

# Living the DREAM

By Clay Fowler

CAL POLY POMONA GRADUATES ARE READY TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING ON DAY ONE. HERE ARE THREE STORIES OF ALUMNI WHO LANDED THEIR DREAM JOB AND ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

## ALUMNI

### NICOLE PARR

Production chemist, Abbott Laboratories

“I like my job because it feels like home”

Nicole Parr’s on-screen equivalent likely won’t be the protagonist of your favorite TV crime drama.

But the Cal Poly Pomona alumna (’18, chemistry) plays a vital role aiding law enforcement and medical professionals to perform accurate drug testing.

After graduating last year, Parr accepted a job with Kelly Scientific as a production chemist at Abbott Laboratories in Pomona. She isn’t the one testing humans for drugs like opiates, LSD and cocaine. Her role precedes that part of the process.

Her job is to ensure the biotech company’s drug tests on blood, urine

and saliva will yield accurate results in the amount of time it takes to watch a couple of CSI episodes.

“We test the drug test administered to people in hospitals,” Parr says. “When our tests come back good, then my company packs the drug tests and sells them to police or hospitals.”

By the time she graduated, Parr had more than three years of hands-on experience both through her coursework and a part-time job in Cal Poly Pomona’s biology stock room. She learned the practical functions of pipets and microscopes in the classroom and gained even deeper knowledge of supplies while repairing them.

It’s not just the work that drew Parr to Abbott Laboratories, but the familiarity of her surroundings.

“I had two job offers and I chose this one because that’s where I felt the love and support that I had at Cal Poly Pomona,” Parr says, specifically referencing the relationships she formed in the biology stock room. “I like my job because it feels like home.”



## ALUMNI

### ANDREW KOPP

Archival and metadata technician, Peterson Automotive Museum

“I really found myself at Cal Poly Pomona”

The first item Andrew Kopp archived after graduating from Cal Poly Pomona was a photo of Evel Knievel’s famous 1974 attempt to jump the Snake River Canyon.

If confirmation that Kopp had landed his dream job didn’t settle in when he peered through the magnifier at his first strip of film, it was driven home the minute he walked into the vault of the Peterson Automotive Museum.

“It just took my breath away,” Kopp says. “I was floored. To see so many pieces of automotive history just lined up in front of me, I knew that I needed this job. I knew that I wanted to tell the story of these cars, the story of automotive history.”

The Peterson Museum displays more than 150 vehicles in its 25 galleries. The 60,000 square-foot museum vault contains some of the rarest vehicles from around the world, including hypercars, early 20th-century cars, head-of-state cars and supercars.

As the museum’s archival and metadata technician, Kopp (’17, history) has archived close to 700,000 of the 20 million images from Robert Petersen’s famous publications, including Hot Rod Magazine, Motor Trend and Rod & Custom.

When Kopp arrived at Cal Poly Pomona after community college, his emphasis was history. His original aspiration was to

teach it, not piece it together.

Kopp discovered the archival profession during an internship at the March Field Air Museum in Riverside. His ensuing work as a student at the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Library cemented his love for the archival process.

Kopp has since transitioned from horses to horse power.

“The opportunities I had in school are the reason why I got the opportunity (at the Petersen Automotive Museum),” he says. “I really found myself at Cal Poly Pomona. When I got to process a collection from start to finish at the Arabian Horse Library, all of that research and preservation really propelled my career and what I wanted to do.”



## CARLY OWENS

Public relations specialist, Experian

**“It’s a challenge, and I thrive on challenges”**

Carly Owens’ most telling detour on her path toward a career in public relations came through the loose nuts and bolts aisle at Ace Hardware.

She says she knew “next to nothing about hardware” when she began the part-time job she held during college. By the end, she could find every rivet and explain every fastener on the most intimidating aisle in the store.

Owens’ curiosity and attention to detail have also served her well as a public relations specialist at **Experian**, where her expertise has since expanded on an international scale.

Experian is a global information services company that maintains up-to-date knowledge across an array of rapidly changing industries all over the world.

“I enjoy everything that I do here because it’s so technical and can be hard to understand, which sounds weird,” says Owens (’16, communication). “But to me, it’s just a challenge, and I thrive on challenges.”

Experian helps companies make the most of data in an effort to unlock future solutions for its myriad of clients. Owens’ role involves media relations, content creation and overseeing measurement of public relations efforts for North America.

Whether it’s breaking down sales trends in the automotive industry or understanding how to mitigate fraud, every day is different for Owens as the global company expands its reach. If that weren’t enough for her to digest, most of the industries in which Experian deals are in a constant state of change.

“Being on top of that change and understanding how that impacts what we do is a constant challenge,” Owens says. “But that’s what I love about it.”

Owens was hired by Experian in April 2017, but her first job in public relations came as a student assistant in the Cal Poly Pomona Department of Strategic Communications. Owens relished the chance to take what she learned in the classroom and immediately apply her knowledge.

The same innate curiosity that Owens satisfied through Cal Poly Pomona’s learn-by-doing philosophy is stimulated on a daily basis through her many endeavors at Experian.

“This is absolutely a dream job,” Owens says. “Working for a company whose mission I believe in means so much to me. We don’t just say we’re trying to help create a better tomorrow, we really are doing it. Getting to share the stories of how we’re doing that is why I look forward to coming to work every day.”



President Coley congratulates Diane Miller on the honorary doctorate.



## Alumna and Cybersecurity Leader Receives University’s Highest Degree

The digital world can be a precarious place, but Cal Poly Pomona alumna **Diane Miller** (’81, computer information systems) is committed to meeting the constantly evolving cyber threat for generations to come.

Miller is director of Global Cyber Education and Workforce Development at **Northrop Grumman**, as well as a leading voice for CyberPatriot, which promotes cyber literacy starting in kindergarten.

In recognition of her distinguished career, Miller was awarded an honorary doctorate by Cal Poly Pomona and the California State University system at the College of Business Administration’s 50th anniversary gala.

Miller has forged a distinguished career at Northrop Grumman and is an internationally recognized speaker on the need to educate and develop a diverse and talented cyber workforce pipeline. She is a longtime advocate for diversity across STEM disciplines and has shaped the national conversation about cybersecurity.

“Underlying all her professional pursuits and accomplishments is an undying commitment to expanding opportunity,” said University President **Soraya M. Coley**. “She has stayed closely connected to Cal Poly Pomona since graduation. And whether it is conducting a workshop at our Cyber Security & Awareness Fair or lending her voice to our strategic planning process, Diane remains ‘Bronco Loyal’ to this day.”

Miller’s commitment to higher education includes helping to develop curricula, offering internships, and cultivating relationships between academia, government and industry. At Cal Poly Pomona, Northrop Grumman has provided resources for research in the Cyber Physical Systems Laboratory and helped create a student-led Cyber Security Operations Center.

At the CBA’s anniversary gala in March, the college also honored Distinguished Alumni **David Singelyn** (’84, accounting and computer information systems) and **Ruth Singelyn** (’84, information systems), as well as digital leader **Avanade** with the Corporate Partnership Award.

In May, the university will also bestow an honorary degree at the College of Engineering’s commencement ceremony to **Joan Robinson Berry** (’82, engineering technology).