

CPM

CAL POLY POMONA MAGAZINE | SPRING 2020



STORIES OF
TRANSFORMATION

what's inside



THAT'S SOCALPOLY

A collection of tidbits and short stories that celebrates our campus' unique location, traditions and inclusive polytechnic identity. [Page 2](#)

TRANSFORMATION

Universities are incubators for growth and transformation, providing powerful, transformative experiences one can't find anywhere else. [Page 6](#)

PROJECT REBOUND

After two decades in prison, Mario Quintana is studying psychology with the career plan to work with youth in the juvenile justice system. [Page 16](#)

60 YEARS OF ALUMNI AWARDS [Page 30](#)

ACTIVE IMAGINEERING

Alumnus Bob Weis leads Walt Disney Imagineering to create fantastic new worlds and experiences. [Page 34](#)

THE POLYTECHNIC ADVANTAGE [Page 38](#)

PRESIDENT

Soraya M. Coley

VICE PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Daniel Montplaisir

DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

CPP MAGAZINE EDITORS

Ani Markarian
Esther Chou Tanaka
Tom Zasadzinski

AUDIENCE CONSULTANT

Lorena Márquez

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Melanie Johnson

CONTRIBUTORS

Stephanie Abraham
Clay Fowler
S. Terri Gomez
Martha Groves
Dan Lee
Shelley Levitt
Melissa McCoy
Jose Omar Garcia Ortega
Nick Owchar
Cynthia Peters
Robyn Norwood
Monica Rodriguez
Nancy Yeang

WEBSITE

Michelle Magcalas
Mercedes Quiroz

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT

Monika Salazar
Tambra Williams

3801 W. Temple Ave.
Pomona, CA 91768
909-869-4997
support@cpp.edu

Not printed at state expense.



As part of our commitment to green printing, CPP Magazine is printed on FSC®-certified paper. The Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC) promotes environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.



How To: SAVE THE BEES

Bees are essential to agriculture and farming, pollinating \$15 billion in U.S. crops annually, according to Adjunct Professor Mark Haag. Recently, bees have experienced death and decline in their colonies. Here are a few ways you can help bees thrive.

AVOID PESTICIDE USE

Use safe pest management practices to limit the use of pesticides that may be harmful to bee colonies.

ATTEND FARMERS MARKETS

Shop at farmers markets and purchase local honey, fruits and vegetables to support beekeepers and farmers.

DIVERSIFY YOUR GARDEN

Plant bee-friendly flowers such as sunflowers, marigolds, lavender and poppies.

ENROLL IN A BEEKEEPING CLASS

Courses are offered at Cal Poly Pomona and through local organizations, such as the Los Angeles County Beekeepers Association and the Beekeepers Association of Southern California.

B R O N C O S A T W O R K

VINCENT MARSALA

'17, civil engineering
 Superintendent at Turner Construction Company
 '06 to '10, United States Marine Corps Bulk Fuel Specialist

Tell us about your career.

I have worked for Turner Construction Company since June 2017 as part of the team managing the construction of SoFi Stadium, located at Hollywood Park in Inglewood. This will be home to the Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers and will be the largest NFL stadium to date. As a superintendent for Turner Construction, I am part of a diverse team that oversees project safety, construction quality, site logistics and construction scheduling.

What was it like being a veteran and a student?

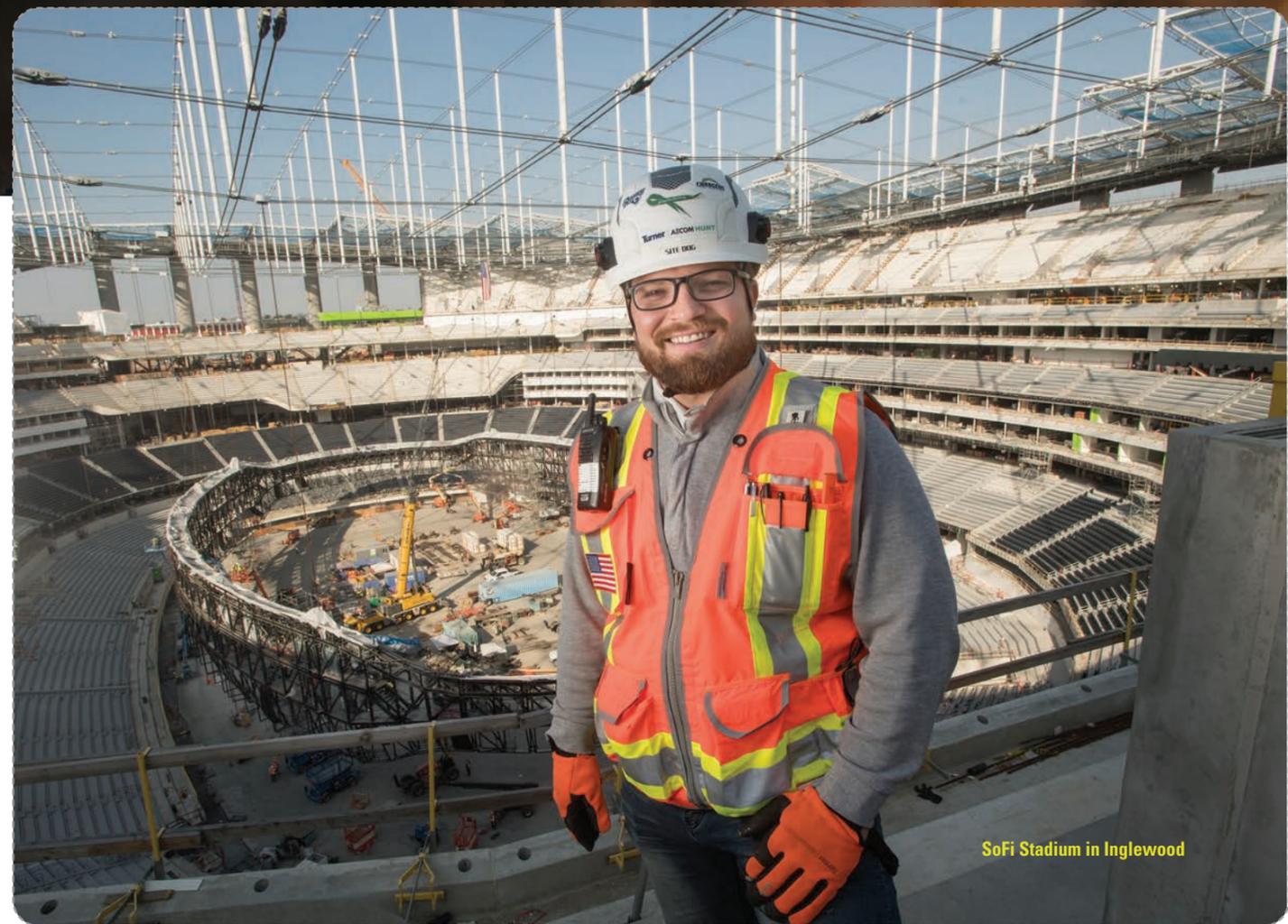
Military service gave me a greater form of respect, discipline, leadership and maturity. We take pride in our work and put the mission first before ourselves. Being unselfish and willing to sacrifice allows us the ability to take on larger roles in any environment, even that of the classroom.

How did Cal Poly Pomona support you as a student veteran?

For my first three years, my GI Bill benefits covered the cost of tuition. However, I exhausted those military benefits prior to graduating. I went to the Veterans Resource Center to seek counsel on obtaining additional financial assistance. I immediately connected with all veterans in the resource center, which led to employment at the center. This allowed me to participate in veteran outreach for the College of Engineering. I received scholarships, and it was truly a blessing in disguise. President Coley, her husband and the university do an amazing job in supporting our nation's military veterans.

How do you give back to student veterans at Cal Poly Pomona?

I have donated to the Veterans Resource Center, attended the Veterans Future Forward event as an alumni panel speaker, and was the keynote speaker for the 2018 incoming class of veterans. I also assist Turner Construction in recruiting veterans for our company.



SoFi Stadium in Inglewood

That's SOCAL POLY

A Brief History

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER

The center supports student parents by providing a high-quality educational environment for up to 90 children. Grants, student fees, ASI and the university provide low-cost daycare and preschool.

1974

The Children's Center is founded by student parents looking for child care options.

2003

"Kids University" opens during the summer months for school-age children.

2005

The center purchases outdoor equipment with proceeds from a silent auction held during its 30th anniversary.

2006

The Children's Center is the first preschool in Pomona to become accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

2019

A \$1.3 million federal grant allows the center to offer evening child care, hire a student parent success coach and expand services to young toddlers.

Partnering with Communities to Improve Food Security



Analena Hassberg, assistant professor of ethnic and women's studies, is a scholar-activist working on issues of food justice and environmental justice in the Los Angeles region.

WHAT IS FOOD JUSTICE?

Food justice is the idea that everyone should have access to healthy, culturally appropriate food. It involves understanding how the food system is racialized and impacts people based on socioeconomic status and location.

HOW IS THE FOOD SYSTEM RACIALIZED?

The poorest communities are often populated by people of color while the most affluent are largely white. The food in a neighborhood can signify the racial and economic demographic: Is there more fast food and only a handful of grocery stores with subpar fruits and vegetables? Or are there more whole food options, a farmer's market and a community garden? Low-income communities of color also have a desire for health but oftentimes can't actualize that in their own neighborhoods because of what's available.

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE MORE GROCERY AND DINING OPTIONS?

We need residents, community leaders and elected officials to support small community enterprises to make the food environment more equitable. Instead of looking to industry and saying 'We need Walmart,' it would be more effective to support small land grants, community farms and nutrition education offered through schools.

WHAT CAN COMMUNITIES DO?

I work with Community Services Unlimited, a food justice nonprofit in South Central LA, founded by the local chapter of the Black Panthers in the 1970s to provide social services. They've opened a wellness center that is also a full-scale marketplace that offers healthy food, yoga and capoeira classes, book clubs and more. They also own and operate mini-farms throughout the city. There's a food justice network in South LA, and the CSU demonstrates the kind of range a food justice project can have.

In Pomona, Urban Mission is a food justice ministry and nonprofit. They have turned their church campus into a community farm and wellness center. They partner with Cal Poly Pomona, Western University of Health Sciences and other local organizations to provide health services.

My service-learning students work at both sites on a semester basis.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Education: A Transformative Pursuit

I started my career as an educator nearly 40 years ago. Over that time, one truth has manifested time and again – nothing is more transformative for individuals and communities than the power of education.

The pursuit of knowledge transforms individuals because it broadens our understanding of the world and our place in it. When we seek learning, we find our talents and discover what we hope to achieve in life. When we understand why things happen – whether it be a chemical reaction or a social movement – we become better equipped to address challenges in our communities and beyond. And when we engage in diverse cross-cultural experiences as part of a scholarly community, like a university, our interactions with others become learning opportunities themselves.

And nowhere is the transformative power of education more evident than at Cal Poly Pomona. A CPP education is engaging, relevant and inclusive – all the key ingredients for transformation. Our unique commitment to learning by doing means that faculty and students work collaboratively to live what they learn and are deeply engaged in the community.

Our alumni are living proof. Regardless of

whether you studied chemistry or geography, literature or engineering, Cal Poly Pomona graduates are showing California and the world how education transforms lives.

The stories for this edition of CPP Magazine highlight many of the ways that Cal Poly Pomona works as a catalyst for transformation. Each story is unique, but the common thread is the polytechnic advantage that is our hallmark. As you read through the magazine, I hope that you will take time to consider how Cal Poly Pomona has helped to transform your life and how you can pass that experience on to others.

Go Broncos!

Sincerely,

Soraya M. Coley, Ph.D.
President



You say you want a

TRANSFORMATION

Schools across America describe the transformative power of higher education in many different ways. What's the best description? Cal Poly Pomona's answer is simple:

ALL OF THEM

By **NICK OWCHAR**

American higher education has seen better days.

Long before the nationwide admission scandals, there was already growing skepticism about the value of a university degree, especially in this age of self-made entrepreneurs, proliferating startups, master classes on YouTube and elsewhere, and much more.

"What good is a higher education?" a recent Atlantic piece bluntly asks. The New York Times doesn't pull any punches either ("College May Not Be Worth It Anymore" one headline declares), while a Washington Post commentary tells readers that employers today care about an applicant's talent and experience while their college degree is just a signal that graduates "are willing to put up with four years of (mostly) boring lectures and (mostly) tedious assignments..."

Ouch. Hardly a ringing endorsement of higher ed.

Many have responded to such criticism using the t-word – transformation – to justify the continuing value and relevance of the college experience. Universities, they say, are still important as incubators for growth and transformation; they provide the kinds of powerful transformative experiences one can't find anywhere else.





Caring individuals and institutions will help students persevere and succeed, says Provost Sylvia A. Alva.

Sylvia A. Alva, provost and vice president for academic affairs, agrees. The college experience is transformative, she says, but she still advises caution in the way the term is used.

"Universities are very transformative places today, but there isn't a single way to define what 'transformation' means," she says. "It depends on the institution. It depends on the individual and the situation. Transformation is a term that definitely has many lenses, and we try to think through and plan for all of them here."

As all kinds of disruptions and innovations are continuing to change the way we do everything, from buying clothes and groceries to how we think and communicate, the Cal Poly Pomona community is thinking about our place in the changing educational landscape.

Rather than pursue a one-size-fits-all definition of the term, the university continues to embrace transformation in its many forms and at every level: individuals, groups, even the institution itself. That inclusive attitude is embedded in our polytechnic DNA and the experiences of our members, some of whom offer up the following reflections on what transformation means at Cal Poly Pomona today.

Do transformations only happen in the **REAL WORLD?**

That's what Peter Thiel thinks. If his name seems familiar to you, it might be because this billionaire started offering "dropout fellowships" of \$100,000 to college-age students in 2011. Real transformational experiences, he said, only happen when you take risks in the real world and work hard on an actual business idea, which his seed money would help fund.

Tari Hunter begs to differ.

As director of the **Office of Student Life & Cultural Centers**, she challenges the argument that universities are bubbled off from the rest of the world.

"We're a commuter school. Our students bring society's changes to campus with them; they don't leave them at home," she says. "There's really no hard line you can make in the sand between what's happening out in society and on our campus."

Nothing better illustrates that for her than the six cultural centers that she oversees – African American Student Center, Asian and Pacific Islander Student Center, César E. Chávez Center for Higher Education, Native American Student Center, Pride Center, and Women's Resource Center.

The centers offer a special kind of transformation, she says – of one's opinions and prejudices, of one's sense of identity and understanding of the social issues and public policies that filter down and affect all of our lives.

In 2019, for instance, when the African American Student Center hosted a visit by Patrisse Cullors, a founder of Black Lives

Matter, some attendees didn't fully understand what Black Lives Matter was all about. That was the point, Hunter says. They came to learn.

"We have to provide students with spaces to introduce experiences that they haven't had before," she explains.

"A big part of the transformative college experience requires intersectionality – an overlapping of issues and challenges that can really help support a student's growth and development. Any critic who says that important transformations don't happen in higher education just isn't looking in the right places."

The same is true of the classroom.

For **Shayda Kafai**, a professor of ethnic and women's studies (EWS), today's classrooms (like the university's cultural centers) can be powerful spaces for important personal discoveries. It depends on the educator's perspective.

"We have to cultivate a space in which everyone is heard," she says. "The classroom is a space that students step into and that makes them feel safe enough to challenge what they're hearing. Cal Poly Pomona has been

flexible enough to allow that kind of dynamic in my classes, and that's led to some powerful transformations for my students."

From the moment she started teaching on campus, while enrolled at nearby Claremont Graduate University in its cultural studies doctoral program, Kafai set about dispelling the traditional idea of what transformation means.

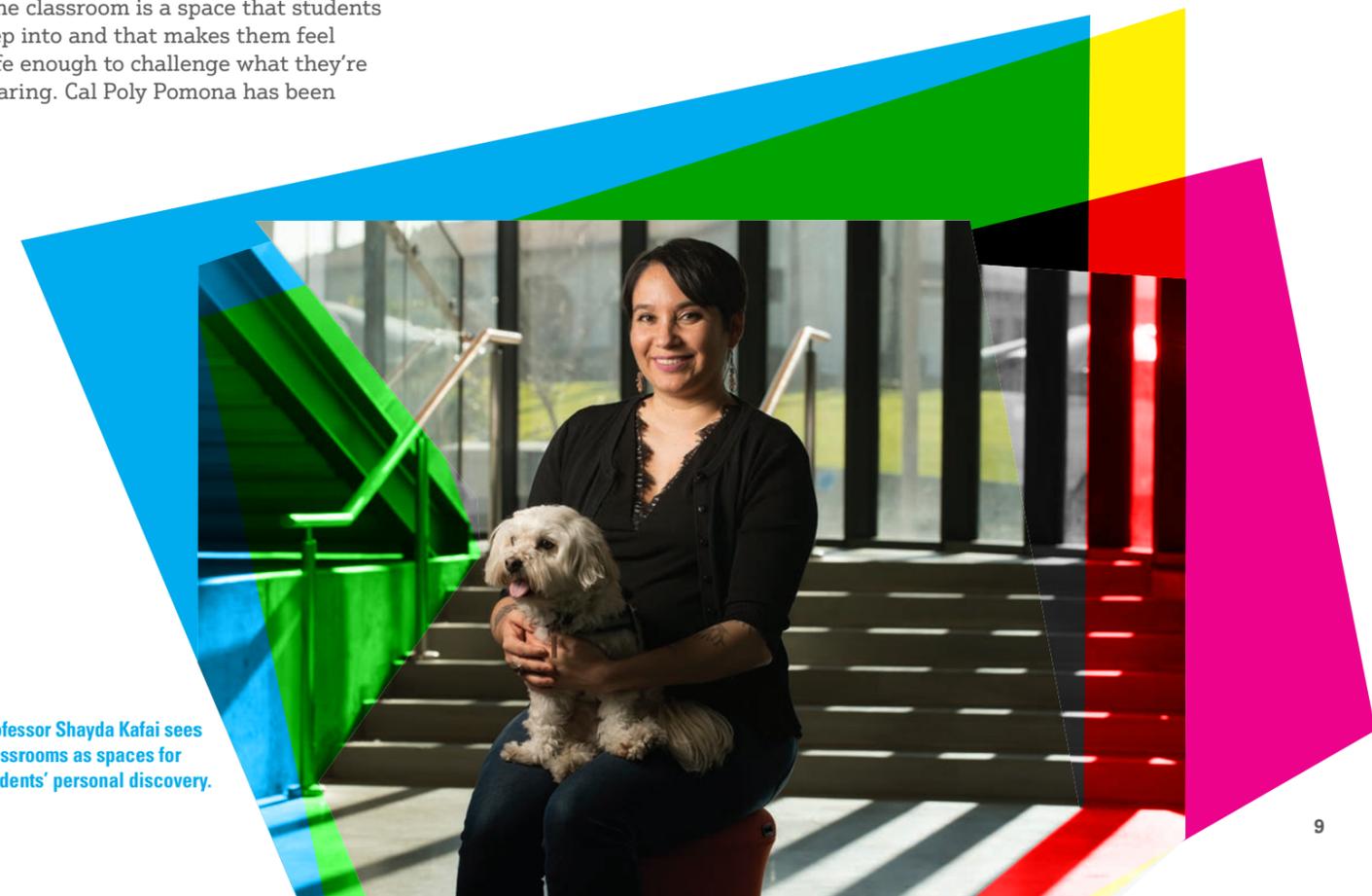
"The way we use that word in higher ed is really curious," she says. "The traditional idea is that it's always going to be the professor who transforms the students, and that's a problem. It doesn't really happen that way. It's a mutual relationship. The traditional view misses out on that reciprocity."

A good example, she says, is **Bronco Scholars**, an early start program that welcomes a cohort of incoming freshmen to campus for five weeks during the summer to assist them in acclimating to their new life.

"On the very first day, we talk about guidelines for our community and our expectations of each other," she says. "I'm not just telling them what I want. These 17- and 18-year-olds, in a very vulnerable way, tell me what they need. This is powerful. It transforms our classroom space, and it's far from the traditional idea that students are just passive receptacles for a professor's wisdom."

Because EWS coursework is available as a part of Cal Poly Pomona's general education requirements, many non-EWS majors in Kafai's classes often discover new ways of thinking about themselves to help them overcome any challenges that might arise in their chosen fields.

"They learn a new vocabulary to help them understand what is happening in their lives," she says. "That's what we give our students when we treat classrooms as transformative spaces. We set the stage for important changes."



Professor Shayda Kafai sees classrooms as spaces for students' personal discovery.

Universities must embrace change to help students meet the expectations of future employers, according to Professor Preeti Wadhwa.



Transformations require **PERSEVERANCE** and **TRUST**

When a butterfly slips from the cocoon, it isn't easy. A great deal of struggle is involved. But the result is worth the pain. It's no different for an organization.

Since fall 2018, **Preeti Wadhwa**, an associate professor of management in the College of Business Administration, has watched as the university emerged from a cocoon of sorts from an academic calendar based on the quarter system to a semester system aligned with the other campuses in the California State University system.

"As is the case with any radical organizational change, there was definitely some uncertainty and fear of the unknown among our stakeholders, both students and staff," recalls Wadhwa, who was involved in the campuswide planning process for this change and has helped counsel and advise her colleagues and students through the transition.

"We are all creatures of habit. When a change happens, it creates ambiguity and anxiety about a person's future. We worry about how the change is going to affect us. Even if we believe that the change is good for us, we are concerned that we may not have enough resources to manage it successfully. That's an understandable reaction. It's normal."

Today, almost two years into the change, people are more or less getting used to the new system and seeing the benefits, she says.

"It wasn't just a simple shift from one schedule to another. People must realize that," she says. "It was a great opportunity for us to create a deeper, authentic transformation in our curriculum. In our college, we have spent a lot of time doing that and looking at our programs to make sure that we meet employer needs and that our students are 'market ready.'"

In other words, the benefits of transformation far outweigh the challenges.

"Change is difficult," Wadhwa says, "but institutions are capable of it, especially when everyone stays focused on the needs of students. They come first."

Provost Alva couldn't agree more.

Throughout her 30-year career in the CSU system – during which she built student academic support networks and innovative programs at three CSU campuses, and today oversees Cal Poly Pomona's academic priorities in sync with the vision of **President Soraya M. Coley** – she has helped a large public system transform and meet students where they are.

For her, in many ways, this work has been very personal.

"My own life has been radically transformed and redirected by higher education. I know what many of our students are feeling because I come from a similar background," says Alva, a first-generation college student and the daughter of immigrants. "I've spent my career working to create and improve conditions so that they won't have some of the challenges and negative experiences that I had."

She recalls her own college aspirations being discouraged by high school counselors. Later, even after overcoming obstacles and arriving as a freshman in college, the struggle still wasn't over. She says she searched for a sense of belonging and a network of support but often felt "disconnected and out of place."

Memories of that sense of disconnection would fuel Alva's desire to create strong student supports and her own scholarly research into the nature of resiliency and the keys to student success. Over her career she has also helped find solutions to administrative

policies both large and small that, however well-intentioned, she says, "sometimes become barriers that get in the way of our students' success."

"What helps students to persevere and succeed despite the odds is having caring individuals and caring institutions," Alva adds.

"Caring communities can forever change a student's life course. That requires providing the necessary guidance and support, compassion and understanding from a team of individuals within the institution. That, for me, is fundamental to the kind of transformation you find in higher education and on our campus."





Sage advice helped Matt Sanford ('07, finance, real estate and law) find his way to business and law at Cal Poly Pomona.

“The great thing about Cal Poly Pomona or any university is that they plant the seeds,” she says, “and those seeds will grow when it's time.”

2020 VISION

learning and following my ambitions to take on new challenges.”

Over the arc of her professional career, starting with her freshman year, Diederichs says she has watched herself transform from an outsider to an insider.

“I really felt like an impostor when I first stepped on campus,” she recalls. “I was this 18-year-old kid from a single-parent, working-class household. I didn’t have any frame of reference for college. I had nothing to prepare me for it, and I didn’t feel like I belonged there.”

But Diederichs’ ambition – and the opportunities afforded by Cal Poly Pomona – transformed that uncertain 18-year-old into a successful, award-winning labor and employment lawyer (like Sanford, she has a J.D. from Loyola) who now oversees HR for one of the region’s largest counties.

A word of warning about the word “transformation.” When schools pursue transformative visions that grow too complicated, problems are sometimes bound to occur.

Take Massachusetts’ Newbury College, which closed its doors in 2019 after a major overhaul of its academic and student life programming didn’t halt falling enrollments; and University of Texas at Austin, whose highly-publicized full-scale reinvention plans moved too slowly and went belly up when the provost there decided that enough was enough.

One reason for Cal Poly Pomona’s ongoing success is that the institution has stayed faithful to a vision of transformation whose simplicity was articulated by Provost Alva: That universities should nurture not one kind of transformation but many – in classrooms, in various campus organizations, around campus, at all levels. Every student’s needs and situation will be different. The opportunities to support student transformation must be, too.

Transformations can't be

CONTROLLED...OR PREDICTED

Matt Sanford’s professional transformation has brought him a long way from the career ambitions he once had as a teen to become an orthodontist.

Sitting in a chair at his orthodontist’s office getting braces, he shared his career goal with the guy working on his teeth. Yes, his orthodontist told him, it was a good career, but he warned Sanford “whatever you do, get a minor in business,” Sanford recalls.

“He told me that he graduated from dental school with too many people who didn’t know how to run a business.”

Flash forward to Sanford’s freshman year. The introductory biology course and the thought of dealing with copious amounts of human saliva didn’t appeal enough to Sanford to keep that career dream alive.

His orthodontist’s business advice, however, did steer Sanford ('07, finance, real estate and law) into the College of Business Administration. He went on to earn his law degree from Loyola Law School and gained other experiences before finding his niche as the legal operations manager at **The Mortgage Law Firm, PLC**, where he is tasked with looking at ways to improve the efficiencies and smooth the flow of various legal work processes and operations.

Today, as the president of the **Cal Poly Pomona Alumni Association**, whenever Sanford talks to students about their career plans, he thinks of his old orthodontist and advises students to be open. Transformations, he says, happen where and when you least expect.

“I think of the things that led me in this direction, and there’s no way I could have predicted any of it,” he says.

“What I do now is totally different from what I thought I was going to be. I think students need to understand that this is normal.”

What is also normal, says **Brenda Diederichs** ('80, political science), is that some transformations may start in college and take much longer to finish.

In fact, says Diederichs, who also serves on the Alumni Association board, those transformations might never end.

“I think they can take a lifetime, especially if you’re the kind of person who is curious, driven and always learning something new. Then I don’t think the changes will ever stop unless you do,” says Diederichs, who is the director of human resources for the county of Riverside. “That’s been true for me. My transformation started at Cal Poly Pomona, but I don’t think it’s stopped. I’m constantly

Brenda Diederichs' ('80, political science) transformation began at Cal Poly Pomona.



That's true for **Gary Huang**, a self-described late bloomer.

After graduating from Diamond Bar High School, Huang spent nearly a decade trying a variety of jobs – as an IT tech, a tutor, a mechanic and aspiring entrepreneur – before deciding to give college a try.

He says it was the tutoring job and the positive affirmation of the kids he helped, that finally made him realize he was college-worthy.

"Up to then, I really didn't know what my plans were. They sure didn't include college," says Huang, 26, now a senior majoring in computer science. "I felt like I waited too long and missed my chance. But helping these kids felt really good, and it made me start thinking that maybe it wasn't too late."

He's right. Cal Poly Pomona's vision to be the model for an inclusive polytechnic university recognizes that not all transformations happen at a prescribed schedule. Since opening its doors in 1938, the campus has answered the needs and circumstances of every kind of student, including 18-year-old freshmen, community college transfers, veterans and parents. The university welcomed Huang with open arms.

Today he is creating a new life, building confidence and a community of friends and teachers that he's never had before. His attitude and outlook on life also points to the transformative value (regardless of what the headlines might say in the major media) that is found in higher education ... and at Cal Poly Pomona.

"I'm truly amazed at what's happened," Huang says. He's especially proud of tackling and conquering calculus and other math classes he once dreaded in high school and moving closer to receiving his undergraduate degree. The finish line – commencement in May 2020 – is almost in sight.

"I never thought I'd ever be able to say I finished those classes. It's been a full 180 for me here, and I'm not even done. That's the great thing. I've got so much more ahead."

Gary Huang, a computer science senior, has found a community of friends and teachers at Cal Poly Pomona.



THE PATH FORWARD

Project Rebound Student Taps into Experience, Gifts to Help Others

By Melanie Johnson

Growing up in East Los Angeles, **Mario Quintana** stood out when he wanted to blend in.

His caramel skin – the product of a Mexican mother and an African American father – brought him unwanted attention from some neighborhood bullies.

“There were no blacks in East LA,” he says. “I was always fighting.”

When he was 12, he was walking down the street when a few youths started picking on him. Some teens jumped on them in his defense and gave Quintana some advice.

“They said, ‘If anyone approaches you, you smash them in the face,’” he says. “I did it one day, and I felt a sense of power. I started hanging out with those guys. And those guys were in gangs.”

His involvement in gangs led to stints in juvenile and adult correctional facilities for charges ranging from burglary to committing three shootings in one night, one in which a man was maimed. He received a third strike sentence of 25 years to life for injuring someone after accidentally firing a shotgun.

“I was full of rage,” Quintana says of those years.

It took a period of soul searching, coupled with a newly discovered love for books and a daughter he wanted to turn his life around for, that helped Quintana make a change.

Now, the 49-year-old junior is studying psychology with a career plan to work with youth in the juvenile justice system and serving as the student liaison for **Project Rebound**, a program on campus that provides academic advising, financial assistance and a workspace for formerly incarcerated students.

The late Professor John Irwin, who taught sociology and criminology for 27 years, founded the program at San Francisco State in 1967. Irwin had served a five-year sentence for armed robbery in Soledad Prison in the 1950s before earning a bachelor’s from UCLA and a doctorate from UC Berkeley.

Project Rebound expanded in 2016 into a consortium of nine CSU campus programs, including the

one at Cal Poly Pomona. Since that expansion, students system-wide have an overall GPA of 3.0 and a zero percent recidivism rate, according to the program website. About 87 percent of Project Rebound graduates have secured full-time employment or admission to graduate school programs.

It was Project Rebound that brought Quintana to Cal Poly Pomona.

While in prison, Quintana earned two associate degrees from Coastline Community College in Fountain Valley – one in math and science and another in behavioral studies. He also discovered an interest in law. Working in the prison law library, he helped other inmates with their legal paperwork and also assisted inmates who were physically and developmentally disabled and became a disability advocate.

Quintana had an uncle who was a teacher and activist in the Chicano Movement of the 1960s whose influence he would feel when he began to pursue higher education. However, growing up, Quintana struggled in school and didn’t think he was college material.

“I thought I was stupid,” he says. “It wasn’t until I started reading books and studying physics and quantum mechanics and psychology journals that I realized I wasn’t. It wasn’t until I started doing legal stuff that I understood my gift.”

Quintana tapped into his legal prowess to challenge his sentence, proving that the district attorney in his case promised something impossible to grant in his plea agreement. That shaved five years off of his sentence and cleared the path for possible parole, he says.

While doing research on college programs, he learned about Project Rebound. He wrote to a few CSU campuses, and Political Science Professor **Renford Reese**, who oversees Project Rebound at Cal Poly Pomona, wrote back.

“His story was very inspirational,” Reese says. “His letter was very well written. You could clearly



Psychology student Mario Quintana is a student liaison for Project Rebound, which helps formerly incarcerated students on campus.

not just see, but feel, his desire to transform his life. There was a sense of urgency in his words that jumped off the page.”

After getting to know Quintana, Reese wrote a letter to the parole board on Quintana’s behalf. Quintana says the letter tipped the scale, and he was released Dec. 12, 2017, after serving 20 years.

About a month later, Quintana sat in on one of Reese’s criminal justice classes through the College of Extended University’s open university program, debating the system with his new classmates. Quintana read all of the assigned readings and books, turned his assignments in on time and earned the highest grade of the 44 students in the class, Reese says. He was granted admission to Cal Poly Pomona in fall 2018.

“His expertise, his comments, the content that he was able to speak about was even more memorable and enlightening than anything that I could have given the students as a professor,” Reese says. “When you bring people into the classroom who have real, lived experiences, they have a breadth and depth other students don’t have, and you get a real learning experience.”

It was a struggle for Quintana initially, trying to balance a full load of classes while working off campus 30-plus hours a week. So Reese hired him as a student liaison, often serving as the first point of contact for prospective students who want to become part of the program. The on-campus job has helped him balance school and work, and Quintana also has the opportunity to attend conferences and give presentations.

It can be alienating coming to a university campus as a formerly incarcerated, older student with limited exposure to technology, Quintana says. Project Rebound has served as a lifeline, providing him with support from others who have similar experiences and helping him adjust to campus life.

“Transitioning to a college setting is very difficult,” he says. “People out here can’t understand what it is like to face the types of things I have faced. With Project Rebound, you have this support system. To overcome that adversity or whatever you’re going through, a support system is important.”

Quintana also will serve as a student mentor for a new program Reese is spearheading – one that will enlist 12 Project Rebound participants from six CSU campuses to mentor youth in juvenile correctional facilities who are interested in pursuing college degrees once released.

Quintana initially enrolled at CPP as an electronics engineering technology student, but recently switched to psychology, in large part, to enable him to work with youth.

“I am excited because I actually have training in that,” he says about working with juveniles. “While in prison, I was a mentor for the Youth Offender Program. You have to connect them to programs they can relate to. We are relatable. A lot of them won’t talk to people in a suit.”



Transforming Access into Opportunity

UNDERSERVED, FIRST GENERATION TRANSFER STUDENTS NEED PIPELINES TO HIGHER EDUCATION

By S. Terri Gomez

Last fall, a student named Priscilla reached out to me asking for some help with transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. She was accepted for spring 2019 from Mt. SAC, but a final review of her transcripts revealed she still needed to take a transferrable math course.

Priscilla was a mother committed to raising her young daughter and earning her degree in early childhood studies. She was unsure of her next steps.

I invited her to campus, where we discussed her transfer journey. She also spent time in **PolyTransfer**, our transfer resource center, speaking

with transfer students who had just completed their first semester and a faculty member. Priscilla left with a plan, an advocate and transfer resources.

Priscilla's journey to Cal Poly Pomona was long and had many detours. Last fall, she successfully transferred and also participated in the PolyTransfer summer program with 100 of her peers to help with the transition to the campus. I was excited about the on-campus opportunities that awaited her, and I was so proud of her for getting past this hurdle.

I am passionate about higher education's power to change lives and the responsibility of expanding educational opportunities for others. As a faculty member, department chair, program director and administrator, my work in higher education has been focused on educational pipelines and fostering access and equity. I have spent my career trying to better understand the pipelines' leaks, detours and stops, particularly for underserved, first-generation college students.

Many students begin their educational journey at community college, but there are many obstacles. On average, transfer students will attend three community colleges to complete their transfer requirements, and many attend part-time. This slows their academic momentum.

Another significant barrier is the lack of clear transfer pathways. Although over 80 percent of students aspire to transfer, only one third transfer within six years. Only 10 percent of low-income students transfer to a four-year institution and earn a bachelor's degree.

I know firsthand the difficulty these students face.

Like half of our CPP students, I attended community college. Although I graduated near the top of my high school class, my parents insisted I attend San Bernardino Valley College. They worried about my ability to adjust in a different environment, but the main reason was financial: I am the youngest of six children from a working-class family. How in the world would they pay for housing and books, even if my tuition was covered? Living at home and attending an affordable community college made financial sense. It also provided an opportunity for me to acclimate to coursework and access support services.

I was fortunate to participate in a rigorous and empowering transfer transition program at UCLA, which transformed my educational trajectory.

I went on to earn my bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in political science at UCLA and joined Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Ethnic & Women's Studies.

In 2014, the CSU wanted to invest in innovative academic support programs. We seized the opportunity to create a first-year experience transfer program. From my UCLA experience, I understood the importance of providing a meaningful transfer experience to first-generation students, who often feel out of place on university campuses. I became

the founding director of PolyTransfer – one of the first CSU programs to provide targeted support and programming to underserved students from community colleges.

PolyTransfer is unique in that it serves the broader transfer community with an array of engagement opportunities: college coffee hours, research workshops and transfer student week celebrations, to name a few. Our work takes an assets-based approach, which recognizes and honors the skillsets our transfers bring to the university. It is precisely this navigational capital that will help them succeed and move on to graduate school or begin a meaningful career.

We have committed to increasing the number of community college transfer students who attend Cal Poly Pomona, but admission is not enough. We are building a "transfer receptive culture," which means we take institutional responsibility for how we receive our transfer students.

Simple things matter, like making sure our orientation literature acknowledges graduating in two years, sharing research and internship opportunities targeting transfer students, providing transfer scholarships and designing programs to support students who already know a thing or two about college.

Our work is yielding important results. In just four short years, Cal Poly Pomona has more than doubled the two-year graduation rates for transfer students, from 13.8 to 32.3 percent. We have seen dramatic increases in graduation rates for our first-generation, low-income and minority students.

The challenge facing American higher education is not simply to improve access, but to substantially improve the completion rates for students with whom we have not been historically successful.

This is the moral imperative behind the **CSU Graduation Initiative 2025** – to eliminate equity gaps. The CSU produces a large percentage of degree earners for California's economy; it is crucial to maintain and increase the number of graduates, and therefore markedly increase the academic achievement and degree attainment of our students. Cal Poly Pomona is at the forefront of these efforts, working hard to make the university a welcoming and supportive home.

S. Terri Gomez is the associate vice president for student success in the Division of Academic Affairs, overseeing student success initiatives, university advising, academic support services, first-year experience programs, and campus progress on the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025.



Hear Terri Gomez speak about her commitment to transfer students.

www.cpp.edu/cppmag



Poly Pantry Fills Plates

BY MARTHA GROVES

While a student at Cal Poly Pomona, **Alyssa Jane Christiansen** ('11, sociology) occasionally slept in her car to avoid the cost of commuting to the mobile home in Upland she shared with her sister and their mother.

She ate a lot of ramen – and never once bought a meal on campus.

“I often skipped meals, ate less than I felt I should and went hungry because there was not enough money for food,” she said.

Instead of buying groceries, she put gasoline in her car or paid for a textbook.

Her life would have been different had the **Poly Pantry** existed during her time on campus. In an ideal marriage of person and job, Christiansen is the founding coordinator of the pantry, which opened last spring in the Bronco Student Center.

Food insecurity has become pervasive on college campuses across the country, and many students are reluctant to ask for help.

“I often skipped meals, ate less than I felt I should and went hungry because there was not enough money for food.”

In recent years, the University of California and the California State University systems found that 4 in 10 students were not getting enough to eat or were worried about access to food. At Cal Poly Pomona, nearly 36 percent of students reported food insecurity, and nearly 15 percent reported having been homeless one or more times in the previous 12 months.

The Poly Pantry is one of many initiatives of the **Cal Poly Pomona Broncos Care Program**, which aims to provide students in need with food and toiletries, housing support and emergency funds.

The university took its initial step to address food insecurity in 2016 in forming the food & housing security committee. The campus partnered with Sowing Seeds for Life, a La Verne-based nonprofit, to create a monthly mobile food pantry program. The student government also passed a resolution to establish the permanent pantry.

Student fees cover most of the costs of operation. Christiansen, who is the care coordinator for **Associated Students, Inc.**, and student staff make the most of the Poly Pantry’s 273 square feet, stocking shelves with donations from two sources – the public and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is managed by the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

Every week, each student may select five to 10 items. These can include fresh fruit, canned vegetables and toiletries such as toothpaste and tampons. Perishables such as milk, cheese, grapes and potatoes go fast, Christiansen says.

On a recent afternoon, **Jamie Tierrablanca**, 21, a sociology senior, stocks up on chickpeas, corn, canned pork and chicken soup.

“Without the Poly Pantry,” she says, “I would be concerned about having to spend more money at the grocery store.”

She also pays it forward by encouraging other food insecure students to take advantage of the CalFresh program, which provides monthly food benefits to individuals in need.

Donations have come from the campus community and beyond, including:

- Alumnus **Jose A. Gomez** ('93, sociology) created a \$50,000 endowment. Gomez is the executive vice president and chief operating officer at Cal State LA
- Alumna **Ginny Mendes** ('86, accounting) matched the first \$5,000 in a crowdfunding campaign in fall 2019 and will also match an additional \$5,000 during the upcoming Giving Day on April 22-23
- **Northrop Grumman** donated \$5,000 and is encouraging its employees to support the pantry
- The **Boiling Crab** has donated \$800, as well as \$1,500 in gift cards
- The Claremont chapter of **The Links, Inc.** donated \$1,000
- **Kroger Company Foundation** donated \$10,000
- **Bradshaw Home** donated gift-in-kind items, including much-needed cookware and supplies

Christiansen has vivid memories of being called “trailer trash” when she was growing up. She never invited friends to sleep over. And, once she got to Cal Poly Pomona after transferring from a community college, she spent countless hours using the library computers because she did not own a laptop.

She credits her mother, **Candace Groeschen** ('77, liberal arts), a social worker, with instilling in her the value of an education and the importance of helping others.

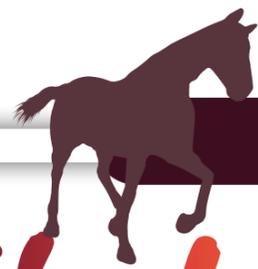
“Now that I’m older,” Christiansen says, “I am able to say I’m proud of where I’m from.”

Even though she is paying down her student loans, Christiansen is delighted that she and her fiancé, Brendan Joyce, a planner for Southern California Edison, have bought a house in Fontana and plan to wed this spring. She says she is grateful for her own experience with food insecurity because it led to this chance to help other young adults who are struggling.

“I tell them, ‘Your student fees pay for the pantry’s operation, and you deserve access to nutritious foods to be healthy and successful.’”

To give to the Poly Pantry, visit <http://bit.ly/polypantrydonate>.

Visit <http://bit.ly/polypantry> for more information about the program.



HORSES for HEROES

Student Veterans Find Stress Reliever in Horse Care

By Monica Rodriguez

John Anthony, a United States Marine Corps veteran, was about two hours away from a final exam, but instead of feeling anxious, the math major felt relaxed.

He had spent part of the morning grooming and walking an Arabian purebred named Alada Sprite VS, or simply Sprite, through a short obstacle course at the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center.

Working with Sprite, a white 19-year-old mare, is calming, Anthony says. When big exams were on his schedule, he made it a priority to spend time with Sprite.

"I go into each exam calm and focused," Anthony says.

The Marine veteran is part of a pilot program called **Horses for Heroes**, which is based on the campus' Foal Watch program and a similar activity at UC Davis. During the fall, 10 student veterans worked in pairs along with graduate assistants to groom and care for a horse. The program also included training in equine behavior, horse handling and horse health.

"It gives veterans the opportunity to focus on the present and also on their well-being," says **Elke Azpeitia**, coordinator of Cal Poly Pomona's **Veterans Resource Center**.

Horses for Heroes is a partnership between the veterans center and the **Don B. Huntley College of Agriculture**.

Jamie Orozco and **Araseli Servin** teamed up to work with CP Sophisticate, better known as Sophie, a 6-year-old Arabian mare.

Orozco, 25, is a junior majoring in electronic systems engineering technology and a veteran of the Marines. Servin, 22, is a biology senior and has completed officer candidate school and will join the Marines after graduation.

As they spend time brushing and feeding Sophie, the pair has gotten to know their horse and she has gotten to know them.

"It's peaceful, you forget about everything," Servin says. "You're with the horse, wanting to know about it."

Being around Sophie and other horses has given Orozco some insight into the animals.

John Anthony with Sprite



"They're really emotionally connected to you," he says. "You forget about the outside world. It helps with stress. You forget about what is happening at school, at work, at home. You don't want to leave."

Horses are perceptive creatures who sense the emotional state of the humans around them, according to **April Kilbourne**, student activities coordinator at the horse center.

"They're like big antennas for emotion," Anthony agrees. "Whatever I am feeling, Sprite will pick up on it and reflect it back at me like a mirror."

Orozco says working with Sophie has taught him to be much more aware of his emotions and state of mind.

"Before I just jumped into things," he says. "With the horse, it's 'Wait, what am I feeling?'"

If he's feeling anxious or stressed, he makes a conscious effort to calm down and relax. Orozco says he's also become more sensitive to the mindset of other people and will ask them how they feel.

During one exercise, student veterans took the horses through a series of obstacles: a wooden platform, four wooden poles laid on the ground about 2 feet apart, and a gate-like structure made of PVC pipes, and blue and green swimming pool noodles.

The obstacles represent situations a horse may encounter on a trail: a wooden bridge, objects on the ground, and bushes or tree branches that might brush against the side of the animal's body. All are things that could scare a horse, Kilbourne says.

Araseli Servin and Jamie Orozco with Sophie



"It teaches people how the horses think," she says. "It teaches them to slow down."

It also strengthens the human-animal team.

As the student veterans took turns going through the obstacle course, Anthony, 36, had a few words with Sprite.

"Pay attention, this is what you're going to do in a moment," he said as he leaned toward her neck.

Before creating Horses for Heroes, Cal Poly Pomona administrators looked into research results on the positive effects of riding horses on military veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder and the benefits of the human-horse bond, according to **Lideth Ortega-Villalobos**, psychologist and **Counseling and Psychological Services** liaison to the Veterans Resource Center. Although Horses for Heroes is not an expressly therapeutic program for PTSD, it includes training on coping skills and elements from similar programs that have been successful.

Program organizers are reviewing the data and results from Horses for Heroes, which will resume in fall 2020, Azpeitia says. They are also exploring grant options to fund the program in the future.



WATCH A VIDEO segment by Spectrum News on Horses for Heroes. www.cpp.edu/cppmag

HOPE for the FUTURE

"I want to be part of an organization that can actually bring change in a real, effective manner."

— SHARIFA KATO



Graduate student is determined to make a difference for her home country of Tanzania

By **ROBYN NORWOOD**

Disparities can be invisible until you see another way. Growing up in Tanzania, Cal Poly Pomona graduate student **Sharifa Kato** slowly and later wrenchingly realized that education, healthcare and the basic standard of living are not what they should be in her country.

Her family of four – her mother, who didn't finish high school but was determined that her children be educated; her father, a self-employed auto mechanic; and her younger sister, Shakila – lived in poverty in what she says is one of the "shantiest" towns near Dar es Salaam, a city of more than 4 million. Electrical service was sporadic, and most people earned what meager living they could doing odd jobs.

"They're still not educated," Kato says. "People are dying of HIV." As she works toward a master's degree in public administration that she expects to complete in 2020, Kato is determined to use the skills she is gaining to make a difference in Africa.

"I want to be part of an organization that can actually bring change in a real, effective manner," she says.

Already Kato has interned for the **United Nations** in New York, a position that political science Professor **Brady Collins** – a former UN intern himself – helped her pursue, acting as a reference.

"I could tell right away that Sharifa was a good fit for the UN," Collins says. "She is naturally diplomatic and capable of working with people from all different backgrounds. More importantly, she understands how large public organizations can and should connect to the communities they are serving."

While at the UN, Kato used the statistical skills she learned in Professor **Sandra Emerson's** quantitative methods course to record and measure digital and traditional media coverage of issues related to the UN in African countries where English or Kiswahili – Swahili, as it is also referred to – are spoken. Kato's language abilities also allowed her to take the lead in creating social media posts in Kiswahili for the UN, and she was interviewed about her personal experiences in her native language for UN Radio.

Collins' former colleagues at the UN told him Kato was instantly an asset in her department.

"Not only were her analytical skills valuable, but her ability to write and communicate herself to multiple audiences," Collins says. "This is a crucial part of the training our students get in the MPA program: how to be both an analyst and a leader."

FIND a WAY

Devastated by her sister's death in March 2010, Kato faced the journey to the United States alone. That August, she left for Lynn University, only to learn when she arrived that the scholarship did not cover room and board. Unable to attend, Kato prepared to return home before her mother told her to call her uncle in California.

Mary and Raymond Rugemalira, her mother's brother, took her into their home in Crestline and helped her enroll at Crafton Hills College. From there, Kato went to Biola University, where she graduated in 2016 with a degree in psychology. She enrolled in the MPA program at Cal Poly Pomona because she believed it would provide the skills needed to help effect change in Africa.

"She was unflappable," Emerson recalls of her early encounters with Kato. "She was committed to a particular future for herself, for her country, and maybe even for her continent. You could see that in her."

Kato's determination continues to show. She has earned scholarships, works part time at Bank of America as a teller, and only recently took out a student loan. When it came time to go to New York for the unpaid UN internship, Cal Poly Pomona offered financial support to help defray her costs.

"My professors, my church members, some family friends all contributed. Friends of friends, friends that I don't even know," she says. "I would create a newsletter showing my grades, showing what I want to do and what I'm learning here. I had people give \$20. Somebody donated \$8,000."

Emerson understands why people want to help.

"She is genuine in what it is she wants and what she hopes to do," the political science professor says. "What she has is a unique capacity to bring people on board with her. She's not trying to lead so much as she is sharing what her experience has been, and people are just willing to support that."

Although the United Nations has been a dream, Kato is open to working for government entities or for non-governmental organizations.

"I'm not limiting myself, because I think there are other organizations that are still advocates for change, like World Vision, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund," she says.

Wherever she goes, her professors at Cal Poly Pomona expect her to make a difference.

"She's got the skills," Emerson says. "We have done a good job of providing her with the skills."

Collins agrees.

"I am excited to see where Sharifa's path takes her. In our program she has learned a great deal about how public policy can shape health and education outcomes for vulnerable populations. I believe she now has the tools necessary to affect change wherever she decides to go."

JOY and HEARTBREAK

At 26, Kato already has a life story that is both inspiring and tragic.

She was about 4 years old when her mother, Maria Inviolata Kato, realized that her daughters were intellectually precocious, especially the youngest, Shakila, who was 2. The girls' talents were confirmed when their parents had them tested. Their mother sought scholarships that allowed them to attend international schools in Dar es Salaam instead of the substandard local schools.

It was at the international school that Kato began to notice the disparities, especially because most of her classmates and friends were children of ambassadors and politicians.

"My school was amazing," she says. "The moment you step through the gates it's a whole different system and mentality, and coming back home you're seeing all these differences. I'm noticing and thinking, 'Why were my sister and I so fortunate to get the scholarships but my neighbors and my friends at home were not able to get those kind of opportunities?'"

Her sister sought even more. A visitor from Harvard told students about U.S. colleges, and Shakila was hooked. An admissions counselor from Lynn University in Florida took a particular interest in the

girls, and they soon applied there, along with about 20 other schools. Lynn offered generous scholarship packages.

But the younger sister soon became ill. Both girls had been diagnosed at an early age with sickle cell anemia, a condition that is common among people of African descent.

"She had a sickle cell attack and her legs had a swelling, and we took her to different specialists," Kato says. "Everybody had their own opinions and they kept misdiagnosing her despite us telling them we know what the underlying cause is. We eventually took her to the district hospital, and they didn't give her the proper medications. She died of heart failure caused by the sickle cell attack. She was just about to turn 15."

"My sister passed away because there was no suitable health care. If she was here in the United States, she would probably be alive today."

Sharifa's younger sister, Shakila, presents a speech they wrote dedicated to the Day of the African Child. The speech was presented to Omari Ali Juma, then the prime minister of Tanzania.

At left: The sisters present a profile on Tanzania at the Institute of Finance Management in Dar es Salaam.



Sharifa Kato plans to graduate in May with a master's degree in public administration.

Market Ready

NASA-CPP is getting closer to bringing its products to consumers like you



Hojoon Kim and Johans Acosta test a competitor's fan in the NASA-CPP lab.

By **SHELLEY LEVITT**

In the next two or three years, you might be able to improve your posture by slipping on Posturonic, an electronic vest-like device whose sensors will emit a pulse whenever you're slouching.

If you're shopping for the perfect birthday gift for a grade-school kid, one affordable option could be Lumoscope, a high-powered portable microscope that just might stimulate the child's interest in STEM.

On the manufacturing side, companies might be able to decrease their heating or cooling costs thanks

Philanthropy in Motion

Al and **Stephanie Tarkington** have both enjoyed long, successful careers. He'd graduated from Cal Poly Pomona in 1964 with a degree in business administration and had gone on to grow a thriving accounting firm, while briefly serving as mayor of Del Mar. After earning her education degree from Cal State LA, Stephanie worked as a special education teacher and had risen to become the principal of a large public middle school.

The Tarkingtons have always had an itch to travel. Unlike sedentary tourists, they prefer to do it peddling on a bicycle — a tandem bike for two to be exact. They have literally traveled the world biking through more than 40 countries.

"You are not sitting high in a tour bus. You are out in the fresh air connecting with the local people," Stephanie says.

Al's cycling (and the swim team at Cal Poly Pomona) has carried over into triathlons. In addition to many shorter triathlons, he has competed in 20 Ironman distance competitions, including 10 at the Ironman World Champion-

ships in Hawaii. Ironman consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride and a 26-mile run. Last year at 80, Al was the last athlete to cross the finish line. As always, Stephanie was his ardent and active cheerleader.

The Tarkingtons have long included Cal Poly Pomona in their estate plans, but in 2018 they increased their commitment to a \$1 million bequest to the College of Business Administration. This year, they've pledged \$250,000 through the sale of a rental property to establish the **Tarkington Family Fellowships in Entrepreneurship** to benefit NASA-CPP.



— **Shelley Levitt**

to a revolutionary new fan blade, tentatively dubbed AirFloLab, that blows 52 percent more air than traditional blades with the same amount of electricity and a lot less noise.

These widely disparate inventions have a couple of things in common. One, they are all built on or inspired by NASA technologies. And two, they were developed by CPP students.

Back in 2016 the **NASA-Cal Poly Pomona Business Startup Program (NASA-CPP)** launched with the mission of putting together multidisciplinary teams of students, faculty and mentors to identify ways NASA's technologies could be adapted to consumer and commercial products. Over the years,

the program has received several grants, won numerous awards and evolved its operations.

"Our goal in the beginning was to create products directly from NASA technologies," says **H. Erkan Ozkaya**, the founding director of the project and professor of innovation in the **College of Business Administration**. "But, as we discovered, you almost always need to modify space technologies to be feasible for consumer products. That's why we've changed from using NASA technologies outright to being inspired by NASA technology."

Now the program is entering an exciting new phase of entrepreneurship. With funding provided by generous donors that include **Al** and **Stephanie Tarkington**, NASA-CPP is moving toward obtaining patents, forming a company for each product, finding investors and bringing the products to market.

"Donors are an essential part of our ecosystem," Ozkaya says. "Our funding for research and development and scholarships for students come mainly from donors."

The process from product idea to proof of concept through prototype and then to a refined product takes several years, with lots of trial and error.



As a retired CPA, Al says, "By donating appreciated property, I am able to donate the full value of the property and not the amount remaining after selling the property and paying income taxes on it."

"We wanted to support students to do something that went beyond academics," he says. "When I was a student, I was involved with the Rose Float, working alongside students from the engineering and agriculture departments. Cal Poly Pomona's learn-by-doing approach was an important part of my education."

Ever the dedicated educator, Stephanie adds that she's impressed by Dean Erik Rolland's vision for the college, especially when it comes to community outreach.

"The school is in the center of a somewhat underserved population," she says. "They've been working with high schools to bring students on campus so they can have a college experience and understand what it could mean for their future. That kind of support is vital in enabling students to really reach their full potential."

August Brookwell is a biotechnology student who leads a team that's working on an at-home product that can track how the body absorbs certain nutrients.

"I went into this program thinking I was just going to be doing some biology research. But I've gained so much more than I thought I would, getting to lead a team from different disciplines, including engineers, business majors and physicists," he says.

Erika Sheppard, an Australian native, targeted Cal Poly Pomona and the NASA-CPP program because she has a product she wants to create. Now, majoring in business administration and computer information systems, she's in charge of the Lumoscope project.

"What's unique about this program is that it really brings together everything that you need to know for a product start-up," she says. "You get to practice a very broad range of skills."

Sitting among the students and their prototypes, Professor Ozkaya beams.

"All the students here are awesome," he says. "I get so emotional about them. Both students and faculty put an insane amount of hours into this program, and I absolutely love it!"

Celebrating 60 YEARS of Distinguished alumni



Cal Poly Pomona alumni are difference makers, leaders, innovators, volunteers and thoughtful community members. For the past 60 years, the Alumni Association has honored individuals who have attained great success in their career, served their community and given back to the university.

To celebrate the award program's 60th anniversary, CPP Magazine caught up with six past awardees to hear about their career path and how they continue to make a difference.

—Melissa McCoy



Jack Kulp

'63, mechanical engineering

Awarded in 1973-74

Jack Kulp is an inventor, innovator and road safety expert who always wanted to be a salesman. Combine all that with some bad luck, and you get great success.

At 49 Kulp lost his job when his company sold the division he'd run for 13 years. "I felt sorry for myself for three, four days," he says, but negotiated a severance package.

With that money he started **TraFFix Devices**, which manufactures highway safety products. Traffix has four factories, employs 350 people and expects to do \$120 million in sales this year. "It's very gratifying for me and all of our workers to do what we do. The stuff they're working on saves lives every day."



Dr. Sylvia Whitlock

'74, master's in education

Awarded in 1988

After a lifetime of service, and retirement as a school principal, one might expect **Dr. Sylvia Whitlock** to slow down a bit.

"I'm a lot busier now than when I worked." She became a therapist, helped establish an AIDS clinic in Jamaica, and supports a school in India by volunteering her time and teaching expertise.

Whitlock made history as the world's first female president of a Rotary Club and wrote a book about it called "Women Also Serve." She makes time to dote on her three grandchildren, but she still talks to 15 to 20 Rotarian groups a year and travels internationally.

"Rotary is all about service. Great goes both ways. You give it and you get it."



Steve Preston

'80, urban planning;
'84, master's in urban planning

Awarded in 1995

Steve Preston spent most of his career in the public sector, but he always made time to follow another passion – teaching. When he retired as city manager for San Gabriel in 2018, there was more time to travel and to volunteer with groups like Pasadena Heritage.

"I've gotten to do all these things I love." He's led many leadership seminars over the years, including for the Tournament of Roses queen and her court. He's been a lecturer at CPP and USC, and he'll keep teaching.

"Each new generation of students lights a fire in you. They don't always understand how much I'm getting from them."



Linda Amato

'74, foods and nutrition

Awarded in 2002

When Linda Amato started at Foodservice Sales, she worked for the national company with 200 salesmen. She was the only saleswoman.

"Talk about changing attitudes! I loved calling on customers and earned 'Man of the Year' my first year. What matters to me most now is that there are very few restrictions in today's workforce."

In 2007, Amato sold her own company, Buena Vista Food Products Inc., to a private equity firm. Even though she misses colleagues and customers, she had a long career she loved.

"My husband and I have traveled to 20 countries and experienced so many different cultures and met so many wonderful people. I would highly recommend it!"

Art Barajas

'92, hotel and restaurant management

Awarded in 2006

Art Barajas' climb up the career ladder – starting with an internship at Glendora Country Club followed by increasing responsibilities at other clubs over many years – led to a great job that he loves. In 2015 he was named chief operating officer at Glendora.

But what the recently remarried Barajas wants to discuss is balance. He says during his first marriage he focused so much on work that he didn't spend enough time at home with his then-wife and two daughters. That's changed.

"You have to learn a balance of life-work – home, family, religion, hobbies. There's a lot more self-fulfillment. It's another chapter in Art's life."



Dr. Una L. Morris

'70, zoology

Awarded in 2009

Una Morris has spent her entire life working hard. She's a three-time Olympian from Jamaica. She's a radiologist with her own practice in Pasadena, and until recently she owned a Jamaican restaurant in the city.

"I grew up where we said only the best is good enough. I worked hard, I sacrificed."

Dr. Morris has no intention of retiring. "I enjoy what I do. I enjoy my patients. Working makes me mentally fit. And I still exercise five days a week. I spend my time working a lot, but I have a second life now too. I help my daughter with her 6-month-old baby, and I'm having a ball."



ACTIVE IMAGINEERING



Alumnus

BOB WEIS

Taps Creativity,

Diversity and

Imagination to Create

Disney's Theme Parks

By **MONICA RODRIGUEZ**

Every year, millions of Disney theme park guests around the world experience fantastic places that at one time existed only in storybooks, films and people's imaginations.

Those immersive experiences are the result of designers, artists, engineers and other creatives led by Cal Poly Pomona alumnus Bob Weis, president of **Walt Disney Imagineering**. Weis ('80, architecture) began working for Disney after graduation, launching a career that has been pivotal to some of the company's biggest projects, including the construction of **Tokyo Disneyland**, the transformation and expansion of **Disney California Adventure** and the creation of **Shanghai Disney Resort**.

Tokyo Disneyland, the first Disney presence in an international theme park, came early in Weis' career and taught him the value of diversity and inclusion.

"We found so many talented people in those early days in Japan to work with us," Weis says. "I took that experience with me to Paris, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Wherever you go, there are passionate people who believe in doing great things. And if you open yourself up to allow those different points of view in, it's a much richer project that gets created."

In preparation for Shanghai Disney Resort, Weis and his team visited schools and homes in China, and discovered that people were familiar with Disney cartoons, characters and stories and are family-oriented.

"They want to do things together with their families. They want to have fun together. They want their kids to have enriching experiences," Weis says. "What we do seems to be accepted around the world because we put that care into it, because our focus is families being together and that goes all the way back to our early history."

Shanghai Disneyland



Camp Discovery at Shanghai Disneyland



Mermaid Lagoon at Tokyo DisneySea

THE POLYTECHNIC ADVANTAGE

Cal Poly Pomona and its faculty played a significant role in Weis' education and career path.

He learned to think problems through, process information effectively and give presentations. It's where he learned to interact with people who had different ideas.

Most of all, Weis remembers his instructors as inspiring and supportive.

One of many faculty members Weis fondly recalls is the now retired Michael DeVine, who taught in the university's Department of Theatre & New Dance in addition



Bob Weis spoke at the 2018 commencement ceremony for the College of Environmental Design.

AN INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

Creating a park or attraction overseas requires writers and designers who understand their local audience. Even designing something within the United States, say Southern California, requires just as much care, if not more, because California is home to a culturally diverse audience, Weis says.

To create something, designers must put themselves into park guests' shoes.

That means making sure visitors can easily understand signs, providing guides who speak the audience's language, showing photos and images of people who represent the audience, and providing food that meets cultural and dietary requirements.

"A lot goes (on) behind the scenes making sure that we have accounted for the breadth of audience, and we're privileged to have such a broad audience," Weis says. "But with that privilege comes a responsibility to have diverse enough points of view on the creative team to make sure you can really meet that challenge."

Diversity and inclusion are critical to Imagineering's work. A workforce that is culturally diverse and from different backgrounds is better able to provide positive experiences for guests, while keeping a company known for creativity and innovation on the cutting edge. It's critical that people feel safe at work so they can present varying points of view and new concepts, and also feel their colleagues are receptive. Students coming out of colleges and universities should be ready to work with people with ideas different from their own, Weis says.

Similarly, he challenges his teams to reach for the impossible and not limit their imagination.

"There's a great Walt Disney quote that we love so much here, which is: 'It's kind of fun to do the impossible.'"

"We have people here who are scientists and writers and artists and sculptors and such a wide range of engineers. If you can put those folks in a room and really let them imagine and let them push the envelope and what they're imagining, they'll come up with great things. And then it's our job to figure out how to do them."

to being a highly regarded scenic designer in the entertainment industry.

"He actually looked at my drawings and he said, 'You know you can stay in theater but you're not going to leverage as much of your design ability as if you were to go get a degree in architecture. Then you can come back to entertainment,'" says Weis, who entered as a theatre major his freshman year.

Weis had never thought about earning an architecture degree, but DeVine's encouragement prompted him to change course.

"He led me in that direction based on what he saw in me. I'm not sure I ever would have done that on my own," Weis says. "I think those instructors have insight into you at that time that you don't even have into yourself yet."

Now it is Weis' turn to pay it forward.

Each year Weis and other Imagineers volunteer their time to interact with architecture through the **Bobby Brooks Memorial Interdisciplinary Design Studio** at Cal Poly Pomona. The program, established in honor of alumnus **Bobby Brooks**, a friend and fellow Imagineer who died in 2008, gives students the opportunity to solve a design challenge.

Disney representatives visit the university, meet with students, review their projects and collaborate with them. The program provides a platform for students to showcase their passion and hard work.

"That's always amazing as an inspiration for us because you see how these incredibly talented young students handle a problem, often with very fresh ideas than what we might not have originally thought of," he says. "It's inspiring to see how hard they work and the technical skills that students have in addition to their artistic and design skills and their passion."

THE POWER OF STORIES

The work of Walt Disney Imagineering is driven by storytelling, a practice started with **Walt Disney**.

Disney, whose background was in animation, wanted to build a theme park and sought the advice of Welton Becket, a renowned Los Angeles-based architect responsible for some of the city's most iconic structures, including the Capitol Records building, the Cinerama Dome and the Los Angeles Music Center.

Disney asked Becket whom he should hire to make his dream a reality.

"Welton Beckett told him, 'You cannot hire a traditional design company to do this because what you're doing is something different. You're making, in effect, a kind of a movie that people are going to be in and they're going to have their own experience in it,'" Weis says. "So, from the very beginning our work has always started with a storyline."

The award-winning designer says he "won the golden ticket" when he was hired by Imagineering after graduation. Although he didn't have a long resume, he had energy, passion for the entertainment field and a degree from a university that was "very diverse in disciplines and people."

For Imagineers, the first step to creating an attraction or theme park is defining the story and telling it one scene at a time. For the **Star Wars**

Galaxy's Edge land, which opened in 2019 in California and Florida, teams addressed numerous aspects of the project – story planning, entertainment experience, types of rides and the variety of food in the restaurants.

"As a designer in Imagineering there are very few boundaries," Weis says. "We're a very multi-discipline group but we're incredibly collaborative. Even a young designer, coming in like I did many years ago, has the opportunity to interact with so many interesting people and be a part of the dialogue."

Finally, after years of planning and design, the payoff moment is watching parkgoers – especially children – experience the park for the first time.

"(These projects) take a lot of your life. Your focus, lots of energy, lots of your time," Weis says. "When you finally get that opportunity to see the audience come in, it's really emotional because it feels like, 'Oh, all those years were worth it.'"

▶ our polytechnic advantage

Music Professor Wins Grammy Award

Add Grammy Award winner to Music Professor and pianist **Nadia Shpachenko's** list of accomplishments.

Shpachenko won in the category of Best Classical Compendium for her album "The Poetry of Places" at the 62nd annual ceremony.

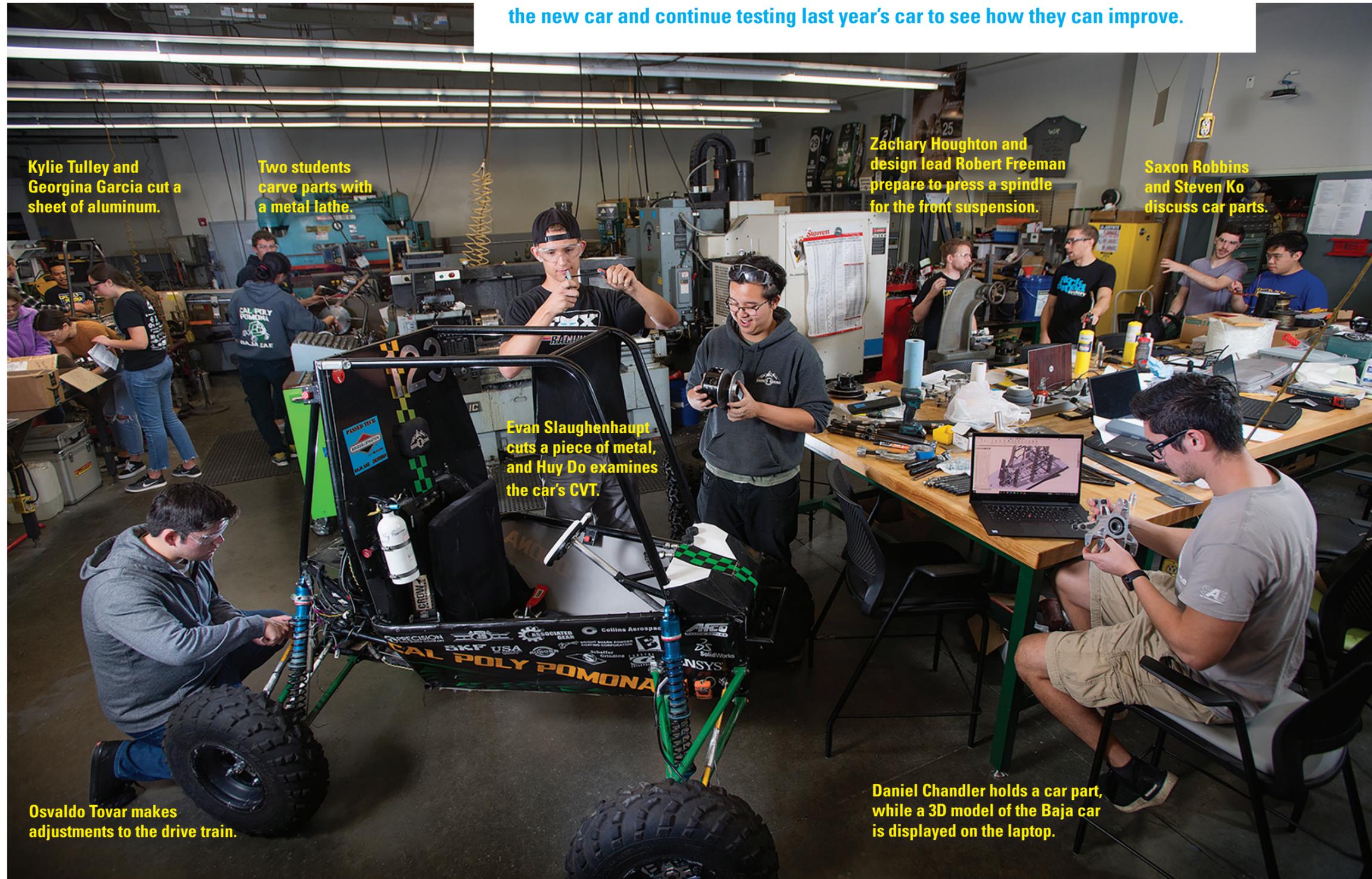
"It was all very exciting, starting with the red carpet and media interviews," Shpachenko said. "During the ceremony, many musicians I admire very much got awards for their work. Once I heard my name and realized that my album won a Grammy, it was surreal."

"It was so exciting to be recognized for this work that was more than four years in the making," she added. "Having it recognized was really a dream."

The award also recognized producers Marina A. Ledin, Victor Ledin, and Barry Werger-Gottesman, who is Shpachenko's husband and the chief engineer on the album.



In preparation for the Baja SAE competition in Arizona, engineering students build the new car and continue testing last year's car to see how they can improve.



Kylie Tulley and Georgina Garcia cut a sheet of aluminum.

Two students carve parts with a metal lathe.

Zachary Houghton and design lead Robert Freeman prepare to press a spindle for the front suspension.

Saxon Robbins and Steven Ko discuss car parts.

Evan Slaughenhaupt cuts a piece of metal, and **Huy Do** examines the car's CVT.

Osvaldo Tovar makes adjustments to the drive train.

Daniel Chandler holds a car part, while a 3D model of the Baja car is displayed on the laptop.

Top Three in National Cyber Competition

A team of cyber security students placed third in the Collegiate Penetration Testing Competition International Finals. Cal Poly Pomona placed behind Stanford University and the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Undergraduate and graduate students worked as penetration testers for a fictitious financial services and cryptocurrency company. They reported on network weaknesses, the impact on the business and how to block malicious hackers.

Joseph Dillon, a computer information systems student, credits CPP's cyber clubs and experiential education for providing learning opportunities outside of the classroom. "With our clubs, we're doing something objective-based that helps us know how the computer environments are set up and knowing what kind of weaknesses machines typically have. That is invaluable, and having that prior knowledge and general experience really gives you a lot of skills."

Learn more about the university's cyber initiative in **Bronco Digital Magazine** at <http://broncomag.cpp.edu>.

Turf Bowl Win Makes History

Four plant science students made history in winning the annual GCSAA Collegiate Turf Bowl competition.

Kathy Nguyen, Stephen Espinosa, Julissa Gomez, and Hailey Taniguchi became the first winning team in contest history to have female members. CPP was also the first winning team from the West Coast.

"This reflects the quality of our turfgrass program and is an example of Cal Poly Pomona promoting women in turf," said Assistant Professor **Priti Saxena**, the first woman to advise a winning team.

With another team placing seventh, CPP was the only university to have two teams in the top 10 this year. The Turf Bowl is sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.



New Residence Halls and Dining Facility Ready for Students

Cal Poly Pomona has officially opened two new eight-story residence halls and a dining facility.

The building project houses 980 students and replaces four residence halls on the north side of campus and a dining facility built in the 1960s.

Sicomoro Hall and Secoya Hall – the Spanish names for the sycamore and sequoia trees – have large lounges, community kitchens and windows that offer views of the San Gabriel Mountains and Chino Hills.

Centerpointe, the dining facility next door, features seven food stations, a late-night dining option, coffee and boba, and vegan and vegetarian options at every station.

Rose Float Wins for Outstanding Artistic Design

"Aquatic Aspirations" float debuted its colorful underwater scene at the 2020 Rose Parade and captured the Director Trophy for the most outstanding artistic design and use of floral and non-floral materials.

The Director Trophy is the 60th award and 72nd entry for Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

The jellyfish were covered in red bougainvillea and sliced citrus for a scalloped, iridescent look. The three sea turtles were covered in green roses, green button mums, dried French lentils and split peas, with lima beans, walnut shells and almond shells for accents.

Approximately 30,000 flowers covered the float, which received the California Grown Certification for having at least 85 percent of cut flowers and greens from the Golden State.



Estate Planning Made Easy

Our new planned giving website offers valuable personal, financial and estate planning resources. At Cal Poly Pomona, we are here to offer information that can assist you in developing an estate plan meets your economic and philanthropic objectives and benefits you and your family.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW PLANNED GIVING WEBSITE
www.cpp.edu/plannedgiving

THE WEBSITE IS UPDATED WEEKLY

News from Washington
Financial updates
Tips for savvy living
Ideas for personal planning
Stories about giving

You'll learn about the best tax saving strategies when planning gifts to your family and Cal Poly Pomona. Discover how to receive supplemental retirement income from making a gift to the university.

Sign up for our FREE estate planning newsletter, download the COMPLIMENTARY copy of our Wills Guide, and learn how to join the Kellogg Voorhis Legacy Society.

Be sure to request the FREE brochure, "Estate Planning Made Easy," when you contact us.

Vince Fraumeni, Director of Planned Giving
vjfraumeni@cpp.edu • 909.869.4825



CalPolyPomona

Department of Strategic Communications
3801 W. Temple Ave., Pomona, CA 91768
www.cpp.edu

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cal Poly Pomona