

# our polytechnic advantage



Photo credit: Melanie Johnson



## SAFELY TOGETHER: Campus Life Returns This Fall

Pairs of students hovered over kits filled with glass pipettes and beakers in a chemistry lab. Across campus, animal science students gathered outdoors in front of stacked hay bales to hear about expectations for the semester, with a cow mooing periodically in the background.

A small group clustered in Aratani Japanese Garden, while a few students sat on benches in the Rose Garden and others strolled along the pathways near the residence halls.

After more than a year of primarily virtual classes and events, the sights and sounds of university life returned to Cal Poly Pomona on Aug. 19, the first day of a new academic year. This fall, Cal Poly Pomona is offering more than 5,470 classes in various forms — about 2,900 online, 2,190 hybrid with some in-person instruction and 370 fully in-person.

It's a welcome feeling for **Neelam Mistry**, a mechanical engineering sophomore. Mistry spent her freshman year living at home with her parents and sister in Placentia, taking her courses remotely. Now, she lives on campus and takes in-person, hybrid and fully online classes.

"Getting more involved will help me feel more comfortable on campus," said Mistry, who joined several clubs and programs virtually last year, including Rose Float, Women in Engineering, Engineers Without Borders, Maximizing Engineering Potential and Kellogg Honors College.

**Rachel Flores**, a lecturer in the nutrition and food science program and director of the Dietetic Internship Program, teaches an online general education class and also a hybrid class that meets in person about once a week.

Flores, a dietitian of 21 years and an alumna ('93, history; '15, master's in nutrition), said she enjoys the physical activity that comes



with teaching and navigating campus. Being in the classroom allows her to hear students' discussions and make sure they stay on track.

"With Zoom, it is so easy to be quiet and hard to see how engaged students are," Flores said. "When we're in person, those students who are just a little quieter are most likely to participate in discussion and ask questions."

Senior **Cristian Chaidez** said he relishes the opportunity to come to campus for two hybrid classes and to work as a tutor for the Reading, Advising and Mentoring Program (RAMP).

"I am feeling very optimistic," said the computer engineering student. "I feel that this is a great way of returning back to the norm, sitting in a class and having professors answer your question right then and there. You don't have to send an email. I also truly miss being able to come out of class and seeing a friend or someone you know from a class and being able to hang out with them."

## Walt Disney Imagineering President Receives Honorary Doctorate

College of Environmental Design alumnus and President of Walt Disney Imagineering **Bob Weis**, who has helped create some of the world's most remarkable theme parks, received an honorary doctorate degree from Cal Poly Pomona at the 2021 Commencement.

Throughout his career, Weis ('80, architecture) has combined architecture with disciplines ranging from art to engineering in his projects. He has achieved tremendous success in his industry, helping bring **Disney** stories to life and build one of the most iconic brands in the world, touching many lives along the way.

"Since graduating from the College of Environmental Design, this proud alumnus has demonstrated innovation, technology and creative imagination in design," said University President **Soraya M. Coley**. "His work has resulted in entertaining and bringing joy to millions of Disney visitors around the world."

Among his many award-winning projects, Weis has overseen the creative and design development of **Shanghai Disney Resort**, the opening of **Tokyo Disneyland** — the first international Disney theme park — and the five-year transformation and expansion of **Disney California Adventure Park**.

Each year Weis and other Imagineers volunteer their time to interact with architecture and landscape architecture students through the **Bobby Brooks Memorial Interdisciplinary Design Studio**. The program, established in honor of alumnus **Bobby Brooks**, a friend and fellow Imagineer who died in 2008, initiates visits from Disney representatives to meet with students, review their projects and collaborate with them. It's an endeavor with deep meaning for Weis and one of the many ways he gives back to his alma mater.

Given his ongoing connection to Cal Poly Pomona students, Weis delivered a message via video to those navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Today you face challenges that no one could have imagined when you entered school. And yet, I envy you," Weis said. "No temporary setbacks, no matter how serious and grave, will hold you back from your tremendous talent, idealism, global mindset, and technological sophistication. Yes, I envy you because all the best is ahead of you."



## Dean's Circle Connects College of Science to Industry

The College of Science has established a Dean's Circle that includes accomplished alumni, experienced faculty and industry professionals to help the college anticipate trends, adjust curriculum and better prepare students to enter the workforce.

"Our Dean's Circle provides a valuable link to the community that benefits both students and the companies that hire them. This is our first advisory group and we're lucky to have such a variety of expertise to support our mission," said **Alison Baski**, dean of the college.

Members support the college with an annual financial commitment and assist in acquiring funding for science programs and students. One of the group's first activities was hosting a career panel in spring 2021.

"We all worked on the career panel and it was a great experience," said Dean's Circle Chair **Niedre Heckman** ('88, chemistry). "The Dean's Circle is enthusiastic about helping the college. We want to give back."

### 2021-22 Dean's Circle

- Niedre Heckman, Chair**  
'88, chemistry  
Takeda
- Mary Mogge, Vice Chair**  
Cal Poly Pomona Physics Professor Emerita
- Maria Alvarez**  
'95, master's in computer science  
Microsoft
- Betty Demus**  
'91, microbiology  
Adventist Health Tehachapi Valley  
US Army (retired)
- Jeffrey Eppink**  
'79, earth sciences  
Enegis, LLC
- Renee Jordan**  
'91, physics  
KLA-Tencor Corporation
- Richard Lay**  
'89, physics  
Jet Propulsion Laboratory
- Mohammad Virani**  
Ernest Prete Jr. Foundation

# ▶ our polytechnic advantage

## Congratulations Class of 2021 and Class of 2020!

Commencement looked much different from year's past for the classes of 2020 and 2021. Masked faces, a different venue, celebration of two classes — all thanks to an unprecedented year gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of eight ceremonies over three days, Cal Poly Pomona celebrated the Class of 2020 and Class of 2021 in 20 ceremonies over four days in May.

But what remained the same was the exuberant celebration of the graduates as they crossed the stage, the hugs between friends who forged bonds over study sessions, club meetings and hangouts. Family and extended family — as many as their cars, trucks and vans could hold — beamed with the usual pride at Fairplex, where the ceremonies were held.

For **Emylia Rodriguez** ('21, psychology), having some sort of commencement, even an atypical one, was important to her.

"I love it," said Rodriguez, whose hair was dyed a perfect shade of shamrock green. "For a while, I thought they weren't going to do anything, so I am happy about this."

Rodriguez's mother, **Celina**, said the entire family is so proud and happy to see her daughter's hard work pay off.

"We got to see the whole journey," Celina said. "The dedication, the working under pressure, and she still persevered. It's a feeling of overwhelming joy and happiness."

The Class of 2021 was the largest graduating class in university history with just over 7,400 students. The Class of 2020 had 6,153 graduates.



## Longtime Professor Named Interim Provost

Longtime Music Professor **Iris Levine** was appointed interim provost of Cal Poly Pomona in August.

"I am humbled and honored to serve as the interim provost," Levine said. "I am excited to work with the dynamic and exceptional leadership team in Academic Affairs. I have taken such care and pride in aligning my core values with those of the university — it's thrilling to be part of the team to lead the university boldly into a vibrant future."

Levine began teaching choral music in Cal Poly Pomona's music department in 1990. She was appointed dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences in 2018 and interim dean of the College of Education and Integrative Studies in 2021. Her current role comes after former Provost **Sylvia A. Alva** became executive vice chancellor for academic and student affairs for the California State University system.

As CLASS dean, Levine oversaw the college's strategic planning process and collaborated with the Division of Student Affairs on an innovative personal coaching program designed to improve student retention rates. As music department chair in 2015, she successfully completed a \$2.5 million campaign to buy and provide maintenance for 30 new Steinway & Sons pianos, a move that gave the university an "All-Steinway School" distinction.

Professor **Sara Garver** is serving as interim dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. She was previously the college's associate dean of academic programs and student success.

**Hend "Hinda" Gilli-Elewy**, who was named associate dean of CEIS in 2018, has stepped in as the interim dean of CEIS.



In the vet tech lab, students get hands-on experience in performing a teeth cleaning procedure.

## Federal Grants Support Equity, Student Success, Research

Cal Poly Pomona received more than \$8 million this year in federal funds to support students, provide valuable educational experiences and strengthen partnerships with community colleges. The grants were awarded through the university's **Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)** designation, which is a federal designation.

Nearly half of Cal Poly Pomona's 27,000 students are Hispanic, and the campus is committed to closing all equity gaps and ensuring every student's success.

**Project STARS** received \$5 million to expand research opportunities and support services for students. The initiative will fund additional student research projects, hire postdocs to serve as research mentors, and establish an industry advisory board so that STEM companies can join the conversation of student success.

STARS will also strengthen the transfer student pathway from Citrus College and Mt. San Antonio College to Cal Poly Pomona. The campus will partner with the two community colleges to launch a learning community for faculty in STEM fields.

The **National Science Foundation** provided a \$3 million grant for Cal Poly Pomona to expand research opportunities and better prepare students for the workforce. To do that, the **CPP INVESTS** initiative will address educational inequalities that may have prevented students from accepting an internship or completing extracurricular projects.

Students will be able to participate in micro-internships, which are short-term and project-based; access more flexible research opportunities; and earn badges for completed projects, leadership skills and other accomplishments.



Photo credit: Jer Jurgens

## Our PolyX Advantage

What does Cal Poly Pomona's learn-by-doing philosophy mean to you? Cal Poly Pomona is introducing **PolyX (Signature Polytechnic Experience)** to formalize our academic philosophy and provide all students with opportunities to develop creative and innovative solutions to positively impact the world.

"PolyX is an expression of our inclusive polytechnic identity. One of Cal Poly Pomona's unique value proposition is that students have multiple opportunities to obtain these signature experiences both inside and outside the classroom. PolyX is our distinctive advantage," said **Olukemi Sawyerr**, associate vice president of Academic Innovation.

While the concept of PolyX isn't new, the university is supporting students by providing opportunities for mentoring, community engagement, collaborative learning, and sharing diverse, multi-disciplinary perspectives. The **Learn Through Discovery (LTD) Initiative** aims to ensure that every student receives a PolyX by the time they graduate.

Examples of PolyX include the LTD Projects Hatchery, which supports students in exploring ideas and developing projects that have real impact on communities. In 2020, the Food Justice team, advised by Professor **Teresa Lloro**, examined how the Pomona Valley Certified Farmer's Market contributes to the development of socioecological community and addresses food access and insecurity in Pomona. Students spent their Saturday mornings at the market, volunteering behind the scenes and interviewing community members.

Professor **James Blair**'s anthropology class helped establish a non-profit, solar panel assembly factory in Pomona called **CHERP** that will provide discounted electricity to low-income households. This spring, students worked remotely in event planning, market research, and economic modeling, contributing to the successful grand opening event of **CHERP** with 600 virtual attendees and \$20,000 raised.

Learn more about the PolyX initiative at [www.cpp.edu/polyx](http://www.cpp.edu/polyx).



## A Cow, a Fiddle and a Diddle Diddle Inspire 2022 Rose Float

Cal Poly Universities' 2022 Rose Float tells the tale. "Stargazers" features a 600-pound cow with a jet pack soaring over the moon, aided by a cat who has put down his fiddle to manage mission control.

The float combines the whimsy of the classic nursery rhyme with the hard work of making dreams a reality. As the only student-built and designed float in the Rose Parade, "Stargazers" will bring a unique engineering twist to the parade's theme, "Dream. Believe. Achieve."

The Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Rose Float student team began designing the float concept in 2020. Once the parade was confirmed for 2022, students began turning those plans into reality.

"Stargazers" is the first float to be constructed at Cal Poly Pomona's new \$5.5 million **Don Miller and Ron Simons Rose Float Lab and Design Complex**. The approximately 14,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor workspace includes a fully enclosed 7,200 square-foot float construction bay. The lab is named after two Rose Float alumni — the late **Don Miller** ('52, horticulture), who got the Rose Float program started in 1948, and the late **Ron Simons** ('64, agronomy; '69, food marketing and agribusiness management), who kept it going and ensured that it thrived.

**STARGRAZERS**  
CAL POLY UNIVERSITIES 2022



## Free Bus Rides for Students

All Cal Poly Pomona students can get a free bus pass with unlimited rides, thanks to a new partnership that launched this fall with **Foothill Transit**.

Through Class Pass, all enrolled students can ride the bus for free from campus to downtown Los Angeles, or Pasadena to West Covina, or Pomona to Brea.

Two months into the pilot program, more than 1,500 students have signed up to receive a free TAP card and collectively taken 5,100 rides.

"This initiative will help make transit access more affordable and convenient for our students, and helps support basic needs," said **Danny Wu**, executive director for transportation & planning and co-chair of the campus Alternative Transportation Committee. "It also helps promote a more sustainable transportation option for getting around campus, which helps the environment."

Foothill Transit's bus network covers over 300 square miles, connecting 22 cities throughout the San Gabriel and Pomona valleys, plus downtown Los Angeles. Currently, seven Foothill Transit Lines serve the CPP campus.



# THANK YOU

FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT



At the end of the year, we can help you save taxes and increase your income, while benefitting Cal Poly Pomona students and programs

### Checklist of tax-wise year-end charitable gifts that can provide tax savings and possible income benefits:

- MAKE A GIFT OF APPRECIATED ASSETS:** Save capital gain taxes
- FUND A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY:** Retirement income guaranteed for life
- ESTABLISH A CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST:** Save taxes and increase income
- DONATE FROM AN IRA:** Avoid taxes due on a Required Minimum Distribution

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