that it had not used synthetic pesticides or fertilizers on the plot for at least three years.

In addition, the farm must follow organic practices, such as crop rotation, organic seed sources, approved inputs, on-farm nutrient cycling and biodiversity.

In addition, the farm must follow organic practices, such as crop rotation, organic seed sources, approved inputs, on-farm nutrient cycling and biodiversity.

Associate Professor **Aaron Fox's** students have participated in a California Department of Food and Agriculture-funded Healthy Soils Demonstration Project, which aims to show the benefits and costs of building healthy soils using compost and incorporating cover crops between vegetable cash crop plantings.

Assistant Professor **Priti Saxena's** students are working on a project project in collaboration with UC Davis and the Organic Seed Alliance to evaluate and identify tomato breeds for hybridization. The goal is to grow tomatoes suited for the Southern California climate and organic production practices.

## The Future

The State of California allocated over **\$18 million** in funding for improvements in the college's agricultural facilities and equipment. For Spadra farm, improvements would include upgrades to tractors, equipment, WiFi, security, a well, and an existing onion shed that needs updates.

The Plant Science department is currently in discussions with Pitzer College for an "agrovoltaic" project at Spadra: a concept where crops are planted under photovoltaic panels. Researchers would try to determine which crops grow best under the panels.

The college also seeks to incorporate more innovative technology by adding a state-of-the-art farm management software system for collecting data on weather, irrigation, crop yields, fertilizer input, and track costs. In addition, it would use sensors mounted on tractors to assess fuel consumption. The system also could generate alerts using artificial intelligence to monitor weather and temperature for frost and high heat. It would store all the data in one application rather than having the information spread across multiple applications or spreadsheets.

The information will also help students and farm managers analyze and make better decisions about campus farm operations. For students to be farm managers and consultants, they're going to need to know how to use this kind of software, Associate Professor **Aaron Fox** said. "It's a good example of how modern farms are managed: plenty of data input, analysis, and management," he said. "If we're teaching outdated methods, we're doing our students a disservice," Fox added. "We need to always be engaging with industry partners and donors so they can help us access the latest technology. Our students should always be on the leading-edge, knowing the most modern methods and having hands-on experience with the latest tools and equipment."

Dean **Martin Sancho-Madriz** stated that Spadra Farm is an invaluable asset in Southern California's large urban area. He added, "the farm, together with the other Huntley College agriculture plant and animal facilities, serves as a window into the world of agriculture for urban dwellers. Spadra Farm is essential in supporting the college's mission and our learn by doing approach, including teaching and research projects involving students and faculty across campus." We encourage participation and collaborations across colleges and with the community at large, he said.





## Micro Farm Yields Big Experience

On a hillside overlooking the Cal Poly Pomona campus sits a small plot of land that serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for urban agriculture students.

At the Horsehill Micro Farm, as it is called, students decide what to grow, based on what the seasons, climate, soil, and market allow.

**“We really developed it to give students hands-on experience in urban agriculture,”** said Plant Science Associate Professor **Aaron Fox**.

The half-acre lot is next to The Collins College of Hospitality Management. It was started nearly 15 years ago as a joint project with The Collins College to provide fresh herbs and produce to the Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch that sits next to the Micro Farm.

Today, Micro Farm sells its produce to local restaurants, Campus Dining, and the Cal Poly Pomona Farm Store.

The students grow tomatoes, cucumbers, and other cucurbits in the summer, and salad greens, cabbage, and kale in the winter.

Horsehill Micro Farm also produces sugarcane, tree fruits, herbs, and edible and cut flowers.

Student farm managers are paid with funding from individual donors and a USDA grant Fox received.

PLT 4965 – Small-Scale Sustainable Farming – is the primary class that uses the Micro Farm, though clubs and student workers and volunteers also utilize it, Fox said. Working on such a small plot of land forces the students to think strategically on how to use the space, he said.

As a student working on the Micro Farm, **Kevin Corona** (‘23, agribusiness and food industry management) learned about soil health, managing water, and maintaining tools, but also how to communicate with customers and other workers.

The experience paid off for Corona. Today, he works as a manager for the California Farmers Market Association in the San Francisco Bay Area. The association runs eight markets. Corona is a liaison and advisor to the more than 100 California farms that work with the association.

In the future, Corona hopes to become an entrepreneur growing culinary mushrooms and working with a cousin in Mexico to grow chili peppers sustainably. “The Micro Farm experience was a crucial steppingstone,” he said. “I believe these skills and experiences that I gained will play a pivotal role in my future success.”



# Plant Science Faculty Growing

A horticultural and controlled environment agricultural specialist. An urban soil science and biogeochemistry expert. And a teacher-scholar who melds both plant science and ethnic studies. Those are the three new faculty members that the Department of Plant Science is expected to add.

**"We're going from four tenure-track faculty to seven over two years,"** Professor Eileen Cullen, the department chair, said. "That really supports the growth of the program."

Assistant Professor Eshwar Ravishankar arrived for the fall 2023 semester to fill the first position (see next story). The department is working on filling the other two positions for 2024-25.

Each position is intended to take advantage of an increased interest in urban agriculture. For example, the USDA has created grant programs to spur innovation in urban agriculture and production.

The urban soil and biogeochemistry expert will be a faculty member who is an expert in soil carbon storage, remediating soil contaminants, and

managing urban soils for food production, among other things.

Soil science is an emerging area in urban agriculture because urban soils may have industrial waste or other contaminants that may make it unsafe for growing crops, Cullen said.

Urban growers are especially attuned to soil quality when cultivating land that was previously in non-farming use, she added.

The other position will help shape the delivery of the new California State University ethnic studies general education requirement in the context of plant science, Cullen shared.

This faculty member will have teaching and scholarly expertise in plant science and of Indigenous, African American, Latinx American, or Asian American cultures and communities.

**"It's exciting to have the opportunity to integrate these positions into the department,"** Cullen said.





# An Engineer Joins Plant Science



A mechanical engineer has joined the Department of Plant Science's faculty.

Assistant Professor **Eshwar Ravishankar** earned his doctorate in mechanical engineering from North Carolina State University.

A native of Chennai, India, Ravishankar got involved with agriculture for the first time in his graduate studies when he joined an organic electronics lab in 2016 and participated in a project to develop a fully functional, solar-powered greenhouse.

**"Up to that point, I had zero knowledge of agriculture," he said. "The goal was to show proof of concept for sustainable, energy-efficient food production in greenhouses."**

The project was funded by a National Science Foundation grant that sought to spur innovations at the nexus of food, energy, and water systems.

Ravishankar and his colleagues explored using organic wavelength-selective photovoltaics and see how well plants could grow under the solar cells.

They also evaluated energy demand and modeled production results in every major climate zone to assess the economics, crop productivity, and the energy efficiency of a solar-powered greenhouse.

Ravishankar became the liaison between plant scientists, biologists, chemists, physicists, and mechanical engineering in conducting research on solar powered controlled-environment agriculture food production.

His experience got him hired at Cal Poly Pomona. The plant science department was looking for someone with expertise in technologies associated with greenhouse production, indoor and vertical farming with efficient energy resources.

**"It is, of course, plant science, but also involves computer science and mechanical engineering, because these are very interdisciplinary,"** said Professor Eileen Cullen, the department chair.

The position matches current trends and will help prepare Cal Poly Pomona students to be career-ready in producing food in places that are not typically zoned for agriculture, she added.

Ravishankar was attracted to California because the climate is suitable for food production, and he could research how different crops grow in controlled environments. He is also interested in seeking funding for research via competitive grants, including those funded by the California State University Agricultural Research Institute and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Ravishankar plans to develop a controlled-environment hydroponic system inside a special shipping container to identify optimal growing conditions.

He also has collaborated with Wayne State University and North Carolina State University to submit a National Science Foundation proposal to develop a virtual-reality greenhouse simulation as a teaching tool to train undergraduate STEM students.

Ravishankar is pleased with the course his career has taken toward sustainability.

**"It makes me feel I'm making a difference,"** he said.

## *Stay in Touch*

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call (909) 869-2963 or  
email: [alumni@cpp.edu](mailto:alumni@cpp.edu).



# Faculty / Staff *News*

## Annual *Awards* Recipients



Teacher  
of the Year

**Dr. Kathy Earle**

Lecturer, Department of  
Animal and Veterinary Science



Faculty Advisor  
of the Year

**Xu Yang**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Nutrition and  
Food Science



Staff Advisor  
of the Year

**Nicole Turner**

Student Success Advisor,  
Office of Student Success



Staff  
of the Year

**Erika Soares**

Dean's Office (now serving in  
the Provost's Office)

## Trio Selected for *Leadership* Program



**Eileen Cullen**



**Hyungchul Han**



**Olive Li**

Professor **Eileen Cullen**, Associate Professor **Hyungchul Han**, and Professor **Olive Li** were chosen to participate in the prestigious Leadership for the 21st Century (LEAD21). Their participation was funded through scholarships and support from the Huntley College. "We are making an investment for the future of the college", said Interim Dean **Martin Sancho-Madriz**.

Cullen is chair of the Department of Plant Science, while Han and Li are from the Department of Animal and Veterinary Science and the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, respectively.

LEAD21 is intended to meet the future needs for leadership development of faculty, specialists, program and team leaders, research station and center directors, district and regional directors, department heads and chairs, and others in land grant universities' colleges of agricultural, environmental, and human sciences and USDA/NIFA. The program is also open to Non-Land-Grant Agriculture and Renewable Resources Universities (NARRU) as well as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) such as Cal Poly Pomona with colleges in the areas mentioned above.



# New Hires



## Essam Abdelfattah

The new assistant professor in the Department of Animal Science. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in veterinary medicine from Benha University in Egypt and his doctorate in animal behavior and welfare from a joint program between Benha and Purdue University. He did postdoctoral work at UC Davis.

## Eshwar Ravishankar

The new assistant professor of Plant Science. He comes to Cal Poly Pomona from North Carolina State, and he brings expertise in greenhouse production, indoor and vertical farming, and using solar-powered and energy efficient power sources.



## Belal Mula Hasan

The assistant professor in the department of Nutrition and Food Science. He earned his bachelor's degree in Food Science & Technology from the University of Mosul in Iraq, his master's degree in biotechnology at the University Sains Islam Malaysia, and his doctorate in food biotechnology from University of Putra Malaysia.

## Nafiseh Sehat

The new graphic designer. She comes to the college with more than a decade of graphic design experience, including stops at the University of Southern California, the City of Hawthorne, Cal State Los Angeles. She got her Master degree in Computer Science from Mississippi State University.



## Arif Iqbal

The new assistant professor in the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Textile Engineering from Bangladesh University of Textiles and his doctorate in Consumer, Apparel and Retail Studies from the University of North Carolina.

## Rebecca Smith

The new petting farm manager at AGRIscales. A master's student in Agriculture, Smith has a background in small rumen husbandry specializing in dairy goats and a passion for educating the public about agriculture.



## Julie Lee

The new assistant professor in the Department of Agribusiness and Food Industry Management. She earned her bachelor's degree in economics from Kwang Woon University, her master's degree in agricultural economics from Mississippi State, and her doctorate in agricultural economics from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

## Irma Villanueva

('18, Apparel Merchandising and Management; '22, M.S., International Apparel Management). The new lecturer in the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management. She is also pursuing a doctorate in apparel merchandising and design from Iowa State.



## Dina Lopez

The new AGRIscales outreach coordinator. A Cal State Fullerton alumna, Lopez has worked for Grey Advertising, Pasadena Service Federal Credit Union, and as a freelance marketing consultant.

## Rebecca Herrera

The new breeding coordinator at the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center. A Pitzer alumna, she first visited the horse center as a collegiate equestrienne.





Retirements



**Mark Haag**

An Animal and Veterinary Sciences lecturer for 13 years, has retired and was awarded emeritus status.



**Bonny Burns-Whitmore**

Professor in the Nutrition and Food Science Department, has retired and began participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program.

Promotions



**Joanne Sohn**

Was promoted to professor in the Department of Animal and Veterinary Science. A veterinarian, she has taught at Cal Poly Pomona University since 2014 and formerly directed the Animal Health Science program.



**Kelsey Swayze**

is now the ornamental horticulture unit manager in the Department of Plant Science after serving in interim capacity for several years. Swayze ('16, Agricultural Science; '18, M.S. Agriculture, Plant Science) started as a nursery assistant as a student in 2014.

Alumni News



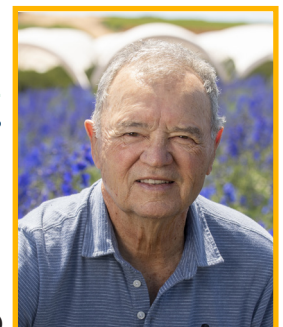
**Alum Participates in Ag Leadership Program**

**Cornelio Blanco**

was selected to participate in the California Agricultural Leadership Program, an intensive, 17-month training program for mid-career agricultural professionals.

Blanco ('16, agricultural science; '18), is a farm manager for Rio Farms LLC in Oxnard, one of the largest multi-generational family farms in California.

The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation, a nonprofit organization, partners with Cal Poly Pomona, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Fresno State and UC Davis, to put on the program. The universities provide curriculum for the participants.



**Mellano Named Distinguished Alumnus**

**Michael Mellano**

was named the Huntley College's 2023 Distinguished Alumnus.

Mellano ('61, horticulture) was recognized by CPP at an Oct. 21 gala at the Pacific Palms Resort along with honorees from other colleges.

For many years, Mellano helped run the family business, Mellano and Co., a top horticulture business that is a source for traditional florists, internet delivery services, and the Tournament of Roses Parade.

Now retired, he still serves as a consultant to the company, which is the grower for the Flower Fields in Carlsbad and manager of the L.A. Flower Market.



# Alumni in Urban Ag

Southern California continues to grow more urbanized and our alumni are still finding jobs in the region. Here are some reflections about their Cal Poly Pomona experiences and how this prepared them for life.



## Alan Melgoza-Calderon

Graduate: '18, Plant Science with a minor in ornamental horticulture.  
Works at Eco Urban Gardens. Duties: Farm Program Manager.  
Comment: "I mostly spearhead our farm-to-school program by building educational school gardens, curriculums and teaching K-12 students all about urban agriculture. My goal is to introduce students to the world of urban agriculture to rebuild their relationship with food and the environment through hands-on activities."



## Julieta Munoz

Graduated: '16, Plant Science with a minor in soil science.  
Works at: Founder, Growing Roots urban farming nonprofit organization in Pomona

Duties: Urban Farmer. Comment: "There are classes that I still use today, that I kept notes from: Aaron Fox's integrated pest management class. Reza Chaichi's agroecology class. Probably the most useful one is the irrigation class. I proudly assemble all the irrigation, and I love it. That is the one I reference the most ... Spadra Farm has given me the most practical knowledge. That's where I actually learned how to harvest, when to harvest, how to prepare for each season. What you learn in theory plays out different in the field."



## Tasien Some

Graduated: '18, Plant Science; '20 M.S. in agriculture, plant science option.  
Works at: Owns urban farming business serving private clients in Beverly Hills and Malibu. Duties: Creates, maintains, and harvests urban farms, organic gardens and orchards on clients' properties.  
Comment: "It was the best experience of my life going to Cal Poly Pomona. The number one thing about Cal Poly Pomona was the teachers, the professors. They were very cordial, very attentive, and they were willing to teach more than they needed to ... You'll have the opportunity to visit smaller urban farms. There are projects within the school of agriculture where you can have hands-on experience in urban agriculture as well as small-scale farm production."

## IN MEMORIAM:

### WILLIAM HUGHES



William Hughes, who was a longtime agribusiness professor and director of the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center, died Sept. 24, 2023.

A longtime horse show judge and owner, breeder, and trainer of Arabian horses, Hughes was initially hired in 1967 as a full-time instructor in the agricultural business management department. In

1998, Hughes was hired as the Arabian Horse Center's director. He retired from Cal Poly Pomona in 2010.

### JAMES ALDERSON



James Alderson, an animal and veterinary science professor emeritus and former department chair and director of the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center, died Dec. 14, 2023 after battling cancer.

A veterinarian, Alderson was hired by the Department of Animal and Veterinary Science at Cal

Poly Pomona in 2003 to oversee the department's fledgling animal health science program.



# Students who are going to Grad School!

## Agribusiness & Food Industry Mngm/Agricultural Science

- Mathew Greenberg ('23, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), started MBA program, University of La Verne
- Alma Gomez ('19, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), working on MBA, CPP
- Eleanore Guenon ('20, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), started master's degree in Agriculture, Murray State University
- Rebecca Jurado ('21, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), working on master's degree in Agribusiness and Food Innovation Management, Colorado State University
- Kathryn Pulford ('23, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), master's in Management & Leadership, Pepperdine University
- Erik Rahn ('18 Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), working on MBA, Sacramento State
- Anthony Vong ('17, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), started MBA program, University of Chicago Booth School of Business

## Animal & Veterinary Science

- Kailani Grant-Curie ('22, Animal Science), Veterinary school, Western University of Health Sciences
- Maranda Nicole U. Hernandez ('23, Animal Science), started Veterinary school, Oklahoma State University
- Vivian Huynh ('23, Animal Science), started a doctoral program in Pharmacology and Toxicology at UC Davis
  - Ashlyn Lewis ('23, Animal Science), started Veterinary school at the University of Missouri
  - Helena Kizor ('19, Animal Science; '22, M.S., agriculture), Veterinary school, University College Dublin
- Michael Martinez ('21, M.S. Agriculture, Animal Science option), Veterinary school, the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Colorado State University.
  - Lauren White ('23, Animal Science), master's degree in Poultry Science, University of Minnesota

## Apparel Merchandising and Management

- Michelle Hiller ('23, Apparel Merchandising and Management), master's program in Strategic Fashion Marketing, London College of Fashion
- Henry Sanchez ('22, Apparel Merchandising and Management), master's program in Apparel Design, Cornell University
- Irma Villanueva ('18, Apparel Merchandising and Management; '22, M.S. International Apparel Management), doctoral program in Apparel, Merchandising, and Design, Iowa State

## Nutrition & Food Science

- Katherine Amelin ('23, Dietetics), started master's in Agriculture Program, Nutrition option, CPP
- Cindy Evelyn Arana ('23, Nutrition), master's in Biomedical Science, UC Riverside School of Medicine
  - Sarah Caballero ('19, Food Science and Technology; '21, M.S. in Agriculture, Food Science and Technology), started doctoral program in Food Science and Technology, Oregon State University
  - Reylina Cruz ('23, dietetics), master's of professional practice in Dietetics and Dietetic Internship, Iowa State
- Angelica Del Rosario ('23, Dietetics), master's in Dietetics and Dietetic Internship, Marshall University
  - Elvis Garcia ('23, Food Science and Technology), doctoral program in Food Science and Technology, UC Davis
  - Diana Jimenes ('23, Dietetics), master's of Professional practice in Dietetics & Dietetic Internship, Iowa State
- Lisa Mai ('15, Food Science and Technology), started master's in Agriculture program, Food Science and Technology option, Cal Poly Pomona
  - Shwe Win ('23, Dietetics), started master's in Public Health, Cal State Los Angeles

## Plant Science

- Lara Amiri Kazaz ('23, M.S. in Agriculture, Plant Science option), doctoral program in Entomology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.



# Alumni Who finished Grad School!

## Agribusiness & Food Industry Mngm/Agricultural Science

- Catherine Fry ('20, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), doctor of Veterinary Medicine, University of Arizona, 2023
- Catherine Kimball ('19, Agricultural Science), master of science, Agricultural Leadership, Oklahoma State University, 2022
- Jessyca Schlegel ('14, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), Integrative Nutrition Health Coach, Institute for Integrative Nutrition, 2021
- Martiza Trujillo ('19, Agricultural Science), master's degree in Agriculture, Virginia Tech, 2022
- Yaoyao Xu ('19, Agribusiness and Food Industry Management), MBA, Cal Poly Pomona, 2022

## Animal & Veterinary Science

- Javier Ramirez ('20, Animal Science); master's degree in Agriculture, Animal Science option, CPP, 2023

## Apparel Merchandising and Management

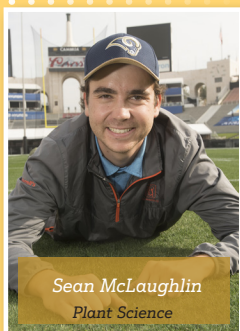
- Lauren Lloyd ('16, Apparel Merchandising and Management), master's in International Apparel management, Cal Poly Pomona, 2023
- Jeanette Luna ('18, International Business and Marketing), master's degree in International Apparel Management, Cal Poly Pomona, 2023
- Carolina Medina ('19, Apparel Merchandising and Management), master's degree in International Apparel Management, Cal Poly Pomona, 2023
- Diamond Scott ('20, Apparel Merchandising and Management), masters in International Apparel Management, Cal Poly Pomona, 2023.

## Nutrition & Food Science

- Benjamin Steiner ('16, Nutrition; '18, M.S. in Agriculture, Food Science and Technology option): earned his doctorate Nutritional Science from Cornell University, 2022

## Plant Science

- Jonathan Allred Karall ('14, Plant Science): master's degree and doctorate in Horticultural Science, Cornell University, 2023
- John Bennett ('14, Plant Science); doctorate in Plant Pathology, Texas A & M, 2021
- Amy Cardenas ('16, Plant Science), master's degree in Agriculture, Washington State University, 2022
- Sean McLaughlin ('18, Plant Science), master's in Agriculture, Plant Science option, CPP, 2020.
- Nelly Moreno ('18, Plant Science), master's degree in Environmental Policy and Management, University of Denver, 2020
- Kacee Morrell ('18, Plant Science), master's degree in Environmental Policy and Management, University of Denver, 2020
- Debra Nardo ('15, Plant Science; '19, M.S. in Agriculture - Agricultural Science and Plant Science options), doctorate in Soil and Crop Sciences, Texas A&M, 2022





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## College Breaks Giving Day Record

*Giving*



Alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends of the university showed their support for the Huntley College of Agriculture during Cal Poly Pomona's 10th Annual Giving Day, donating a record-breaking \$115,132 to support programs throughout the college.

The funding from 73 gifts during the 36-hour crowdfunding campaign – the most raised by any participating program on campus and surpassing the previous college record set last year of more than \$90,000.

Separately, the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center received \$37,060 from 36 donors during the April event, nearly equaling the fundraising record that was established last year.

Many thanks to the alumni, parents, faculty, staff and friends.

Cal Poly Pomona's 2024 Giving Day is April 17-18.



**Save the Date**  
**Pumpkin Fest**  
**Preview Night**

**Friday, Sept. 27, 2024**



# 30 years of **PUMPKIN FEST**

The Cal Poly Pomona Pumpkin Fest organized by the Huntley College celebrated 30 years in October. What started as a pumpkin patch run by the Los Rancheros student club evolved into a festival for the first time on Oct. 23, 1993. It included the Insect Fair, an intercollegiate horse show, pumpkin carving, face painting, hay and pony rides, a scarecrow contest, petting farm, barbecue, and country-western dancing.

In 2023, the event drew thousands of people to AGRIScapes throughout October to pick pumpkins, wander into the corn mazes, admire the sunflower patch, or view agricultural demonstrations and costume contests.

The Pumpkin Fest has grown with the addition of the Huntley College’s Preview Night, a fundraising event with food, beer, and wine tasting in the pumpkin patch. Proceeds benefit the college and support our mission to cultivate success through experiential learning, discovery, and innovation. Local restaurants and food vendors supplied the culinary dishes, while Cal Poly Pomona’s own Horsehill Vineyards and Innovation Brew Works and Pomona’s Homage Brewing provided the wine and beer, respectively.

**“We are thankful for the leadership and hard work by Craig Walters, AGRIScapes Director, resulting in an increasingly successful Pumpkin Fest, including in recent years the generation of much needed revenue to support the academic mission of the college”** said Interim Dean Martin Sancho-Madriz. **“We are also very grateful to all the Huntley College students, faculty and staff volunteers who have consistently throughout the years worked many hours to support the event”**, he added. Pumpkin Fest is the community event at Cal Poly Pomona with the largest attendance.









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**Don B. Huntley College of Agriculture  
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