



# 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, visionary, 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 advancing 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 22 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, in addition to the newly integrated Cal Poly Solano campus in Vallejo, California that houses Cal Poly Maritime Academy. 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. Recognized for the excellence and impact of its programs, the College offers 14 bachelor's and 11 master's degree programs across engineering and computer science disciplines, all of which emphasize 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 remarkable foundation to build upon, and the dean will accelerate the College's impressive trajectory of academic excellence. As

the University evolves in the coming years through significant change, including projected enrollment growth, the dean will drive an ambitious vision for the College; play an important role in attracting and retaining talented students, faculty, and staff who reflect the demographics of California; secure the facilities, support structures, and other financial and operational resources necessary to support growth and the College of Engineering and Cal Poly's aspirations; and inspire top-notch work with faculty and industry to continue to meet workforce needs today and in the future through Cal Poly's "Learn by Doing" approach. The dean will be astute in leading the College during a time of rapid change in higher education and at the University by providing a sense of stability while also encouraging innovation, continuing CENG's strong momentum, and bringing the College to a higher level of success and recognition in a fast-evolving academic landscape.

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

- Provide strategic visioning and planning to continue to elevate the College's excellence, prominence, and national reputation
- Build and deepen partnerships that support and enhance 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 inclusion, 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 national leader in engineering education with its Learn by Doing, hands-on approach and focus on undergraduate and master's degree education. The College includes approximately 6,200 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 array of highly-ranked engineering and computer science 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](#). At [Cal Maritime](#), the College offers programs in Mechanical Engineering, Facilities Engineering Technology, and Marine Engineering Technology. 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 academic 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 and the University. 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 offers a robust advising model that provides comprehensive services to guide and empower students to achieve their goals. In addition, the College is 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. 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 provide multidisciplinary opportunities for engagement in the engineering fields. To ensure that the curriculum and experience within CENG effectively prepare students for the work force, the College maintains close relationships and collaboration with industry partners and maintains trust with major employers.

The [Dean's Advisory Council](#), a group of executives and leaders in business, industry, government, research, and engineering education, who lend their resources, brainpower, and differences of thought to support the College in fulfilling its mission and goals. The 17 council members assist the dean and the College in providing strategic vision, advice, advocacy, and partnership.

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 November 2024, the California State University Board of Trustees [voted to integrate](#) Cal Poly and the [California State University Maritime Academy](#) (Cal Maritime), and effective July 1, 2025, the two institutions now operate as a single university, Cal Poly. A 92-acre Cal Poly, Solano campus houses the Cal Poly Maritime Academy. Cal Maritime invites the opportunity to leverage tremendous alumni, industry partners, and government agencies who can provide resources and partnerships to enhance funding, as well as Learn by Doing experiences, both on campus and through internships and research opportunities.

Announced in June 2024, the Noyce endowment is a transformational gift to the University, enabling Cal Poly to build upon its nationally recognized Learn by Doing approach to undergraduate education. It brings together three highly ranked engineering programs—Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Software Engineering, and Computer Engineering—to create the Noyce School of Applied Computing.

The Noyce School will focus on applied work in collaboration with leading industry partners and research collaborators, engaging in projects that draw upon the strengths of Cal Poly's faculty and students. It will support student success through summer undergraduate research programs, Learn by Doing opportunities at Cal Poly and with industry partners, and year-round academic and research experiences.

Faculty, through partnerships with industry, will bring real-world problems into the classroom and research environment, engaging students while advancing applied research. The Noyce endowment will

provide infrastructure, computing resources, new laboratories and equipment, and additional research and study spaces dedicated to applied computing, including a recently instated AI Factory that will provide the artificial intelligence computing capabilities of few other universities.

In October 2021, the University began the process of converting from a quarter calendar to a semester calendar system, and the University will implement semester terms 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, create more robust high impact practices and year-round educational opportunities, and simplify academic pathways for transfer students. Beginning in fall 2026, to coincide with Cal Poly's first term on semesters and to more fully support and actualize the teacher-scholar model, the University will provide tenure-line faculty with one course release to enable tenure-line faculty to engage in research, scholarly, and creative activities. This equates to a 4:3 teaching load for most faculty. 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, meet California's demand for more Learn by Doing graduates, better reflect the state of California's demographics, and align with system-wide financial incentives. Enrollment growth will be paired with increased financial aid packages to allow for all California students to better access and take part in Cal Poly's Ready Day One programs. 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 for more new students at Cal Poly with enhanced opportunities for them to engage in a rich variety of high impact practices and accelerate progress to degree completion, including taking a summer term to allow for study abroad, internships, and other co-curricular opportunities during the fall and spring terms.

## 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, retention, and professional development 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 vision and direction of high-quality 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 three directors, three associate deans, an assistant dean, nine department heads, and approximately 187 tenure-track faculty, 216 lecturers, and 46 staff. The dean manages a complex budget of \$56 million and extensive engineering facilities.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The new dean will be joining a highly reputable College that has a very solid and successful 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 accelerate the College on its impressive trajectory. In doing so, the dean will address the following opportunities and challenges:

### **Provide strategic visioning and planning to continue to elevate the College's excellence, prominence, and national reputation**

CENG has established itself as one of the nation's preeminent undergraduate engineering schools. The College's leadership has successfully fostered a collaborative culture and advanced college-wide strategic planning with input from an 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 developing new revenue for the College while also providing an ambitious and forward-thinking vision that elevates the College's prominence nationally and internationally.

The dean will ensure the College's strategic priorities and vision are aligned with university-wide and Academic Affairs initiatives, including the successful integration of Cal Maritime, the continued advancement of the Noyce School, implementation of year-round operations, and the expansion of CENG's role as a national leader in engineering education while capitalizing on local, national, and global opportunities. The dean will also inspire innovation by encouraging systems-level approaches, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and creative integration of emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, and data science.

An essential part of this vision will be embracing the transformative opportunities of artificial intelligence. The dean will ensure that AI is thoughtfully integrated into teaching, research, and operations, supporting student success, enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration, and positioning the College at the forefront of addressing societal and industry needs in an AI-driven world. AI can also be harnessed to strengthen data-informed decision-making, accelerate discovery, create new approaches to Learn by Doing, and expand experiential learning through AI-enabled simulations, design tools, and real-world applications.

At a time of significant evolution in higher education and industry, the dean will lead CENG with vision and adaptability—promoting excellence, ensuring the implementation of key strategic priorities, and continuously refining strategy through data, assessment, collaboration, and transparent communication.

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**Build and deepen partnerships that support and enhance 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 ensure the College stays on the cutting edge in planning and innovation. The dean will leverage the CENG's outstanding reputation to strengthen existing partnerships and build new partnerships, creating increased opportunities for advancement initiatives, applied research, student internships, and workforce preparation. The dean will have the opportunity to represent Cal Poly's many strengths and assets in a rich landscape for industry partnerships throughout California and beyond and through collaborations at the national and international levels for increased excellence and prominence.

**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 to secure additional resources. 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 to support the academic mission. 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 strategic plan, work collectively toward college and university goals, and showcase faculty and staff achievements and innovations to a wider audience. To help ensure the support and retention of a strong team, the dean will be a thoughtful manager of personnel, provide professional development and mentorship opportunities to advance faculty and staff in their areas of expertise, ensure accountability, 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 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 larger, ambitious priorities and to pursue excellence 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 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 and year-round operations, the dean of CENG will also be involved with assisting with the successful integration of Cal Maritime, university-wide and CSU fundraising goals, and university commitment to representing the state of California's population in its student enrollment. The dean will empower and support the CENG community while leveraging its talents in promoting opportunities to work across colleges in support of Cal Poly's aspirations. The dean will model transformative, 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:

- Creative and visionary leadership with proven ability to execute ambitious goals and bring a forward-looking perspective on trends in engineering and computer science
- 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 ability to manage resources effectively in a complex environment, a strong aptitude for fundraising, and the excellent ability to develop partnerships and secure external support for programs, facilities, and personnel



- 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 learning 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
- Understanding of the value of industry and alumni relations and a clear commitment to maintaining and enhancing relationships with a wide array of industry leaders, community members, and alumni partners
- Strong personnel management experience and 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 compensation for the position will be \$300-350K plus supplemental compensation. 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/553016/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*

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*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. Albert A. Liddicoat was appointed Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs in September 2025 after serving as interim since April 2025. Liddicoat previously served as Interim Vice Chancellor for Human Resources at the California State University system, where he was responsible for providing strategic leadership and direction for the CSU's comprehensive human resources department. At Cal Poly, he previously served as vice president for University Personnel and chief human resources officer. He also held the roles of vice provost for Academic Affairs and Personnel, interim dean of the Orfalea College of Business, and director of the Computer Engineering program. A faculty member at Cal Poly since 2002, he holds tenured status as the Forbes Professor of Computer and Electrical Engineering. Liddicoat holds a Ph.D. and a master's degree in electrical engineering and a master's degree in industrial engineering and engineering management, all from Stanford University. He earned his bachelor's degree in electronic engineering from Cal Poly.

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 joined 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 positive 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 22 campuses, more than 460,000 students, and 63,000 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.

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Cal Poly. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Cal Poly would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*