Get to know a few of the professors and lecturers who drive Cal Poly’s unique brand of experiential business education.

**Pratish Patel**
Assistant Professor of Finance

**SPECIALTIES:** Real estate finance and investments

How do you challenge your students? In one class, I ask students to reverse engineer the Madoff strategy. In the process, they learn the power of derivatives in a financial portfolio along with history and ethics.

What has been your favorite moment of teaching recently? When Eric Morley, who is involved with the new Apple campus, visited my class, he spoke frankly about personal integrity and ethics in local politics. I will remember that moment forever.

**Li Dang**
Associate Professor of Accounting

**SPECIALTIES:** Financial accounting and managerial accounting

What has been the biggest challenge in your career? Being from a different culture requires me to work that much harder. Like my students, I hold myself to high standards.

Who is your go-to for faculty collaboration at Cal Poly? Tad Miller. There’s a reason he’s one of our best faculty members and our students like him so much. When I need someone to help me work through a classroom issue, his wisdom and kindness always shine through.

**Javier de la Fuente**
Assistant Professor of Industrial Technology and Packaging

**SPECIALTIES:** Product and packaging design, particularly in healthcare

How has your subject changed in the last five years? Design thinking is now used as a disruptive method to achieve innovation, and rapid prototyping technologies are making product development easier and cheaper.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever received? My mom always used to say that if you don’t ask, the answer is already “no.”

**Solina Lindahl**
Economics Lecturer

**SPECIALTIES:** Micro and macro economics

What has been the biggest challenge in your career? Trying to ignite passion in a GE course in a discipline that has a reputation for being hard or boring.

How has your subject changed in the last five years? The financial crisis really disrupted macroeconomics and reinvigorated the debate about the health and stability of capitalism. Breakthroughs in neuroscience are also allowing us to explore decision-making in much deeper ways.

How do you challenge your students? I try to convey that anybody can create innovative solutions with clear objectives, the right methods and hard work.
What has been your favorite industry position? I negotiated price and contract terms and conditions for weapons missile systems at McDonnell Douglas. It was a very intense, male-dominated position, but my persistence made me a good negotiator. The frequent travel, interactions with government and time with other defense contractors taught me so much about the industry. This is where I found my research interest in pricing.

What is your hidden talent? Drumming. I played in band and orchestra throughout high school and briefly considered a career as a rock ‘n’ roll drummer. But I decided to pursue something a little more practical.

What’s the best advice you’ve ever received? Keep your chin up, and take it one step at a time!

How has your subject changed in the last five years? Federal income tax law changes all the time. Financial accounting has also shifted as the U.S. moves closer to adopting international accounting standards and recognizes new revenues in this high-tech global economy.

What has been your favorite moment of teaching recently? Teaching IT 407: Applied Business Operations, our capstone course, in the fall. I loved seeing the students show off their products at Cal Poly and at the San Luis Obispo Farmers Market.

What is your hidden talent? I am a serial entrepreneur. I used to own a restaurant, among other businesses, and have consulted in the aerospace and hospitality industries.

What are your favorite parts about teaching at Cal Poly? I love walking into a classroom full of students who sincerely want to learn. The palm tree outside of my window isn’t bad either.

What has been your favorite moment of teaching recently? A local alumnus working for a software company tasked my class with identifying opportunities to improve the user interface of a mobile app. It was so much fun watching the students seek to improve a tangible product in a meaningful way.

“I’VE LEARNED STUDENTS WILL RISE TO THE CHALLENGE AS LONG AS THEY KNOW THE ‘BIG PICTURE’ AND AS LONG AS YOU SUPPORT THEM.”

— Pratish Patel