



CAL POLY

*Search for the Associate Provost, Academic Innovation and Programs
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, California*

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) seeks a creative leader who cares deeply about students to serve as its Associate Provost for Academic Innovation and Programs (Associate Provost). Reporting to the Senior Vice Provost, the Associate Provost will provide leadership, strategic planning, and administrative oversight for the units within Academic Affairs that support academic innovation and programs, including the Office of Academic Programs and Planning, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, International Education, University Honors Program, and the academic component of Service Learning. The Associate Provost will have the opportunity to build collaborative networks across the university in support of high-quality programming, assessment of student learning, degree completion, high-impact practices, general education, and the student academic experience. Guided by Cal Poly's renowned [Learn by Doing](#) philosophy, the Associate Provost will drive initiatives that will advance Cal Poly's commitment to innovation and inclusive excellence.

Founded in 1901 as one of 23 universities in the California State University (CSU) system, Cal Poly has consistently been recognized for its academic programs, educational excellence, and Learn by Doing philosophy. Each year, more than 20,000 top-tier students come to beautiful San Luis Obispo to put knowledge into action, taking their learning outside the classroom as they prepare for careers in engineering, agriculture, science, business, humanities, and the built environment. The university has continually been named the [most innovative school in the West](#), and the best public masters-level university in the West by both U.S. News & World Report (USNWR) and Forbes Top Colleges. In addition, Money magazine gave Cal Poly [a 5-star ranking](#), an honor that places Cal Poly among the top 34 universities nationwide. The Institute of International Education has regularly ranked Cal Poly [among the top 10 campuses in the nation](#) for students who engage in year-long study abroad programs, and based on their 2021-2022 annual survey, ranked the university as #1 for the second consecutive year. Cal Poly is also an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and plans to grow to 25,000 students by 2035.

This Associate Provost will join the Cal Poly community at an opportune time for new ideas and expansion as the institution advances student access and success efforts to meet institutional and California State University system goals. The university will simultaneously be experiencing many transitions as they plan for year-round operations and convert from a quarter to semester calendar starting in the 2026-2027 academic year. These initiatives, along with Cal Poly's continued commitment to innovation for increased prominence, provide ample opportunity for assessing current programming and initiatives while also encouraging academic programming innovation, growth, and development. The Associate Provost will

lead a strong team of highly committed faculty and staff within their unit who are eager to co-create a new vision and strategy, in close collaboration with university stakeholders, that promotes academic excellence and student success. The Associate Provost will leverage their expertise while fostering partnerships across the university to accomplish new, innovative objectives in support of Cal Poly's mission and values.

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the Associate Provost can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to provide background information and detail the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

ABOUT CAL POLY

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 the 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

The current [2019-2024 Strategic Plan](#) has seven strategic priorities that focus on the themes of its people, programs, and support infrastructure. For information about university leadership, please visit the appendix at the conclusion of this document.

In October 2021, the University began the process of converting from a quarter calendar to a semester calendar system for the 2026-2027 academic year. The conversion is 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. The campus is in the process of finalizing curriculum proposals and performing curricular review. After Cal Poly converts to a semester calendar, the entire California State University (CSU) system of 23 campuses will be on semesters.

Enrollment at Cal Poly is expected to grow in the coming years to support CSU system goals and to align with system-wide financial incentives. The most recent master plan calls for a maximum student head

count on-campus during any term to about 25,000 students by the year 2035. This growth includes leveraging a new summer term for year-round operations, where students will be on-term some summers and provided with opportunities to engage in high-impact practices during their off-terms.

Cal Poly is the second largest land-holding university in California, second only to UC Berkeley, and one of the largest land-holding universities in the nation. Cal Poly acknowledges that its campus sits on land that carries the heritage and culture of the Indigenous People of San Luis Obispo County, the yak tit^yu tit^yu yak tit^hini, Northern Chumash tribe. The Cal Poly community honors the Indigenous People's connection to these territories and respects the land on which they gather.

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.

ABOUT ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND PROGRAMS

The Academic Innovation and Programs portfolio is comprised of the following units that enable and deliver high-quality experiences for students: Office of Academic Programs and Planning; the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology; International Center; University Honors Program; and the academic component of Service Learning, described in greater detail here:

- The Office of [Academic Programs and Planning](#) (APP) is committed to promoting student learning and success by partnering with faculty and staff to develop, deliver, and continuously improve academic programs; collaborating with the Academic Senate to develop, implement, and review academic policies; and engaging the campus leadership in academic planning. APP steers Cal Poly's WSCUC accreditation and manages accreditation and program review for all its degree programs. It also directs the assessment of student learning, oversees the university's Instructionally Related Activities program, implements systemwide CSU initiatives, and makes reports to meet the university's accountability requirements. In particular, APP provides guidance and support for each of the university's degree programs, which, for the 2023-2024 academic year includes 66 undergraduate and 33 graduate degrees, plus 92 minors, 15 accredited credentials, and numerous other non-degree academic programs. APP also provides administrative oversight for the university's General Education program.
- The [Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology](#) (CTLT)'s purpose is to provide Cal Poly educators with knowledge and support to develop skills and expertise for exemplary teaching on

their journey toward excellence. The CTLT's mission is helping educators create equitable and inclusive learning environments and experiences that maximize success for all Cal Poly students. The unit provides evidence-informed guidance for course design, learning activities and teaching strategies that incorporate best practices in accessibility, equity and inclusion. The CTLT's programs and services are informed by scholarship, designed to model effective instruction practices, tailored to the realities of educators' priorities, focused on well-defined curricular outcomes, and integrated with academic technologies that support teaching and learning success.

- The [International Center](#) connects students with opportunities to study, intern and research abroad, supports international students and scholars, facilitates international travel for faculty and staff, and more. The International Center's primary mission is to provide leadership and coordination for international activities and programs and to serve as a catalyst for internationalization efforts at Cal Poly. The International Center maintains administrative authority and university-wide oversight of international engagement and initiatives supported by the campus. The International Center is committed to providing equity and access to services and programs for the populations it serves, including for students studying abroad and international students and scholars at Cal Poly. The International Center provides support to campus efforts in internationalizing the curriculum and in creating global partnerships.
- The [University Honors Program](#) was founded in 1999. It brings together students, faculty, and friends of the University to seek challenges, participate in experiential and interdisciplinary learning, grow as individuals, and expand the boundaries of their academic potential. The Honors Program provides curricular and extracurricular programming designed to foster intellectual engagement, knowledge discovery, and the mutual exchange of ideas. Honors courses, research projects, teaching assignments, service learning projects, study abroad programs, dedicated meeting/study space, campus housing, and other activities provide Honors students with many opportunities to expand and enrich their academic experiences in the company of similarly motivated peers.
- [Service Learning](#) at Cal Poly is a collaborative program between Student Affairs (SA) and Academic Program and Planning (APP) that addresses critical community needs while reinforcing course content through a learn-by-doing approach. Each quarter, Service-Learning courses place up to 300 students in over a dozen non-profit agencies in San Luis Obispo County. Students in Service Learning courses provide over 10,000 hours of service to the community each year.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE PROVOST, ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND PROGRAMS

Reporting to the Senior Vice Provost, and overseeing a broad portfolio of units, the Associate Provost identifies and realizes strategic priorities related to academic innovations and programs while providing dynamic and engaged leadership that facilitates the management of specific programs, initiatives, projects, and emerging opportunities. The Associate Provost collaborates across the Division and

university on strategic priorities and initiatives such as the assessment of student learning; opportunities for University Honors students as well as international students; and implementation of tools, technologies, and applications designed to support student-centered academic programs, curriculum, faculty, and students at a comprehensive polytechnic university. The Associate Provost serves as a leader in longer-term planning of academic programs, quality of instruction, and furthering the university's strategic plan and the goals and objectives of Academic Affairs. The Associate Provost serves as a thought partner on existing or emerging academic innovation strategies and opportunities. Principles of and a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion guide the Associate Provost's work in all areas.

The Associate Provost provides leadership, strategic planning, and administrative oversight for academic program planning, management of academic program reviews, program accreditations, certifications, and the university's regional accreditation, including oversight of the approval process and assistance to colleges and departments in the development of all degree and certificate program proposals. They also develop and implement academic program policies consistent with CSU Chancellor's Office and campus requirements, as well as CSU accountability reporting, and are in charge of reviewing student academic petitions based on academic policies.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSOCIATE PROVOST

The Associate Provost will be joining a university focused on innovation and evolution for increased prominence, and the Associate Provost will have the opportunity to make a large impact in the years to come by creatively addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

- Serve as a trusted advisor to the Cal Poly community around academic innovation; partner across Academic Affairs and the university to develop a vision for Academic Innovation and Programs;
- Build and cultivate collaborations across Academic Affairs and the university including with deans, associate deans, faculty, students, and staff to ensure the quality of courses and the curriculum; guide colleges around short- and long-term enrollment planning and advise around resourcing needs; discover new opportunities to bridge units and resources for even greater impact; support the teacher-scholar model through innovation;
- Provide strategic leadership and guidance to all units within the Associate Provost's portfolio to support growth and long-term success; bridge units for further integration; enhance operational excellence and efficiency; strengthen practices to encourage transparency, collaboration, academic quality, and innovation;
- Develop student learning assessment programming and evaluate data regularly; ensure transparency and reporting for all units;
- Promote inclusive programming and pedagogies to support a diverse student body;
- Build trust across the institution, especially with faculty, to effectively advise curriculum committees and Academic Senate around academic planning, programming, and policies; effectively establish and clarify policies and resolutions in close collaboration with faculty through active listening; communicate new policies from the CSU Chancellor's Office;

- Serve as a strong communicator to navigate complicated and nuanced matters effectively and promote the visibility of Academic Affairs units and programs internally and externally;
- Assist Cal Poly in achieving enrollment objectives by helping to expand Cal Poly's programming reach, especially through partnerships with community colleges, such as transfer programs (i.e. 2+2 programs and articulation agreements) and international programming;
- Work closely with the Associate Provost for Student Success, and assist in bridge building across the university, to help break down barriers to student success;
- A serious and significant commitment to university-wide equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts; close equity gaps; assist in Cal Poly becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution;
- Cultivate and empower a strong team of experts around innovation while determining creative solutions to resource new ideas;
- Creatively assess and advocate for resource needs;
- Increase Cal Poly's international visibility and partnerships.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

An earned doctorate or terminal degree and academic accomplishments appropriate for the rank of at least Associate Professor with tenure are required. The successful candidate will also bring eight or more years of progressive, responsible academic experience in a regionally accredited institution of higher education. Candidates are also expected to have many of the following skills, knowledge, and abilities:

- Strong knowledge of and creativity in addressing contemporary curricular issues related to outcomes-based, student-centered learning; program- and institution-level assessment and accountability;
- Knowledge and experience with hybrid and fully online learning;
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and student success, and the ability to work effectively with the various academic leaders across Cal Poly to achieve university-wide objectives;
- A record of facilitating a consultation process regarding academic matters and policies, such as with an academic or faculty senate; successful experience collaborating with faculty and staff in the design and implementation of academic programs;
- Ability to exercise good judgment, discretion, sensitivity, and reason in fulfilling responsibilities;
- Demonstrated ability to investigate and analyze problems while developing imaginative and innovative solutions; ability to negotiate and resolve highly sensitive and complex problems and/or issues;
- Evidence of a strong commitment to excellence in undergraduate and graduate education;
- Expert human relations, communication, and interpersonal skills, including strong consultative skills conducive to building and maintaining positive relations with faculty, department chairs, deans, administrators, staff, and other members of the campus community and the California

State University system office (Office of the Chancellor); demonstrated commitment to shared governance and ability to develop cooperative working arrangements at all levels of a university;

- Successful innovation and/or change management experience;
- Demonstrated ability to prepare and analyze complex reports and make effective presentations;
- Experience interpreting, communicating, and applying policies and procedures.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for this position is \$180,000-\$200,000. To learn more about Cal Poly employee benefits, please visit: <https://afd.calpoly.edu/hr/benefits/>.

Cal Poly is located in San Luis Obispo, California, a coastal city halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The San Luis Obispo community is nestled close to the Pacific Ocean, 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. Full applications must include a CV, cover letter, and statement of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For more details, including the full position profile and to submit inquiries, nominations, and referrals, please see the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/california-polytechnic-state-university-san-luis-obispo/associate-provost-academic>.

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At California Polytechnic State University, we believe that cultivating an environment that embraces and promotes diversity is fundamental to the success of our students, our employees and our community. Cal Poly's commitment to diversity informs our efforts in recruitment, hiring and retention. California Polytechnic State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

Appendix: University Leadership

Dr. Daniel Grassian joined Cal Poly as Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs in August 2023. Dr. Grassian is instrumental in driving the development and implementation of strategic initiatives within the Division of Academic Affairs. Prior to Cal Poly, Dr. Grassian was the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at California State University, Chico, where he led a multifaceted portfolio including undergraduate studies, graduate studies, academic technology, international education, faculty development, academic programs, program review, assessment, and accreditation.

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 co-chaired a university level Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee and was appointed to the MSU Strategic Planning Committee.

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 that embraces inclusion and diversity and has focused on improving graduation rates and bolstering student success, particularly through expanded university-industry partnerships.