Here’s to a new year

This is my favorite time of year – being back in the classroom and watching the momentum build as students return is exhilarating.

People often sympathetically say to me, “Oh, you must be disappointed the summer is over.” To which I reply, “What are you talking about, this is the best time of my year!” When 4 p.m. hits on Mondays and Wednesdays, a screech of joy emanates from my office as my class is about to begin. It’s the best part of my week.

Don’t get me wrong, I also enjoy my role as the Department Head. Those responsibilities include making sure that our program is robust. How do I measure that?

1. Our enrollment has steadily increased up to 10 percent each year, for three consecutive years.
2. The number of requests that I receive from industry partners for student internship and employment opportunities indicate that our students have several career options in their future.
3. The modernization of agriculture, and our curriculum with it, ensures that those careers will be among the most rewarding because they are supporting one of the most basic of human needs: food.

I have met many people in the agricultural and horticultural industries in the past several years, and one of the major lessons I have learned is that our graduates must have a multifaceted skill set. Being able to grow a healthy plant is the foundation of that skill set, but students must also have a firm footing in...
Business.

Labor has arguably become the number one issue in the agriculture and horticulture sectors, with water remaining the key issue in the western United States. However, California has always been a drought prone region, and we have always incorporated the latest water saving technologies into our classes.

We continue to emphasize our core offerings: good farming and growing practices for agronomic and horticultural plants, the Pest Control Advisors License, and an emphasis on the Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) certificate (http://cacca.org). The CCA is increasingly significant because of the close scrutiny to which any plant production operation is subjected by water and air quality agencies. As we move forward we will be mindful of the rising demands of a more diversified training for our graduates.

A request for qualifications for the planning and design of a new Plant Sciences Complex is in process. The project will include the renovation of several of our existing facilities and add a new fruit and vegetable processing facility. We will also be building a new Plant Science Teaching and Research Building that will support labs, faculty research, as well as soil science activities, which is crucial to supporting the Certified Crop Advisors certificate curriculum. Also to that end, we are in the process of hiring a new Soil Fertility Specialist.

In parting, it is with great pleasure that I announce the hiring of Professor Margaret Hoffman, who will join Cal Poly in January. She received her Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State and has 15 years of experience in the horticultural landscape industry. Hoffman also taught at Western Illinois University, where she received among the highest ratings as an instructor. She replaces Cole Thompson, who moved to the University of Nebraska.

With that, please enjoy the rest of the newsletter!

Scott Steinmaus, Ph.D.
Department Head

A Sweet, New Ride Arrives

Jim Marderosian of Bee Sweet Citrus in Fowler, Calif., donated a new flatbed truck to the department. The truck replaces a 1988 Chevy and will be primarily used by students for picking and production work in the Cal Poly orchard. The majority of students majoring in Fruit Science and Crop Science will have the opportunity to use the truck during enterprise classes. Marderosian founded Bee Sweet Citrus in 1987 as an independent packer and shipper of California oranges. In the last 27 years, the company has expanded and now ships a wide range of citrus varieties throughout the U.S. and overseas.

HCS Recognizes Faculty for years of Service

In April, three Cal Poly staff members were honored for service to the university and the HCS Department.

Wyatt Brown was honored for 25 years of service to the university and the department. Since arriving in 1990 from Cornell University, he has been teaching vegetable science and postharvest courses. He has also serves as Assistant Department Head. He is currently conducting postharvest research on caviar limes, strawberries, apples and citrus fruit.

Melinda Lynch was honored for 15 years of service to the university and the department.
The Cal Poly alumna teaches floral design classes, as well as summer courses for the California Agriculture Education Teachers. She is the advisor to the Gordon Student Chapter of American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD). She also coaches the National Floral Design team, which competes at the state and national levels. She was inducted in AIFD in 2002 and is also a Certified Floral Designer with AIFD.

Lauren Garner was honored for 10 years of service to the university and the department.
Garner teaches classes in Fruit Science. Her research interests focus on whole-plant physiology, plant growth regulators, and the development of cultural methods to increase fruit crop production, including avocado, citrus and pomegranates.
She was the recipient of the 2012 College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences New Faculty Award for University Teaching. Garner is the faculty supervisor of the Cal Poly orchards and a faculty advisor to the department’s Crops Club.
Floral Design Team Places First in National Competition

The Cal Poly Floral Design Team earned first place at the Floral Designer’s 2016 Symposium held in July in Anaheim, Calif.

Cal Poly students also took top honors in several individual categories at the American Institute of Floral Designers Symposium and Student Floral Design Competition.

In all, 11 colleges, including Texas A&M and Missouri State University, and 52 contestants took part in the national competition.

In the Duplication Arrangement competition, in which students are tasked with making two arrangements exactly the same, Agricultural Science major Kirsten Smith from Los Osos tied for first place.

In the Wedding Bouquet Design competition, Agricultural and Environmental Plant Sciences majors Sara Do from San Gabriel and Dawn Mones from Kapaa, Hawaii, placed second and fourth, respectively. Do also took fourth place for her design of an arrangement for cocktail tables.

The two-day sales event showcased 74 varieties of tomatoes.

The Cal Poly Tomato Mania enterprise team, comprised of six students, had a very successful project this year. The student team produced 3,475 tomato plants, representing 74 varieties. The student project culminated in a two-day community sales event in April.

The six-student team was led by agricultural and environmental plant sciences junior Gage Willey, who was responsible for creating an improved production timeline.

After careful planning, the 2016 tomato plant sale resulted in a nearly complete sell-out of all the tomato plants. In the past, students struggled with excess inventory and oversized plants, leading to a loss of sales, materials and time.

Student leadership responsibilities included: senior Grace Watson, supplies; senior Kiku Severson, marketing and publicity; senior Lissy Moriarty, communications; sophomore Hanna Brand, inventory and labeling; and senior Kelsey Russell, paperwork.

Thank you to everyone who came to the sale and supported the team. We look forward to seeing you at the 2017 Tomato Mania sale.
Cal Poly competes in the National Collegiate Landscape Competition

Cal Poly students took 24th place out of 63 schools at the 40th annual National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC) in Starkville, Miss. in March.

Eight Cal Poly students competed against teams from schools such North Carolina State, Virginia Tech, and Kansas State. Overall, the team competed in 20 different events, with five top-10 rankings and 12 top-20 rankings.

Three students, Anna Thengvall, Chris Romeo and Nick Crump finished in the top 50 in the overall individual rankings (6, 15, 48) out of the nearly 700 students competing. Students also attended workshops, networked, and met with industry leaders.

Student Receives Travel Award Scholarships

The American Phytopathological Society (APS) Foundation Board selected Scott D. Cosseboom as the undergraduate recipient of 2016 Dow AgroSciences Student Travel Award and a Joseph M. Ogawa Student Travel Award recipient. The two awards helped support Cosseboom’s travel expenses to attend the 2016 APS Meeting in Tampa, Fla. from July 30 to Aug. 3.

This year, a total of 63 individuals received awards from the APS Foundation, totaling $39,797.

Cosseboom received a bachelor’s degree in Agricultural and Environmental Plant Science from Cal Poly, and was accepted into Cal Poly’s master’s program for a degree in Agriculture with a specialization in Plant Protection Science. He has been working at the Strawberry Center. He began in the lab as an undergrad, and will be working on his Master’s thesis at the center. He will focus on the resistance of Botrytis cinerea to fungicides in California strawberries. Botrytis cinerea is the causal agent of a fruit rot in strawberries called gray mold.

In order to apply for the scholarship, Cosseboom had to submit a topic idea for a symposium, in addition to supplying a letter of recommendation and a copy of his abstract for what he would be presenting at the symposium. His topic idea was fungicide resistance as it encompasses most, if not all, conventional cropping systems worldwide. Plant pathology is the primary sector of research done on this topic as fungal pathogens aren’t as large an issue in animals.

This symposium topic will provide the audience with a clear view of what experts in fungicide resistance are doing to deal with this issue, including how resistance begins, and how multi-fungicide resistance occurs. Techniques and cultural methods to prevent or delay resistance to fungicides, and overviews of cropping systems where fungicide resistance is, and is not, an issue will be discussed.

Cosseboom will learn early in the new year if his topic was chosen for the 2017 APS Meeting.

PLANNING FOR UTAH 2017

The 41st annual NCLC will be held at Brigham Young University from March 15 to 18 in Provo, Utah. Available funding will determine the size of the 2017 Cal Poly team. Four returning students are expected to attend, additional students will be selected during the fall quarter. The cost per student is $1,500 which includes registration, travel, lodging, food, and competition supplies. To contribute to this Learn by Doing opportunity, contact Ben Hoover at 805-756-6358 or email bkhoover@calpoly.edu.
BOB SCOFIELD

graduated from Cal Poly with a bachelor’s degree in Ornamental Horticulture in 1953. While at Cal Poly, he met his wife, Martye. Scofield’s first job was at the J. Harold Mitchell Company in San Gabriel as an arborist and pest control applicator. He later went back to school and received a California Certificate in Turf Grass Management from UCLA in 1955.

His first job after Cal Poly was for the OM Scotts Company as a field research technician and agronomist, covering the western states doing new product development for the golf and landscape industries. He served as an agronomist and managed contracting and maintenance for both municipal and private golf courses during his 38 year career. His contributions to the Green Industry stemmed from his involvement to industry professionals that he came in contact with. He was an ever present face at recruiting events at the colleges and universities encouraging students a to build a career in the industry.

ALLEN CHARITON

It was a horticulture class at Granada Hills High School that inspired Allen Chariton to establish a gardening route. He was the first college graduate of his family, earning a bachelor’s degree in Ornamental Horticulture in 1974 from Cal Poly. He turned a summertime job with Environmental Care into his post-college profession, where his first boss, Bob Scofield, became his lifelong friend and mentor.

In 1976, Chariton founded Tierra Verde Landscape, Inc. and served as its president and chief operating officer until his sudden death in July 2015. His company was a multiple winner of the Chapter and State California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) Beautification Awards. He played an active role in the CLCA committee that developed and implemented the first Landscape Industry Show.

His wife of 41 years, Ellin Chariton, and his family are honored by his induction into the Green Industry Hall of Fame.

JACQUIE WILLIAMS-COURTRIGHT

After earning a bachelor’s degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Cal Poly, Williams-Courtright returned to Livermore to help with the family business, Alden Lane Nursery, where she focused on marketing and advertising. She worked in every department and now heads the 61-year-old company.

She has hosted The Valley Gardener, a monthly program on seasonal gardening topics that airs on community access television for the last 25 years, which can be viewed online at TV30.org.

Williams-Courtright was one the first in the state to become a California Certified Nursery Professional. She was the third woman to serve as state president of the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers, and the first woman to serve as the American Nursery and Landscape Association Retail Division president.

TOM COURTRIGHT

is a second-generation garden center owner. His parents founded East Bay Nursery in the 1940s. Courtright and his father designed and installed flower shows in the summer, including the State Fair in Sacramento. His flower show earnings paid for his college education at Cal Poly, where he studied horticulture and met his future wife, Jacquie.

After graduation, Courtright purchased Orchard Nursery and Florist in Lafayette in 1971 and settled into a life of community and industry service. He is member of the Rotary Club of Lafayette and Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and has led both organizations.

Courtight served on the board and as president of the American Nursery and Landscape Association in Washington, D.C.

He is currently on the board of the Master Nursery Garden Centers Cooperative and served as its president. He has also been involved in the International Garden Center Association having served as its president, the only American to do so.

DEPARTMENT FACULTY AND STAFF

Scott Steinmaus
Department Head

Kristi Golin
Administrative Support

Trish Lyons
Administrative Support Coordinator

Sara Arnett (Bynum)
HCS Academic Advisor
805-756-7475

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CALPOLYHCS