



DESTINATION: SUCCESS

**THE CPP | BOEING
PARTNERSHIP**

**HAS HELPED
HUNDREDS OF
CAREERS TAKE OFF**

By Clay Fowler

The surprising part of Kristin Sharou-Alfonsi and Michelle Alfonsi's professional lives is that the mother and daughter landed jobs one floor apart for a company that employs 140,000 people across the United States.

What's not surprising is that they are both Cal Poly Pomona graduates who work for The Boeing Company.

The world's largest aerospace company actively recruits from 77 universities across



From left: Boeing employees connect at a recent Cal Poly Pomona alumni reception. Engineering students prepare a hexicopter for a survey at Spadra Farm on campus. Mother and daughter Kristin Sharou-Alfonsi and Michelle Alfonsi are CPP alumnae and Boeing employees.



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the country. Cal Poly Pomona is not only one of them, its contribution of employees to Boeing is matched only by a select few elite institutions.

The number of CPP alumni working at Boeing is fast approaching 1,000. As Kristin Sharou-Alfonsi ('87, mechanical engineering) and Michelle Alfonsi ('13, mechanical engineering) clearly demonstrate, the relationship between the university and the company spans generations.

“It’s a great engineering school. It’s hands on, so you would expect them to go there for students,” says Sharou-Alfonsi, a project engineer in her 25th year at Boeing. “I take great pride in my school.”

Cal Poly Pomona’s learn-by-doing approach has long made an impression at Boeing, which has four sites in Southern California. In fact, it’s common for Boeing hiring managers to expressly request that candidates from Cal Poly Pomona be among the pools of applicants for their highly competitive positions.

“Cal Poly Pomona alumni have a different kind of education than some of our other schools,” says Teresa Vallejo, college and diversity recruiter at Boeing. “We look to our Cal Poly Pomona students to come in and hit the ground running. They’re very eager and they’re pretty aggressive in wanting to soak up as much as they can when they get their foot in the door. I like that.”

Vallejo even has a team of volunteer employees who are Cal Poly Pomona alumni and help her recruit from their alma mater.

“Even if its 20, 30 years down the line, they still want to give back and they still have that connection to the university,” Vallejo says. “It’s a testament to what they experienced at Cal Poly Pomona.”

Matthew Yeseta ('08, electronic and computer engineering technology) was introduced to Boeing more than nine years ago when he was a student. When he stopped by the Boeing booth at the university’s High-Tech Career Fair, he felt an instant connection.

Yeseta, who is in charge of powering satellite systems at the company, began his career there much the same way he left off at Cal Poly Pomona.

“A lot of the hands-on learning, getting involved, making mistakes and asking questions is what drove my development at the start of my career,” Yeseta says. “My education was very transferrable in that way. That’s very much the culture at Cal Poly Pomona and in Rose Float and in all my other clubs. That’s how you got the most out of your classes.”

While in school, Yeseta wasn’t privy to the depths of his university’s ties to Boeing. It didn’t take long for him to realize the connection given the number of alumni he encountered when he began working at Boeing’s El Segundo location.

John Ventimiglia ('89, aerospace engineering) estimates that 30 percent of the team with which he worked on the Solid Rocket Booster in the Guidance, Navigation & Control group — which supported NASA’s Space Shuttle program — was made up of Cal Poly Pomona graduates.

It’s not surprising given the geographic proximity between Boeing and Cal Poly Pomona — and that the university has a nationally top-ranked engineering program.

“When I was in school, I knew there was a Bronco community at Boeing,” Michelle Alfonsi says. “But I don’t think I quite realized how many people had come from Cal Poly Pomona throughout the years.”