



# CAL POLY

## Search for the Dean of the College of Engineering California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, California

### THE SEARCH

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), a distinguished public undergraduate and master's level institution located in San Luis Obispo, California, seeks a strategic and collaborative leader to serve as its next Dean of the College of Engineering (CENG). The CENG offers a wide range of highly-ranked programs across engineering and computer science that provide students with an outstanding applied education through its renowned [“Learn by Doing” philosophy](#). The dean will build on the College's success while supporting Cal Poly's distinct mission, values, and clear vision of being the nation's premier comprehensive polytechnic university that develops and inspires whole systems thinkers to serve California and the world.

Founded in 1901 as one of 23 universities in the California State University (CSU) system, Cal Poly is located in San Luis Obispo, a coastal city halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco and 15 minutes from the Pacific Ocean. Cal Poly has consistently been named the best public masters-level university in the West by both *U.S. News and World Report* and *Forbes Top Colleges*, and *Money* magazine gave Cal Poly a 5-star ranking, an honor that places Cal Poly among the top 34 universities in the nation.

For over a century, Cal Poly's “Learn by Doing” philosophy has prepared students to be leaders and problem solvers in an increasingly complex world. The CENG is central to this mission, allowing their students to innovate, design, and create sustainable solutions to real-world challenges. The College offers 14 bachelor's and 11 master's degree programs across engineering and computer science disciplines, all of which offer a hands-on approach to learning and allow students to gain impactful practical and scholarly experiences that prepare them to successfully work and solve global challenges.

The dean will be joining Cal Poly at an opportune time, as the College has a solid foundation to build upon, and the dean will ensure the College continues on its impressive trajectory of academic and inclusive excellence. As the University evolves in the coming years through significant change, including projected enrollment growth and achieving Title V federal designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the dean will play an important role in attracting and retaining talented students, faculty, and staff who reflect the demographics of California; securing the facilities, support structures, and other financial and operational

resources necessary to support growth and CENG and Cal Poly's aspirations; and maintaining the work with faculty and industry to continue to meet workforce needs and best support Cal Poly's "Learn by Doing" approach. The dean will be astute in leading the College during a time of change at the University by providing a sense of stability while also encouraging innovation to continue CENG's strong momentum and success.

The dean will address the following key opportunities and challenges, which are enumerated in detail later in this document:

- Lead the College's visioning and planning for continued excellence and prominence
- Build and deepen partnerships that support the success of the College and its students
- Thoughtfully manage CENG's complex infrastructure while creatively augmenting resources through fundraising
- Support a high-performing College of dedicated and ambitious faculty and staff
- Serve as a strategic university partner at Cal Poly and in the CSU system to support university-wide goals and initiatives

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the dean, prepared by Cal Poly with assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, can be found at the conclusion of this document. Background information and key opportunities and challenges related to the position are also included below.

## ABOUT CAL POLY

Each year, more than 20,000 top-tier students come to San Luis Obispo to put knowledge into action, taking their learning outside the classroom as they prepare for careers in the humanities, engineering, agriculture, science, business, and the built environment. Cal Poly's hands-on philosophy, small class sizes, and close student-faculty mentorships result in graduates ready from day one to impact their communities, California, and the world. At the heart of all that Cal Poly values is a core commitment to student success. Cal Poly students graduating with undergraduate or graduate degrees are expected to have met the following learning objectives:

- Think critically and creatively
- Communicate effectively
- Demonstrate expertise in a scholarly discipline and understand that discipline in relation to the larger world of arts, sciences, and technology
- Work productively as individuals and in groups
- Use their knowledge and skills to make a positive contribution to society
- Make reasoned decisions based on an understanding of ethics, a respect for diversity, and an awareness of issues related to sustainability

To learn more about Cal Poly, please visit: <http://www.calpoly.edu/>.

To learn more about Cal Poly leadership and the CSU System, please see the Appendix.

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

The College of Engineering (CENG) is known as a leader in engineering education because of its Learn by Doing, hands-on approach. The College includes approximately 5,900 undergraduate students and 300 graduate students who are enrolled in 14 bachelor's and 11 master's degree programs, most of which are ABET accredited. With an emphasis on applied learning and problem-solving, the College's in-demand graduates are heavily recruited by some of the best-known companies in the world including Apple, Boeing, Cisco, Google, Tesla Motors in addition to state and federal agencies.

The College offers a robust and diverse array of highly-ranked engineering and computer science departments and programs, including [Aerospace Engineering](#), [Biomedical Engineering](#), [Civil & Environmental Engineering](#), [Computer Engineering](#), [Computer Science & Software Engineering](#), [Electrical Engineering](#), [General Engineering](#), [Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering](#), [Materials Engineering](#), and [Mechanical Engineering](#), as well as additional graduate programs in [Engineering Management](#), [Fire Protection Engineering](#), and [Regenerative Medicine](#). Undergraduate students can opt to pursue a blended program in several CENG disciplines, providing an accelerated route to a graduate degree. CENG recently unveiled the [Noyce School of Applied Computing](#) (Noyce School), a new interdisciplinary school combining three departments under one umbrella: Electrical Engineering, Computer Science & Software Engineering, and Computer Engineering, further developing the concept of applied computing and strengthening collaborations across the College. Interdisciplinary engineering programs can also be found outside of CENG, including [Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies](#), [Architectural Engineering](#), and [Bioresource and Agricultural Engineering](#).

Student success is paramount to the College of Engineering, and the College aims to provide an excellent education that empowers all students to innovate, design, and create sustainable solutions to real-world challenges. As part of this mission, CENG is committed to universal student success and home to the [Multicultural Engineering Program](#) and [Women's Engineering Program](#), which help to recruit, support, and ensure the success of all students in engineering in addition to the College's robust advising model. Students also participate in real-world engineering problem solving through internships, design competitions, class projects, and the senior project capstone design experience. Campus facilities include more than 80 state-of-the-art laboratories, providing students unparalleled access to advanced technological systems. The College also hosts 55 engineering clubs and organizations to encourage an engaged and supported student body.

To ensure that the curriculum and experience within CENG effectively prepare students for the work force, the College maintains close relationships with industry partners and maintains trust with major employers. The [Dean's Advisory Council](#), a group of leaders in business, industry, government, research, and engineering education, lend their resources, brainpower, and diversity of thought to support the

College in fulfilling its mission and goals. The 17 council members assist the dean and the College in providing advice, advocacy, and success.

The College has embarked on important initiatives outlined within the recently completed [2023-2028 College of Engineering Strategic Plan](#), which integrates feedback from more than 1,600 stakeholders including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and industry partners. Through the plan, the College reaffirms the enduring commitment to provide an exceptional Learn by Doing hands-on education for the success of all students, while adding a focus on creativity, innovation, sustainability, and making a positive impact on society.

### **Current Context**

In October 2021, the University began the process of converting from a quarter calendar to a semester calendar system. This transition will occur at the start of the 2026-2027 academic year. The conversion presents an opportunity to achieve greater pedagogical depth, rethink how to balance teaching and research for faculty, review and discuss the curriculum, and simplify academic pathways for transfer students. As part of this transition, the campus is currently in the process of finalizing curriculum proposals and performing curricular review. After Cal Poly converts to a semester calendar, the entire California State University system will be operating on semesters.

Looking ahead, enrollment is expected to grow in the coming years to support CSU system goals and to align with system-wide financial incentives while meeting or exceeding Governor Newsom's funding compact goals. Cal Poly also has the goal of achieving recognition as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) soon. The most recent campus master plan calls for growing the maximum student headcount on campus to approximately 25,000 by 2035. This growth will be supported by the introduction of Year-Round Operations (YRO), which will be implemented in the 2027-2028 academic year. YRO will allow new students to matriculate during the summer and spring terms in addition to the traditional fall term. Cal Poly also intends, as part of YRO, to engage as many continuing students as possible in credit-bearing high-impact practices (e.g., study abroad and internships) during both their off-term and on-term semesters.

In November 2024, the California State University Board of Trustees [voted to integrate](#) Cal Poly and the [California State University Maritime Academy](#) (Cal Maritime), a previously separate CSU campus. The integration process is underway, and effective July 1, 2025, the two institutions will operate as a single university, Cal Poly. A 92-acre Cal Poly, Solano campus will house the Cal Poly Maritime Academy.

## **THE ROLE OF THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING**

Reporting directly to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, the dean will act as the lead academic and administrative officer for the College. The dean devises and executes strategic planning and visioning for the College and fosters an organizational culture that enables the recruitment and retention of talented faculty, staff, and students. This includes reaffirming Cal Poly's teacher-scholar model by supporting faculty in their integration of teaching, scholarship, professional engagement, and

service commitments to the university, college, and industry. The dean is responsible for the quality of academic programs and managing the fiscal, human, and physical resources and facilities of CENG. As the main spokesperson for the College, the dean will build deeper connections internally with leaders across the University and alumni, and externally with industry and government officials. This will ensure close alignment around academic and industry needs and foster mutually beneficial partnerships across the University and externally in support of CENG, Academic Affairs, and university-wide goals and objectives.

The dean oversees an administrative team composed of 3 directors, 3 associate deans, an assistant dean, 9 department heads, and a manager and manages a complex budget of \$56 million. The CENG includes approximately 187 tenure-track faculty, 216 lecturers, and 46 staff.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The new dean will be joining a highly reputable College that has a very solid foundation, values collaboration and communication, and prides itself on a talented and ambitious faculty, staff, and students who are all committed to making an even greater impact. The dean will be expected to leverage the strong academic offerings within the College; the deep talents and enthusiasm of faculty, staff, administrators, and students; their impressive reputation with industry partners; and the outstanding potential for increased fundraising support from industry and alumni to continue the College on its impressive trajectory. In doing so, the dean will address the following opportunities and challenges:

### **Lead the College's visioning and planning for continued excellence and prominence**

CENG has established itself as one of the nation's preeminent undergraduate engineering schools. The College's leadership has continued that success by fostering a collaborative culture and implementing college-wide strategic planning with input and efforts from a diverse array of stakeholders. The dean will continue to implement the College's strategic plan, which supports excellence in teaching and scholarship, student success, fostering a welcoming environment, and promoting new revenue for the College. The dean will ensure the College's strategic priorities are aligned and help fulfill university-wide and Academic Affairs initiatives and goals, which will include ensuring the successful integration of Cal Maritime and continuing to position the newly created Noyce School for increased prominence and success. The dean will continue to encourage and expand Learn by Doing activities with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary collaborations to ensure students have access to an education and experiential learning opportunities that will allow them to address current and merging societal challenges and industry needs. With many university-wide initiatives underway, the dean will lead and inspire the College through a time of significant evolution by helping to ensure the implementation of the strategic plan's key components, promoting innovation, and adapting strategy as needed through data, assessment, collaboration, and frequent communication.

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**Build and deepen partnerships that support the success of the College and its students**

The dean will be a visible and influential leader both within the University and externally, cultivating meaningful connections and extending CENG's and Cal Poly's reach and impact locally, within the CSU system, nationally, and globally. The dean will effectively broadcast CENG's distinct hands-on approach to education and scholarship; engage industry leaders, alumni, donors, and other community members in discussion around mutually beneficial partnerships; and gather their feedback often to inform how the College approaches future planning and innovations. In doing so, the dean will strengthen existing partnerships and build new partnerships, creating increased opportunities for advancement initiatives, applied research, student internships, and workforce preparation.

**Thoughtfully manage CENG's complex infrastructure while creatively augmenting resources through fundraising**

The next dean of CENG will inherit a complex organization, and it will be imperative to possess strong resource management and fundraising skills to achieve CENG's goals. The dean will prioritize and creatively capitalize on the College's current resources and position the CENG as a valuable university-wide partner for additional resources when possible. As Cal Poly prepares for its next capital campaign, the dean will be called upon to support the advancement efforts of the University and the College, set a vision for fundraising priorities and opportunities, and work closely with industry partners, the Dean's Advisory Council, alumni and other potential donors to continue to build a strong donor pipeline. The dean will simultaneously fundraise while finding efficiencies in support of improved resources, space, technology, staffing, and the infrastructure necessary to carry out the College's important work, including its unique computing needs, and ensure the College remains on the cutting edge of engineering education. The dean will also work closely with the Division of Strategic Enrollment Management for enrollment growth and the success of year-round operations for additional revenue. As the university moves toward multi-year planning and budgeting, the dean will combine skillful enrollment management, fundraising, and people management to ensure a strong foundation well into the future.

**Support a high-performing College of dedicated and ambitious faculty and staff**

The CENG is functioning well due to its talented faculty, staff, and students, which will allow the dean to focus on a larger strategy for the CENG and external efforts. The dean will bring the CENG community together around the execution of the College's new strategic plan and work collectively toward college and university goals. To help ensure the retention of a strong team, the dean will provide professional development and mentorship opportunities to advance faculty and staff in their areas of expertise and continue to foster a strong sense of community, belonging, and purpose across the College. The dean will support teaching, research, scholarship, and service in accordance with the teacher-scholar model and encourage the CENG's engagement in fulfilling CENG, Academic Affairs, and university-wide goals. It will be important that the dean provides stability for the College through the many university-wide changes over the coming years while inspiring the faculty and staff around the possibilities for innovation during their continued evolution.

The dean will ensure that the College fosters a welcoming environment for all as outlined in the College's strategic plan. In accordance with Cal Poly's goals of becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution and the College's strategic plan, the dean will continue important work of ensuring the CENG community reflects the demographics of the state of California and that College policies, procedures, and pedagogy allow for equitable success for all community members, including faculty, staff and students.

### **Serve as a strategic university partner at Cal Poly and in the CSU system to support university-wide goals and initiatives**

The dean will be a highly collaborative leader who will support Academic Affairs and university-wide goals, as well as CENG and CSU objectives. In addition to the upcoming transition to a semester system, year-round operations, and work towards becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the dean of CENG will also be involved with assisting with the integration of Cal Maritime. The dean will empower and support the CENG community while leveraging its talents in seeking opportunities to work across colleges in support of Cal Poly's aspirations. The dean will model collaborative leadership and execute a shared vision and purpose in line with Cal Poly and CSU initiatives.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The next dean will have a distinguished record of achievement in at least one of the engineering disciplines represented in the College of Engineering and credentials appropriate for a tenured appointment at the rank of full professor, including a terminal degree. The dean will also have an eagerness to engage with industry leaders to build meaningful partnerships and support; a demonstrated commitment to student success and applied research; and the ability to work collaboratively and effectively across Cal Poly.

The ideal candidate will also possess many of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A leadership style that inspires and fosters communication, collaboration, community building, and mutually beneficial partnerships
- Experience in the continuous implementation of university-wide and unit strategic planning through teamwork and resource development
- Demonstrated experience supporting faculty teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activities, especially within an applied learning and research context
- Demonstrated commitment to the importance of hands-on experiences for students and enthusiasm for Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy and the CSU's mission
- Demonstrated commitment to and/or record of being a good university citizen and working towards shared goals with a variety of university partners
- Experience fostering interdisciplinary collaborations for innovation and student success
- Demonstrated ability to manage resources effectively in a complex environment, an aptitude for fundraising, and the ability to develop partnerships and secure external support for programs, facilities, and personnel



- Understanding of the value of industry relations and a clear commitment to maintaining and enhancing relationships with a wide array of industry partners
- Success in resolving personnel issues in a complex and/or unionized environment
- Excellent communication skills in a wide range of settings

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for the position is \$290-310K. Cal Poly is located in San Luis Obispo, California, which has a population of over 46,000, and is an area with an extraordinary quality of life and a temperate, Mediterranean climate that is comfortable year-round. The economy is based largely on agriculture and tourism and the region is known for producing world-class wine.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. **Inquiries, nominations, and referrals** should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search at <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/cal-poly-slo-engineering/dean>. All **applications** (including CV and cover letter) should be submitted through the Cal Poly portal here: <https://jobs.calpoly.edu/en-us/job/546406/dean-college-of-engineering>.

Lindsay Gold, Lauren Wilkes, and Julia Hochner  
Isaacson, Miller

### ***Equal Opportunity and Excellence in Education and Employment***

*This position is open and available to all regardless of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. Consistent with California law and federal civil rights laws, Cal Poly provides equal opportunity in education and employment without unlawful discrimination or preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. Our commitment to equal opportunity means ensuring that every student and employee has access to the resources and support they need to thrive and succeed in a university environment and in their communities. Cal Poly complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the California Equity in Higher Education Act, California's Proposition 209 (Art. I, Section 31 of the California Constitution), other applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws, and CSU's Nondiscrimination Policy. We prohibit discriminatory preferential treatment, segregation based on race or any other protected status, and all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in all university programs, policies, and practices.*

*Cal Poly is a diverse community of individuals who represent many perspectives, beliefs and identities, committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and intellectually vibrant environment. We cultivate a culture of open dialogue, mutual respect, and belonging to support educational excellence and student success. Through academic programs, student organizations and activities, faculty initiatives, and community partnerships, we encourage meaningful engagement with diverse perspectives. As a higher*



*education institution, we are dedicated to advancing knowledge and empowering individuals to reach their full potential by prioritizing inclusive curriculum development, faculty and staff training, student mentorship, and comprehensive support programs. At Cal Poly, excellence is built on merit, talent, diversity, accessibility, and equal opportunity for all.*

## APPENDIX

### Leadership

Dr. Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore joined Cal Poly as Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs in August 2020. Prior to Cal Poly, Dr. Jackson-Elmoore served as the dean of the Honors College at Michigan State University, where she oversaw the university-wide program for high-achieving undergraduates, as well as the Academic Scholars Program, the National/International Fellowships & Scholarships Office, and the MSU Debate Program. Dr. Jackson-Elmoore was also a professor with affiliations in the MSU School of Social Work and the Global Urban Studies Program. She also was appointed to the MSU Strategic Planning Committee. In her time as Provost thus far, Dr. Jackson-Elmoore has led the curricular charge for a semester conversion, championed universal student, faculty, and staff success, and supported the teacher-scholar model that is vital to Cal Poly's success.

President Jeffrey D. Armstrong began his tenure as Cal Poly's ninth permanent president on February 1, 2011. Before joining Cal Poly, Dr. Armstrong served as dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University, as head of the Animal Sciences Department at Purdue University, and in various roles at NC State University. He participates in numerous California State University (CSU) committees, including the CSU Agricultural Research Initiative, CSU Water Resources and Policy Initiatives, CSU Technology Steering Committee, and CSU Council on Ocean Affairs, Science & Technology (COAST). Dr. Armstrong will join the APLU Food System Leadership Institute (FSLI) Commission in 2024. Cal Poly is one of three FSLI partner institutions (along with North Carolina State University and The Ohio State University) hosting a week-long residential session. As a first-generation college graduate, Dr. Armstrong is particularly passionate about nurturing a campus climate and has focused on improving graduation rates and bolstering student success, particularly through expanded university-industry partnerships.

### California State University System

The California State University (CSU) system spans the state of California and has an annual budget of more than \$7 billion. It is not only the largest four-year university system in the nation, but also one of the most diverse and affordable. With 23 campuses, more than 350,000 students, and 53,000 faculty and staff, CSU is a leader in high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education. A student success initiative in the CSU system, the Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025), is the CSU's ambitious effort to increase graduation rates for all CSU students while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps.