

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



### Investing in Opportunity

The demand for a Cal Poly Pomona education has never been higher.

To cite just one measure, this fall we received the most applications in the history of our university, topping 60,000 for the first time. This historic high beat out the previous record, which coincidentally had just been set only one year before.

The cause of this state of affairs comes as no surprise. Like you, prospective students understand that Cal Poly Pomona offers a transformative educational experience that is engaging and relevant and that they will be ready to succeed the moment they cross the stage at graduation. These potential Broncos see that regardless of what field of study they would pursue, our students learn how to think critically, innovate and utilize the latest in technologies and practices. They engage with employers and build a wealth of knowledge and skills to succeed now and as part of the workforce of the future.

To put it more succinctly: **Cal Poly Pomona equals opportunity.**

And that being the case, it follows that when people give of their time, expertise and resources to Cal Poly Pomona, they're investing in opportunity.

Each year, we dedicate the philanthropy edition of CPP Magazine to highlighting the people and programs investing in opportunity for our students. These investments are happening all over campus, and in this edition, we're pleased to announce a gift of historic proportions from Distinguished Alumni **David and Ruth Singelyn** that promises to elevate graduate education in the College of Business Administration to new heights. Their generosity is growing the legacy of opportunity that they first experienced as undergraduate students at Cal Poly Pomona.

As always, thank you for being part of the Cal Poly Pomona community, and thank you for investing in opportunity.

Sincerely,

**Soraya M. Coley, Ph.D.**  
President

# THE GIFT OF innovation

*Alumni David and Ruth Singelyn  
Transform Graduate Business  
Education with \$12.5 Million  
Gift to Cal Poly Pomona*

When David and Ruth Singelyn were students at Cal Poly Pomona in the 1980s, they experienced the best that a polytechnic education has to offer: the opportunity to earn a top business degree while getting the hands-on experience necessary to set them apart in their early professional roles.

The couple went on to build successful and fulfilling careers and now have set their sights on bolstering the program that provided them with a strong foundation.

"Cal Poly Pomona offers one of the leading business programs in the country but is not yet recognized in the national conversation of top institutions for graduate education," says David, co-founder and chief executive officer of **American Homes 4 Rent**, a Las Vegas-based real estate investment trust. "We're still the best-kept secret in the United States, and that needs to change. Every professor, thought leader and candidate for an advanced business degree should have us on their list."





*"Visionary philanthropy has always been fundamental to Cal Poly Pomona's success starting from the time of W.K. Kellogg, and it is even more important today. It gives us the freedom to imagine new possibilities and make them happen, and creates essential opportunities for growth and ambition."*

President Soraya M. Coley

## Family and Faith

For the Singelyns, now in their 60s and residing in Denver, guiding and empowering future generations are priorities.

"Hard work, teamwork and collaboration are integral to any family's success," says Ruth ('84, computer information systems), who is passionate about modeling that behavior for her children and grandchildren.

David and Ruth met in 1982 when she introduced herself to him at the university's bookstore, having noticed him in class, and invited him for a beer at the former on-campus pub Blazing Saddle. The rest, as they say, is history.

Born in Germany to a German mother and Swedish father, Ruth and her family moved to Illinois in her early childhood, then to the San Gabriel Valley when she was 15. She earned an associate's degree at Pasadena City College and, with encouragement from her father, later enrolled at Cal Poly Pomona.

After graduation, Ruth took a job as a systems engineer for IBM. She and David married in 1987. When they had their second child, Ruth stepped away from working outside the home to devote herself to their growing family. Once their three sons finished college, Ruth received a master's degree in counseling psychology from Cal Lutheran, with an emphasis on marriage and family. She retired a few years ago when their sixth grandchild arrived.

David was born in Inglewood and has lived mostly in Southern California. His brother, sister-in-law and nephew are also Bronco alumni. When David graduated, he took a staff accounting job with Arthur Young & Company (now called EY). Since then, he has held

leadership roles at Winchell's Donut House and Public Storage. In his late 30s, he became president of Public Storage Canada.

In 2006, David partnered with his mentor and real estate icon Wayne Hughes to found American Commercial Equities, a private real estate company focused on the acquisition and management of retail properties. In 2011, he and Hughes co-founded American Homes 4 Rent, transforming the value proposition of single-family rental properties, while creating an entirely new real estate sector and asset class. Today, David is a trustee and the chief executive officer of American Homes 4 Rent.

David is currently a member of the Cal Poly Pomona Philanthropic Foundation board of directors and a member of the College of Business Administration's Dean's Advisory Council. In addition to Cal Poly Pomona, the Singelyns are also involved in other philanthropic endeavors, including supporting their church and youth programs that promote lifelong learning.

Ruth says they were motivated to give back to their alma mater because of the students.

"As the first in my family to graduate from college, I'm thinking of the students who are going to be able to raise themselves beyond their socioeconomic status," she says. "Nothing is more powerful or motivating than that journey."

David adds, "There's research that says you're a happier person if you give back and help others. There's a lot of truth to that."

David and Ruth, who were honored as Distinguished Alumni in 2019, believe the time has come for Cal Poly Pomona to take its rightful place within both academia and the business world. As proud alumni and passionate supporters of higher education, the couple is investing \$12.5 million to elevate the College of Business Administration's graduate program, which has been formally named the Singelyn Graduate School of Business. The donation represents the largest outright gift commitment from an alumni couple.

With the gift, the Singelyns, working alongside university leadership and faculty, are committed to sharpening the program that prepares young professionals for

the challenges and opportunities that exist in today's workplace. David ('84 accounting and computer information systems) says the expansion will emphasize public-private collaboration, storytelling and interdisciplinary synergies across colleges.

"We have the ability to innovate and elevate the business school experience," David says. "Let's change the mindset. Let's promote curricular innovations. Let's create a transformative, creative experience in business education that the business community and community at large not only support but desire to partner with."

"This gift is a game-changer. David and Ruth's generosity will make an immediate impact in expanding opportunities for students, fostering innovation in our academic programs and continuing to attract world-class teachers and scholars to our faculty," says Cal Poly Pomona President Soraya M. Coley. "Visionary philanthropy has always been fundamental to Cal Poly Pomona's success starting from the time of W.K. Kellogg, and it is even more important today. It gives us the freedom to imagine new possibilities and make them happen, and creates essential opportunities for growth and ambition."



*"When people ask me what I like most about working at Cal Poly Pomona, I always say it's the difference I can help make in students' lives. And I think the Singelyns, being alumni, really understand what that means."*

Professor Rita Kumar  
Director of the Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics

## Getting Involved

The Singelyns' alumni connection with the College of Business Administration started in 2016, when David's nephew and marketing management student asked him to speak to his marketing fraternity. That led to an introduction to **Erik Rolland**, former dean of the College of Business Administration, and **Jeff Cox**, the college's senior director of development. That was David's first significant interaction with the university since he'd graduated and the beginning of what would become a life-changing relationship for him, Ruth, the college and the university.

**Rolland** worked closely with the Singelyns as the college was rethinking its graduate program. The Singelyns' first gift of \$1 million in 2017 funded the **Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics** and provided the resources to launch two new graduate degrees – business analytics and supply chain analytics – while strengthening the undergraduate curriculum and supporting faculty research.

David understood the importance of data analytics in business, as customer insights and the ways data can be used to solve problems helped him and his team build American Homes 4 Rent into the publicly traded company that it is today. The company provides a high-quality housing option to more than 200,000 residents nationwide and employs approximately 1,800 people.



Alumnus David Singelyn shares his motivations for his transformational gift with then Dean Erik Rolland and university staff.



Professors Rita Kumar, center, and Anthony Orlando, right, talk with students about a research project focused on the City of Pomona.

## A Transformative Gift

With their latest donation, the Singelyns, together with the college, envision transforming the already successful graduate business program into a leading, sustainable institution that is recognized around the world for the caliber of its students, faculty and thought leadership. Beyond the gift, they plan to play a hands-on role in establishing the cornerstones of this enhanced program.

"David and Ruth bring so much in so many ways, not just financially but with new ideas, too," Rolland says. "The shared vision that they have, and them being role models, it's incredibly helpful to a public institution."

Rolland, now president of the **University of the Bahamas**, says a named graduate school will attract talent and also make Cal Poly Pomona a magnet for accomplished, forward-thinking students who bring new ideas and perspectives to campus. The Singelyn Graduate School of Business

is the first named CSU graduate business school in Southern California.

Alumna and now interim dean of the college **Larisa Preiser-Houy** says the school will serve as a new type of professionally focused and technologically agile program that also emphasizes communication, leadership and global citizenship.

"Effective leadership and technological agility are necessary for organizational success – from the top down," Preiser-Houy says. "As automation and technology make new inroads in organizations, the human aspects of management and leadership are critically important."

The Singelyns' transformational gift enables the college to sustain its program growth and impact beyond the university's current capacity, as demonstrated by the recent success in building a world-class center and programs in analytics. Their investment in graduate business programs and the Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics has proven instrumental to the financial stability and success of the college, providing new capabilities and revenues to Cal Poly Pomona, according to Preiser-Houy.

Graduate Programs Director **Meihua Koo** adds, "Establishing the Singelyn Graduate School of Business will be essential in advancing high-quality polytechnic education, while addressing the needs of society by providing social mobility and a well-prepared work force."

In partnership with David and Ruth, a growing endowment will secure the sustainability and impact of Cal Poly Pomona's mission in perpetuity, leaving a legacy that provides value and opportunities for generations to come.

Professor **Rita Kumar**, director of the Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics, says she is inspired by the couple's passion and enthusiasm.

"When people ask me what I like most about working at Cal Poly Pomona, I always say it's the difference I can help make in students' lives," says Kumar, professor of technology and operations management. "And I think the Singelyns, being alumni, really understand what that means."



Photo by Patrick Record



At the CSU Board of Trustees meeting in November, Ruth and David Singelyn speak about the opportunities to elevate the graduate business program.

# Providing Opportunity

The Singelyns are eager to help students broaden their experiences and interact with professionals. That's exactly what they did in 2019 when they sponsored 13 Cal Poly Pomona students to attend a national real estate conference in Arizona.

Slater Storm Solis ('20, finance, real estate and law) says it was the first time he had been to such a gathering. Solis, originally from Corona and now a real estate agent living in West Los Angeles, was impressed and proud that three Cal Poly Pomona alumni, including David, were presenters at the main session.

"Beyond being informative and eye-opening," he says, "it was also reassuring to know that I'd chosen the right career. Having exposure to all of those professionals was affirming."

In 2016, the graduate business program had 62 students. After the launch of the Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics in 2018 and the addition of innovative, tech-focused degree options, such as a new master's in business analytics, the number of graduate students skyrocketed to 619, a nearly 900 percent increase that has made the program largely self-supporting.

It is that self-sustaining model that David and Ruth hope will ensure that the graduate school thrives. They look forward to more opportunities to expand certificate programs, hire more faculty and add classes.

A new associate dean will be dedicated to the Singelyn Graduate School of Business in collaboration with the newly renamed College of

**Professional and Global Education**, making it easier to coordinate lifelong learning. David believes certificate programs for working professionals can be invaluable to competing in today's ever-changing work environment.

Nandita Chauhan ('18, computer science; '22, master's in business analytics) says she appreciates that the graduate program emphasizes both technical skills and people skills.

"I came into the program with a technical tongue," she says, laughing. "But my public speaking skills have come a long way. Now when it comes to client-facing work, I'm able to present a project."

David knows that soft skills are vital to success. "We're putting in more than just the technical skill sets," he says of the changing curriculum. "We're adding all the soft skills that are needed. If you can't communicate to a client what the data means, what good is it?"

As an undergraduate, Chauhan received a scholarship from **Avanade**, a global technology consulting firm that partners with the university. That led to an internship and another scholarship to fund her master's degree. She's now a full-time software engineer with the company in San Francisco.

Chauhan says group projects in her master's coursework paid dividends quickly for her and her classmates. "People were applying what they learned in class that same week in their workplace," she says. "I learned a couple of dashboards [a visual representation of data] and I went back to my internship job and built one."



President Coley and the Singelyns celebrate the naming of the Singelyn Graduate School of Business on Nov. 17.

# Setting the Standard

David often says that "success breeds success," and he believes that measuring it means clearly outlining goals and objectives. For him and Ruth, success would mean that everyone considering a master's degree in business, and anyone who wants to teach business, has Cal Poly Pomona at the top of their list.

They also hope that the Singelyn Graduate School of Business will provide a template for other CSU campuses to expand their programs.

"We're not going to be professors or dean of the business school," Ruth says, "but there are many ways we can walk alongside and help."

The Singelyns are certainly helping to set a new standard for business education, and their donation is set to change the lives of countless students.



# An Innovative Philanthropic Investment

*The Singelyn Family Endowment establishes the Singelyn Graduate School of Business, the first named CSU graduate business school in Southern California. Here's what the \$12.5 million gift will support:*

## **Singelyn Family Deanship for the College of Business Administration**

The first endowed deanship at Cal Poly Pomona will ensure a continuing commitment to dynamic, visionary, and community-minded leadership and scholarship. The deanship aims to attract a talented individual focused on student success in an inclusive polytechnic university.

## **Singelyn Family Associate Deanship**

The associate dean will lead the development of the graduate school, build a well-regarded national reputation for its programs, work with esteemed faculty and partner with the business community

## **Graduate Professorships**

Endowed Singelyn professorships of up to \$15,000 will elevate the university's ongoing commitment to teaching and research, recognize exceptional faculty with a national reputation and continue to build relationships with external partners.

## **Faculty and Student Fellowships**

Singelyn faculty fellowships will recognize individuals who make positive, long-lasting contributions to graduate programs and their academic discipline. Singelyn student fellowships will be awarded to those engaged in applied research or industry projects.

## **Graduate Student Scholarships**

Scholarships of up to \$2,500 will support and encourage undergraduate students to pursue a graduate business degree, as well as attract new students to the Singelyn Graduate School of Business.

## **Ph.D. Track Scholarships**

To promote the diversity of business faculty, the endowment will provide scholarships of up to \$10,000 to Ph.D. candidates enrolled in doctoral business programs at AACSB-accredited campuses. The scholarship will include the option of mentorship to support their success and persistence.

# **RIGHT WHERE HE BELONGS**

*On a Journey to Discover Community and Career, a Former Foster Youth Finds His Place at Cal Poly Pomona and in New York City*

By MELANIE JOHNSON



You see it all the time in movies and television shows about New York City.

A plucky young outsider driven to make their dreams come true gets a one-way ticket to the big city, arriving wide-eyed and eager to prove they can make it.

For **Ramiro Montiel**, life kind of imitated art. He really did arrive in the city that never sleeps with a one-way plane ticket in 2016.

But unlike some of those fictional characters debarking with little more than lint in their pockets and hope in their hearts, Ramiro ('16, marketing management) arrived with a job at HBO, a relocation allowance, and a generous first salary as an executive assistant with the entertainment behemoth.