AGRIcolumn

DON B. HUNTLEY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Animal Science Excellence

Pre-Vet Program Gains Renown





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welcome

At the Huntley College of Agriculture, we're dedicated to the mission of developing the next generation of leaders in the farming, fashion, and food industries through a STEM-based curriculum and hands-on learning experiences.

In this issue of our AGRIcolumn magazine, you'll see what our students can accomplish when being mentored and inspired.

You'll read how our animal science students are winning national acclaim and are sought after by veterinary schools.

You'll discover about how our food science and technology program celebrated its 25th anniversary; how its undergraduates can hold their own in competitions with graduate students from prestigious universities; and how its faculty organized an inaugural symposium on plant-based foods and nutrition.

We're also busy engaging the community. We just finished the 31st Pumpkin Fest this past fall, which drew nearly 80,000 people despite unseasonably warm weather.

In addition, we hosted more than 10,000 schoolchildren on field trips at AGRIscapes. We're starting to plan again for the LA County Fair in May and hope to see you there!

Enjoy our 2025 edition of AGRIcolumn!

Mison Baski, PhD

Dean (interim)



STUDENT COMPETITIONS



Animal science major **Mia Herrera** placed fourth in the undergraduate senior division of the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Assessment Contest. The virtual event, held April 20-21, involved students from North and South America who assessed online scenarios and presented their findings to scientists and veterinarians.



A team of five food science and technology students won second place at the 37th Annual Student Product Development Competition by the Southern California Institute of Food Technologists. The competition, held on March 12, required teams to submit new food product proposals, create displays, present orally, and provide samples.

The students created Green Dream Matcha Tres Leches cake, a dairy- and gluten-free fusion of Mexican and Japanese flavors.



A team of seven undergraduate students earned second place in the College Bowl at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) FIRST annual event in Chicago. The July competition tested knowledge of food science, history, processing, law, and trivia.

The Cal Poly Pomona team competed against graduate students from larger universities, including Penn State, Ohio State, Cornell, Wisconsin, and Brigham Young. They earned their spot after winning the Pacific Southwest College Bowl at Cal Poly Pomona on March 23. Lecturer **Karoline Harrison** served as the team's advisor/coach.



Five Cal Poly Pomona students received honorable mention in the USDA competition, which tasked them with developing a strategy to export cheese to the Philippines. The USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's Agricultural Export Market Challenge combined a case study and role-playing, exposing students to diplomacy, economics, marketing, and trade policy. Teams developed and presented market entry strategies for a fictitious U.S. food product in an overseas market.



Cal Poly Pomona teams placed ninth and 14th in the national Turf Bowl competition at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's annual convention in Phoenix, Jan. 29-Feb. 1. The event tested teams from universities nationwide on turfgrass, insects, diseases, weeds, and seeds.

COMPLISHMENTS STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

awards



PIA SPORS

Agribusiness and food industry management student Pia Spors was named Julian A. McPhee Outstanding Student Scholar as the college's valedictorian for the Class of 2024.



MICHELLE BAGGETT

Baggett was named John E. Andrews Undergraduate Student Leader of the Year. A plant science major, Baggett managed the campus apiary's honey lab and participated in the SoCal Farm to Table Ambassador program.



MYUNGGYO YU

Yu was named John E. Andrews Graduate Student Leader of the year. Yu, who is in the international apparel management master's program, was praised for her mentoring of undergraduate students and representing the department at public events.



KARINA VENEGAS

Apparel Merchandising and Management student Karina Venegas has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship by the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) California Affiliate.
During the 2023-24 academic year, Venegas served as treasurer for the AATCC SoCal Broncos chapter and as a Council representative for the Apparel Merchandising and Management Association.



MALIA CHANG

Apparel Merchandising and Management student Malia Chang received the annual Student Chapter Award from the American Association of Textile Chemists & Colorists (AATCC). This honor is given to a graduating senior from each of the 25 AATCC chapters nationwide, recognizing academic excellence and contributions to their chapter, school, or society.



TANESHI NOEL

Taneshi Noel, an MS in Agriculture-Nutrition and Food Science Option student, was awarded the California Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Scholarship and the National scholarship Foundation's 2024 National Organization of Blacks in Dietetics & Nutrition Scholarship.



STUDENTS WIN RESEARCH FUNDING

Four students received \$8,000 in funding from the university's Projects Hatchery to research the safety and efficacy of equine dietary supplements.

Ivanna Marroquin, Anita Fereidooni, Ericka Diaz, and Samantha Meija explored whether feeding horses a commercially available Echinacea-ssp-based supplement for 28 days would increase hematological parameters in the animals.

The Projects Hatchery is a multidisciplinary program under the Office of Undergraduate Research that encourages students to pursue research topics with the help of a mentor. **Holly Greene**, a staff member and an animal and veterinary sciences lecturer, served as the students' mentor.



EQUINE STUDIES STUDENTS AT SANTA ANITA

Students in Cal Poly Pomona's equine studies minor gain insight into the Thoroughbred industry through a new paid internship at Santa Anita Park. Developed in partnership with the racetrack the Dept. of Animal and Veterinary Science over the past year, the program offers students work experience and first-hand knowledge. Fourth-year students **Tina Kabbouche** and **Vanessa Cardenas** were the first interns, starting last February.



FARM STORE SELLS FST SALSA

The Farm Store now offers restaurant-style salsa crafted by food science students using campus-grown ingredients. The project was proposed by Martin Sancho-Madriz and Gabriel Davidov-Pardo, developed by Natalee Wolley, and implemented with licensing support from Lecturer Dianne Trinh.

Interns Truong Minh Nguyen and Adan Cadenas-Arzate also contributed significantly.



COLLEGE CELEBRATES COMMENCEMENT

The College celebrated the Class of 2024 at commencement on May 17. Professor **Bonny Burns-Whitmore** of the Department of Nutrition & Food Science served as the mace bearer, leading the procession.

CA State Treasurer Fiona Ma was the

CA State Treasurer Fiona Ma was the special guest.



PLT STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT FLORAL INDUSTRY

Plant science students interacted with floral industry professionals during the Home Depot California Spring Trials at AGRIscapes in March. Breeders showcased new plant varieties to Home Depot buyers for potential sales at stores nationwide.



AMM STUDENT WINS WRITING PRIZE

Apparel merchandising & management student **Angela Becerril** won the Common Read Writing Contest, reviewing "The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together" by Heather McGhee. She received a \$150 Bronco Gift Card and \$375 from the University Library.



ABM STUDENTS PARTICIPATE AT INDUSTRY EVENT

Seven agribusiness students gained experience at the National Grocers Association Show in Las Vegas, evaluating products, assisting in a grocery bagging competition, and competing in a case study contest.



AMM STUDENT'S DESIGNS FEATURED AT UNION STATION

Apparel student Isaiah Wallis designed two looks worn by models at the Sustainable Student Fashion Show on Earth Day in April. Sponsored by Metrolink, the event featured sustainable designs from 23 Southern California high school and college students.



AHS STUDENT WINS SCHOLARSHIP

An animal health science student has won a \$2,000 national scholarship for aspiring registered veterinary technicians.

Elise Contreras was awarded a Zoetis Foundation/American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) Veterinary Technician Student Scholarship.



HORSE CENTER EARNS RECOGNITION

The W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center was named "Performance Breeder of the Year" at the Arabian Horse Times Readers' Choice Awards in February. After receiving public votes, the award was presented at the Richard & Georgiann Ames Family Foundation Gala on Feb. 15 in Scottsdale, Arizona.



INTERNATIONAL PANEL TALKS AT AG TECH FUTURE

For the second year, the College partnered with the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce's Southern California chapter to host a panel on artificial intelligence and robotics in agriculture. The Feb. event, was livestreamed with participants from Europe.

Stay in Touch

Keep your contact information current to get our latest news. Visit: bit.ly/AgUpdate or call (909) 869-2963 or email: alumni@cpp.edu.

PRE-VET STUDENTS EXCEL



Students in the CPP Pre-Vet Club visiting Churchill Downs as part of the 2023 APVMA.



Arely Navarro, APVMA president, (left), Lecturer Dr Kathleen Earle with the APVMA's Robert Van Shaun Outstanding Advisor Award, and Christine Berry, APVMA president, (right).



Arely Navarro ('24, animal science) earned a full-ride scholarship to the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.



Cal Poly Pomona students at the 2024 APVMA Symposium at North Carolina State University.

Growing up in a low-income community, **Arely Navarro** often struggled to find adequate medical care for her Labrador retriever, Lola. This inspired her to help animals in need. Today, she is pursuing that dream at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. The Westminster native credits Cal Poly Pomona ('24, animal science) for helping

her secure a full-ride scholarship. "CPP effectively prepared me for veterinary school by providing hands-on experiences with various species," Navarro said. "The pre-veterinary curriculum equipped me with the knowledge and skills necessary for this next phase."

Navarro was one of 22 Cal Poly Pomona students accepted into UC Davis' Class of 2028, reflecting the program's growing reputation. The American Pre-Veterinary Medical Association (APVMA) has also recognized the program's success. In the past five years:

- The Cal Poly Pomona Pre-Vet Club was named the APVMA's outstanding club in 2023-24.
- Navarro and fellow Cal Poly Pomona pre-vet student Christine Berry served as APVMA presidents in 2023-24 and 2022-23, respectively.
- Dr. Kathleen Earle, who advised the Pre-Vet Club, was named APVMA's 2022-23 Advisor of the year.
- Other Cal Poly Pomona students also were elected as APVMA vice president, treasurer, and webmaster.
 Professor Hyungchul Han, chair of the Department of Animal & Veterinary Sciences, highlights the program's unique hands-on animal experience and a curriculum tailored for California's vet schools. Although any life science student can apply to vet school, Cal Poly Pomona is the only Southern California university where students work directly with animals on campus.

"The hands-on experience is one of the big benefits," Han said. The curriculum also prepares students for California's two veterinary schools—UC Davis and Western University of Health Sciences—and meets the requirements for many others. Participation in APVMA provides additional advantages, such as touring other vet schools and learning about their admission criteria.

The program's popularity is evident: more than 2,100 high school students applied for Fall 2024, with fewer than 800 admitted. Many are first-generation students from underrepresented backgrounds. Han noted, "These students need help navigating higher education but are eager to succeed."

Navarro and fellow alumna Brooke Han, now also at

UC Davis, credit mentors like Dr. Earle and Professor Han for their success. Brooke, a non-traditional student married with a son, had spent 12 years in community colleges before arriving at Cal Poly Pomona. Initially, she aimed to become a registered veterinary technician, doubting her grades were competitive for vet school.

Her mentors disagreed. "They encouraged me to apply and reassured me I had a real chance," Brooke Han said.
Their support helped her improve her grades and build confidence. Today, she and Navarro are officers in their class: Navarro as president and Han as secretary.

Navarro called Dr. Earle a pivotal mentor who provided constant support and guidance. "Her encouragement and belief in my abilities motivated me to push beyond my limits and strive for excellence," she said.

Their journeys underscore the program's role in fostering resilient, and well-prepared future veterinarians.

By the Numbers:

Twenty-two Cal Poly Pomona students were accepted into the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine's Class of 2028. To put this into perspective:

- UC Davis had the most students admitted at 49
- UCLA had the third most at 11.
- CPP had more than the other California State University campuses combined (19).
- Cal Poly Pomona had more than UC Berkeley and UCLA combined (18).

Source: UC Davis

My time at Cal Poly Pomona gave me

the hope and strength to aim higher.

Brooke Han ('24, animal health science)





pro motion

Erik Froyen

was promoted to associate professor in the Department of Nutrition & Food Science and received the college's Faculty Advisor of the Year Award.

Gabriel Davidov-Pardo

was promoted to professor in the Department of Nutrition & Food Science and was appointed as interim associate dean of the college.

Jiangning Che

was promoted to professor in the Department of Apparel Merchandising & Management and was named the department's interim co-chair, for 2024-25.

Helen Trejo

was promoted to associate professor in the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management.

Claire Whang

was promoted to associate professor in the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management.

Brianna Cox

was promoted to manager of the Farm Store.













Dosition

Professor **Hyungchul Han** was named chair of the Dept. of Animal & Veterinary Sciences and received the college's *Teacher* of the Year Award.

Associate Professor Steven Archambault served as interim chair of the Dept. of Agribusiness & Food Industry Management during Professor Phillips' fall 2024 sabbatical.

Stacey Cordua, an animal health technician in the Department of Animal & Veterinary Sciences, received the college's Staff of the Year Award.

Professor Chitra Dabas & Jiangning Che were named interim co-chair of the Department of Apparel Merchandising and Management for 24-25. Rosa Lamas Serratos was selected for the college's *Staff Advisor* of the Year Award.

Associate Professor
Ondieki Gekara
was named associate
chair of the Department
of Animal & Veterinary
Sciences.

Plant Science Professor Emerita **Valerie Mellano** was inducted into the "Green Industry Hall of Fame" for her contributions to education and environmental advising.

Established in 2005 in Ontario, Calif., the hall honors individuals with 20+ years in the industry who have innovated, educated, or influenced the field. Mellano, department chair from 2012–2022, called the recognition a tribute to the department's impact on the industry.















Faculty Receive Nearly \$170K in Grants.

Ten faculty members were awarded a total of nearly \$170,000 in campus funding to create innovative instructional programs or to modernize classrooms.

The funding was awarded through Cal Poly Pomona's Special Projects for Improving the Classroom Experience (SPICE) program, which are funded through the university's Student Success Fee.

The awards and awardees were, by department:

Agribusiness & Food Industry Management / Agricultural Science

• \$7,566 to Assistant Professor **Julie Lee** to create a four-week instructional module where students will learn how to assess the environmental impact of food products' life cycles in the supply chain.

Animal and Veterinary Science

- \$30,000 to Assistant Professor **David Driscoll** to replace two anesthesia machines used in spaying and neutering operations in a surgical learning lab course.
- \$4,075 to Assistant Professor **Eeman At-Taras** to replace two freezers used to store fresh specimens for multiple labs in anatomy, clinical anatomy, endocrinology, and nutrition.

Apparel Merchandising and Management

- \$24,135 to Assistant Professor **Seoha Min** to acquire Alvanon physical dress forms to give students experience with fashion industry sizing practices, understanding of diverse body types, and integrating virtual and physical garments.
- \$12,959 to Professor **Jiangning Che** to replace flammability testing equipment in the department's textile lab.

Nutrition and Food Science

- \$30,000 to Assistant Professor **Kellene Isom** to update the medical nutrition therapy lab course to provide students with learning activities that simulate working with patients.
- \$25,000 to Associate Professor **David Edens** to update a kitchen in Building 7, Room 113 for health and safety concerns and to meet industry standards.
- \$21,665 to Assistant Professor **Belal Hasan** to replace lab equipment and revamp curriculum for the senior capstone lab course.
- \$3,950 to Assistant Professor **Fatheema Subhan** to develop methods to evaluate the effectiveness of a class on food insecurity and nutrition disparities in minority communities on student learning.

Plant Science

• \$9,585 to Assistant Professor **Eshwar Ravishankar** to restructure a course about technological innovations in plant science by purchasing sensors, cameras, and other equipment for precision agriculture.

hire

NEW FACULTY / STAFF HIRES



MIRANDA AIKEN

was hired as an assistant professor in plant science. She earned her doctorate in environmental toxicology at UC Riverside and has taught at Chapman University and Riverside City College.



GUADALUPE MALDONADO

was hired as an assistant professor in plant science. She earned her doctorate in botany from UC Riverside, taught at UC Riverside and Cal State Dominguez Hills, & worked as a GIS consultant.



LUCAS KRUSINSKI

was hired as an assistant professor in animal & Vet science. He earned his doctorate in food science from Michigan State University and did a postdoctoral fellowship at Chapman University.



HOLLY JACKSON

is the new assistant manager at the Farm Store. She previously worked at T.J Maxx and Bed Bath & Beyond.



JACQUELINE MOBLEY

('10, animal science) was hired as an assistant professor in animal & Vet science. She earned her doctorate in veterinary medicine from Western University of Health Sciences and is an associate veterinarian in South Pasadena.



ANGIE STARK

is the new accounts specialist for the Farm Store. She worked for the San Bernardino County auditor-controller.



VIVIAN NAGAO

was hired as an assistant professor in animal & Vet science. A UCLA alumna, she earned her doctorate in veterinary medicine from Ohio State University and served as medical director at the Wallis Annenberg PetSpace.



JEREMY MORA

is the college's new director of farm and animal operations oversees animal units and crop who programs. He spent nearly two decades in the Salinas Valley, including four years as ranch manager at Laguna Mist Farms and two years as ag manager at Dole Fresh Vegetables.



ABIGAIL CLARKE

was hired as an assistant professor in nutrition and food science starting Fall 2025. She earned her doctorate and master's in nutrition from Loma Linda University School of Public Health. She has been a clinical nutrition educator at Loma Linda Medical Center and a lecturer at Caribbean universities.



JASMINE GOMEZ

is a new student success advisor who works with animal science students



WINNIE LAW

is an administrative support coordinator for both the dean's office and the Department of Agribusiness & Food Industry Management/Agricultural Science. Previously, she was an executive assistant under the Faculty of Law at the University of Hong Kong.



LILIBETH DEBORD

is a new administrative support coordinator for the dean's office. She previously worked for the University of La Verne's online program.



MITCH SPERTE

is the new manager of equine operations at the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center.



WENDY ROSE

is the administrative support coordinator for the department of Animal and Veterinary Science. She worked at Citrus College before joining us last yea.

RECENT RETIREMENTS



MUDITHA SENANAYAKE

retired as chair of the Department of Apparel Merchandising & Management in July 2024. He was first hired at Cal Poly Pomona in 2007 and became chair in 2017. He has joined North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University as chair of its Department of Family and Consumer Science.



SHONNIE CRANE

retired in December 2023 after working nearly 14 years at the Farm Store. As the store's financial manager, Shonnie was responsible for bookkeeping and accounts payable.



DAWN TACCONE

retired in January 2024 after 16 years as the Farm Store's manager. During her tenure, she also helped plan the college's Pumpkin Festival and Strawberry Festival until 2015.



PETER KILDUFF

retired as Associate
Dean of the Huntley
College of Agriculture
in June 2024. Appointed
in 2022, he had served
in the role on an interim
basis for five years.
Previously, he was a
professor and chair
of the Department of
Apparel Merchandising
and Management
since 2006.



SHELTON MURINDA

retired as professor and chair of the Department of Animal and Veterinary Science in June 2024. Joining Cal Poly Pomona as an assistant professor in 2005, he specialized in biotechnology applications in animal science and meat industry courses, becoming department chair in 2019.

SYMPOSIUM ON PLANT-BASED FOOD & NUTRITION: INNOVATIONS & CHALLENGES

An innovative national symposium on plantbased nutrition attracted researchers and industry experts to CPP in November. "The Symposium on Plant-Based Food & Nutrition: Innovations & Challenges" was hosted by the Department of Nutrition & Food Science and drew nearly 200 attendees to the Kellogg West Conference Center.

It's the department's latest initiative to establish national leadership in the plant-based food and nutrition field. Several years ago, it began offering the country's first plant-based minor, thanks to donors Bipin and Rekha Shah in collaboration with department chair Professor Harmit Singh. The Shahs also funded an annual lecture series.

Initially intended as a small, local event, the symposium grew after consulting with industry and local experts, said Assistant Professor Belal Hasan, the lead organizer.

"We found strong support for a larger





event," he said. "Stakeholders are interested in plantbased nutrition."

In the next 25 to 30 years, animal protein sources are expected to decline due to population growth and carbon reduction efforts, Hasan explained. Interest in plant-based meat substitutes is also increasing.

"We're not asking people to become vegan or vegetarian," Hasan said. "We're creating alternatives to reduce animal production while maintaining protein supplies."

Industry interest was evident in the over 30 sponsors supporting the symposium, including two contributing \$4,000 each and seven donating \$2,000 each.

The sponsorships enabled organizers to invite 13 guest speakers from across the country, including Darin Detwiler, a Northeastern University professor featured in the Emmy-nominated Netflix documentary Poisoned: The Dirty Truth About Your Food.

Christopher Gardner, a Stanford nutrition scientist featured in the Netflix docuseries You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment, was another speaker.

The event also featured research presentations, an industry expo with 30 companies, and networking sessions. CPP students participated with poster presentations.

"The biggest goal I have is to let employers know our students are ready," Hasan said. "I hope to see them hired by these companies."

Plant-based food production requires expertise in areas like food safety, supply chain, and renewable energy, so faculty from across campus were invited. Hasan hopes the event showcases Cal Poly Pomona's expertise and research facilities.

Thanks to special state funding, the department acquired cutting-edge equipment, including extruders, a rheometer, 3D printer, high-shear homogenizer, spray dryer, and fermenters—tools uncommon at other universities.

Organizers hope to make the symposium a regular event, though its frequency is yet to be determined, Hasan said.







THE FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The food science and technology program celebrated its 25th anniversary during the Symposium on Plant-Based Food and Nutrition.

It was a fitting occasion, because the symposium reflected one of the ways that the program has developed during the past quarter century.

From its inception in 1999, the program has grown from just three students and one tenure-track faculty member to about 150 students and six tenure-track faculty. Also this program has approval



from the Institute of Food Technologists, which is an important milestone and goal of any FST program.

"We are one of the largest food science programs in the U.S.," said Professor Singh, chair of the Department of Nutrition & Food Science. "We are now a well-recognized program." To celebrate the milestone, the department hosted a gathering for more than 60 people during the symposium at the Kellogg West Conference Center.

Guests included Interim Dean Alison Baski; former Interim Dean Martin Sancho-Madriz, who founded the program; department faculty, staff, students, & alumni.

The Food Science and Technology program was created to prepare students to work in the food processing industry and related regulatory agencies with required internship, which set it apart from traditional food science programs.

The major has since added Culinology option – combining culinary arts with food sciences – which was developed in partnership with The Collins College of Hospitality Management and approved by the Research Chefs Association.

The department also created a plant-based food and nutrition minor several years ago and hopes to expand that into an option, Singh said.

The hiring of additional faculty has enabled the program to obtain millions of dollars in research grants, which also provide learning opportunities for students.

Another learning opportunity emerged with the creation this year of Cal Poly Pomona Farms Restaurant Style Salsa, which is made from ingredients grown on the campus farm. Students make salsa at Lecturer Dianne Trinh's food production facility in Garden Grove.

Students have displayed their excellence at regional and national competitions over the years, more than holding their own against peers – even graduate students – from larger universities. In the future, Singh says the department plans to build more links with the food industry, offering extension and continuing education programs like the symposium, while also seeking out new internship opportunities for students.

To build enrollment, the department is creating a "pipeline", making it easier for Los Angeles Community College students to transfer into the food science program, and will establish similar relationships with other colleges. Singh said he also hopes to create an on-campus pilot plant approved for food-grade production where industry can come and test their products.

OCCURES PUMPKIN FESTIVAL & FIELD TRIPS

Nearly 80,000 people attended Pumpkin Fest events in October despite unseasonably warm weather for most of the month.

In addition, more than 10,000 local schoolchildren visited the pumpkin patch, petting farm and Children's Garden at AGRIscapes on field trips during the month.





















Thank you

Our thanks to everyone who helped the Huntley College establish a new fundraising record during the Cal Poly Pomona Giving Day 2024 campaign in April!

The college raised more than \$117,000 from 61 gifts, surpassing the college's previous best of \$115,132 raised in 2023.

Special thanks to those who generously provided matching gifts to encourage donations, including the James G. Boswell Foundation, American AgCredit, the Bronco Fund, and the Orange County Farm Bureau.

Separately, the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center raised \$23,835 from 24 gifts.

Support the Huntley College of Agriculture.
Donate at https://www.cpp.edu/agri/giving/cpp.shtml.
For more information about engagement and fundraising, contact
Patricia J. Tucker at: pjtucker@cpp.edu.



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