CLUB SPOTLIGHT

Women in Business Club Sees Major Growth

In spring 2015, business administration students Hannah Poplack, Shelby Sly, Megan Johnson, Kayla Lake, Jessie Goodrum and Courtney Jacobson established one of the nation’s first dedicated organizations for the empowerment of female leaders across campus — the Cal Poly Women in Business Association (WIB). With the new club came a movement to empower female leaders. The club quickly grew to 200 members from a variety of majors looking to network and develop personal and professional skills to help them thrive in their careers.

“The most important goal of the organization is to effectively represent and address the needs of young women in college to empower them from the day they arrive at Cal Poly until the day they leave,” said Poplack, WIB’s co-president.

To support the groundswell of interest from students, WIB has introduced a series of professional development programs that extend beyond campus. In 2016, the club launched the Women’s Business Leadership Academy, a certificate program that includes professionalism workshops, executive roundtables, mentorship opportunities from leading alumni, and industry tours. It also hosted nearly 500 students at its first Defining Her Future Conference, featuring keynote speaker Blake Irving of GoDaddy.

For more information about Women in Business, visit www.cpwomeninbusiness.com.

FACULTY EXCELLENCE

ECONOMICS PROFESSOR RECEIVES GRANT TO RESEARCH LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Cal Poly Economics Area Chair Stephen Hamilton and a team of researchers recently received a $400,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study the economics of local food systems.

Hamilton and Arizona State University Professor Tim Richards will lead the team as it examines how stakeholders in local food supply chains — including growers, distributors and retailers — can design the local food supply network to increase value for farmers, local food economies, retailers, and consumers.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

ORFALEA RANKED AMONG NATION’S TOP UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

The Orfalea College of Business has again been named to Bloomberg Businessweek’s list of the nation’s top undergraduate business programs, moving up 11 spots this year to No. 59. This marks the seventh year the Orfalea College of Business has been ranked in the list of 114 colleges and universities. Cal Poly was one of only four universities in California to make the list.
LEARN BY DOING

Student-Managed Portfolio Project Continues to Outpace Market Trends

Cal Poly's Student-Managed Portfolio Project (SMPP) thrives amid a year of market volatility.

This Learn by Doing senior project tasks a team of Orfalea’s top finance students with investing nearly half a million dollars of Cal Poly Corporation funds in dividend-yielding stocks. The goal: to outperform the Vanguard Dividend Appreciation (VIG) by one percent.

This year, students earned hands-on experience navigating uncertain financial territory, including historically low oil prices, a weakening Chinese economy, and geopolitical shifts. Even as the VIG has recovered from a sharp dip in the first quarter of 2016, Cal Poly’s portfolio has maintained a stronger growth trend of nearly 10 percent. Historically, the SMPP has outpaced market indices, including avoiding major losses in 2007 and 2008 by converting Cal Poly’s assets to cash.

The yearlong class operates much like a managed investment fund, with the cohort acting as an advisor to the Cal Poly Corporation. With guidance from Professor Cyrus Ramezani and local financial advisor Phillip Cohl, students evaluate last year’s SMPP investments, reallocate funds, survey new opportunities, and make regular presentations to the Cal Poly Corporation board.

COMMUNITY

STUDENTS HONORED FOR VETERANS’ HOUSING PROJECT

A team of Cal Poly students tied for first place in Bank of America Merrill Lynch’s annual Low Income Housing Challenge. The group created a comprehensive proposal for a veterans’ housing project titled Sanctuary 6 in partnership with San Luis Obispo nonprofit Peoples’ Self-Help Housing. The proposal outlined design, municipal planning, construction and financing for the 1.4-acre project that would house 44 homeless or at-risk veterans.

Architecture Professor Bryan Shields and finance Professor Pratish Patel advised the students throughout the research and planning process, which included interviews with local veterans about their needs. After coordinating with the city, veterans’ organizations and community partners, the team created a design for Sanctuary 6 that was LEED Platinum-certified, pet friendly, and home to amenities like a gym and counseling center. Peoples’ Self-Help Housing now has the opportunity to take the project forward to construction.

BY THE NUMBERS

$457,030
The amount of Cal Poly Corporation funds the SMPP team invested.

25
student investors who Learn by Doing throughout the year.

9.91%
The growth of SMPP’s portfolio, compared to VIG’s 8.17 percent growth as of May 1, 2016.

1992
The year the SMPP launched at Cal Poly with Professor John Lindvall.
SENIOR PROJECTS

Entrepreneurship and Engineering Launch Joint Senior Project Courses

Cal Poly Professors Thomas Katona, Lynne Slivovsky and Jonathan York have launched the university’s first series of joint senior project courses between business and engineering students. The journey began in the spring of 2015 when students formed interdisciplinary teams and pitched projects involving robotics, clean tech, the Internet of Things, wearables, data analytics, virtual reality and bitcoin. Business and engineering students spent fall quarter developing low- and high-resolution prototypes. At the same time, they conducted consumer market validation testing for their concept.

According to entrepreneurship senior Kali Lauhon, many groups pivoted their idea during this exploratory time. “Our team refocused its strategy after we had done multiple interviews and thorough customer development. We shifted our sights from a medical device to enhancing the communication stream between doctors and patients, a major opportunity to help people.”

During winter quarter in BUS 488: Planning and Managing New Ventures, the teams formed more stable business plans and explored larger-scale production of their products. Spring quarter gave each team the chance to work more independently on their concepts, many of them entering Cal Poly’s Innovation Quest competition. ObserVR, a startup that adds streaming video to virtual reality content, placed third and won a $5,000 cash prize.

This intensive experience provided the platform to help launch an entrepreneurial career and better understand the journey of entrepreneurial teams. Several startups will continue growing in the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) Summer Accelerator Program.

ACCOUNTING PROGRAM EYES GROWTH

The Accounting Area has set a goal of preparing 200 quality graduates each year by 2017, nearly doubling the program’s size. The initiative aims to meet the increasing demand for CPA-eligible professionals from public accounting firms. How will one of Cal Poly’s most prestigious programs grow without sacrificing quality? According to Executive Director for Accounting Excellence Sheri Boscaro, the answer is smart growth. In the coming year, the Campaign for 200 will start with hiring more faculty. In 2016, the Accounting Area welcomes Professor David Maber, who earned experience at USC and the University of Michigan, to teach at the undergraduate and graduate level. The area has also begun to educate more students by adding an accounting minor and allowing students in other disciplines to add a second concentration in accounting.

The program will continue to expand its Learn by Doing capstone courses, including the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, to ensure each student can tackle an immersive experience in the industry.

To support the Campaign for 200, contact Sheri Boscaro at sboscaro@calpoly.edu.

STUDENT SUCCESS

CAL POLY SHINES AT MARKETING CONFERENCE

Cal Poly’s chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA) took home several awards at AMA’s annual Intercollegiate Conference in New Orleans. Cal Poly placed in the top three in the International Sales Competition, the Pitch Perfect Competition, the Marketing Strategy Competition, and the Strategic Allocation of Business Resources Simulation. Overall, Cal Poly ranked among the top 25 collegiate chapters worldwide.