



Search for the Dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, California

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) seeks a highly collaborative and visionary leader with the ability to build connections across disciplines and with industry to serve as the next dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design ([CAED](#)). For over 75 years, the CAED has had an outstanding national reputation due to its distinguished community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni that have positively influenced the forces that shape the planning, design, and construction worlds. The dean will build on the successful reputation of Cal Poly and CAED to reach new levels of distinction and national prominence while promoting their renowned [“Learn by Doing” philosophy](#). The dean will support Cal Poly’s clear vision of being the nation’s premier comprehensive polytechnic university that develops and inspires whole system thinkers to serve California and help solve global challenges.

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 & 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.

The CAED has the unique distinction of housing eight degree programs in [five departments](#) contributing to the built environment: Architecture, Architectural Engineering, Construction Management, Landscape Architecture, and City and Regional Planning. All CAED programs are highly ranked, and offer students the opportunity to undertake sophisticated projects, collaborate with industry partners, and work across disciplines. As a result of Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing philosophy, all CAED students gain impactful practical and scholarly experiences and are prepared to work globally within innovative teams creating sustainable, compelling surroundings within the built environment.

The dean will be joining Cal Poly at an opportune time for impact as the CAED is ready to rally behind a cohesive and forward-thinking vision that bridges disciplines, unites the CAED community, promotes innovation and inclusive excellence, ensures they remain competitive in their fields and the national higher education landscape, and increases their national and international prominence. As the University pursues enrollment growth in the coming years, the dean will also play an important role in attracting and retaining diverse and talented students, faculty, and staff; securing the facilities, support structures, and other financial and operational resources necessary to support growth; and working with faculty to ensure academic programming is attractive to students and is responsive to industry needs.

To achieve these ambitions, the dean will address the following key opportunities and challenges, which are enumerated in detail later in this document:

- Inspire the CAED around a new, unified vision that builds on the college's distinct identity, fosters interdisciplinary collaborations, and supports Cal Poly's mission, values, and goals
- Thoughtfully steward and enhance the CAED's revenue, resources, and infrastructure
- Lead a committed and talented faculty and staff ready to leverage their expertise in support of students and interdisciplinary goals and objectives
- Be a highly collaborative and strategic university partner at Cal Poly and in the CSU System
- Serve as a visible spokesperson locally, nationally and internationally

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the dean, prepared by CAED stakeholders 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 engineering, agriculture, science, business, humanities 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 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

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 co-chaired a university level Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee and 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 diversity, equity, and inclusion action planning, 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 that embraces inclusion and diversity and has focused on improving graduation rates and bolstering student success, particularly through expanded university-industry partnerships.

Current Context

The CAED is currently being led by an interim dean, Kevin Dong, after the former dean, Christine Theodoropoulos, retired in the Summer of 2023 after serving 11 years in the role, the second longest tenure in the college's 75-year history.

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 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 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 (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. Cal Poly also has the goal of achieving recognition as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) soon. 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. In the 2027-2028 academic year, Cal Poly intends to begin Year-Round Operations (YRO), which will allow additional new students to matriculate in the summer and spring terms as well as during 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 their off-term as well as their on-term semesters.

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 THE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Recently celebrating its 75th anniversary, the CAED has established itself as a premier institution in the nation, preparing students for leadership roles in the professions that plan, design, construct, and steward the built environment. The CAED is one of the largest colleges of its kind in the country, with 2,000 students enrolled in the programs mentioned in the introduction. The college also offers interdisciplinary programs including dual degree and minor programs in partnership with the College of Engineering and the Orfalea College of Business, allowing students to make connections beyond their degree of study.

With a unique blend of professional majors not found in the same college anywhere else in the United States, the college encompasses all the professions that come together in designing and implementing the built environment. All CAED degree programs are highly ranked and built around educational experiences heavily focused on using rigorous, time-intensive design studios and project labs as a central arena for developing and integrating multiple skills. Each major emphasizes Cal Poly's rich Learn By Doing tradition within a comprehensive university complex. As such, CAED students receive a contemporary polytechnic education that provides the creative, technical, and leadership abilities to plan, design, construct, and steward the built and natural environment.

Student success is of paramount importance to the CAED. The college's interdisciplinary focus and low student-to-professor ratio ensure that all students are prepared for professional practice and are able to develop impactful relationships within the community. CAED's educational benefits include small class sizes, accreditation in each program of study, the opportunity to study abroad, and access to hands-on learning in studios, shops, laboratories, and support facilities. The college also offers students a broad range of extra-curricular activities that provide a social network between students, a career network with industry and alumni, and volunteer opportunities to become better acquainted with the greater community. [CAED clubs](#) and organizations range from college-wide to departmental and major-specific, allowing students to connect across the college as well as dive deeper into their program of study.

To ensure that the curriculum and experience effectively prepare students for the work force, the college maintains close relationships with industry partners and maintains trust with major employers. The CAED [Dean's Leadership Council](#), a group of dedicated professional leaders from various built-environment fields, lend their resources, brainpower, and diversity of thought to support the college in fulfilling its mission and goals. The nearly 40 council members assist the dean and the college in providing advice, advocacy, and access.

The CAED continues to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion in its communities and foster a socially just, respectful, and welcoming environment for its students, staff, and faculty. The college developed the CAED Diversity Plan to outline its achievements, efforts, and goals in this area. With DEI as a high priority to the entire community, the CAED Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee leads listening sessions and workshops about DEI at the intersection of all CAED disciplines. As such, the college provides opportunities for connection, discourse, knowledge sharing, and support within each department.

ROLE OF THE DEAN

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 diverse and talented faculty, staff, and students, including faculty support in their teaching, scholarship, professional engagement, and service to the university, college, and industry. The dean is responsible for the quality of academic programs and for managing the fiscal, human, and physical resources and facilities of the CAED. As the main spokesperson for the college, the dean will build deeper connections internally with leaders across campus and alumni, and externally with industry and government officials. This will include ensuring close alignment around academic and industry needs and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships across the university in support of CAED, Academic Affairs, and university-wide goals and objectives.

The dean oversees an administrative team composed of an associate dean, an assistant dean, a senior director of development, and five department heads, and manages a complex budget of more than \$18.2 million. The CAED includes approximately 59 tenure-track faculty, 54 lecturers, and 21 staff.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The new dean will have the opportunity to build upon CAED's impressive record of success by leveraging a college-wide enthusiasm for a new vision and strategy for CAED to achieve new levels of excellence. The CAED and university are committed to preparing its students for a dynamic, global workplace within the built environment and are eager for leadership to help foster innovation and interdisciplinary collaborations to achieve that objective, along with other Cal Poly aspirations. The dean will be expected to leverage the unique array of disciplines within the college; the deep talents of faculty, staff, and students; and their extensive industry partnerships and fundraising efforts to make an even greater impact. In doing so, the dean will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Inspire the CAED around a new, unified vision that builds on the college's distinct identity, fosters interdisciplinary collaborations, and supports Cal Poly's mission, values, and goals

Upon joining Cal Poly, the dean will work closely with faculty, staff, students, industry partners, alumni, the Dean's Leadership Council, and university partners to inspire and unite the community around a collaborative and cohesive vision for the college. The vision will build on the college's successes, celebrate the distinctiveness of each department, be forward-thinking, and foster a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration, creativity, and inclusive excellence. The vision will entail a strategic plan for the college that aligns with the goals of the university and Division of Academic Affairs and emphasizes Learn By Doing and CAED's stature and prominence within their fields. The dean will be a highly collaborative and innovative leader who will consult with internal and external stakeholders to ensure the college adapts to the future needs of all disciplines while also finding new ways to build connections among them. The dean will be able to connect and translate across five distinct departments to unite and excite all members of the CAED community around its unique characteristics and assets. The dean will be responsible for the successful implementation of planning by inspiring the CAED around achieving common objectives; incentivizing participation; integrating equity, diversity, inclusion, and student success efforts; providing clear delegation and effective resource allocation, tracking progress and outcomes, and adapting strategies as needed.

Thoughtfully steward and enhance the CAED's revenue, resources, and infrastructure

The next dean of CAED will inherit complex and limited resources, and it will be imperative to possess strong resource management and fundraising skills to achieve CAED's goals. The dean will prioritize and creatively capitalize on the college's current resources and position the CAED 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, and they work closely with industry partners and potential donors to continue to build a donor pipeline. The dean will seek new sources of revenue and find efficiencies in support of the resources, space, and infrastructure necessary to carry out the college's important work. This will include working 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 the resources necessary to meet staffing, faculty, Academic Affairs, university, and industry needs. They will augment, prioritize, and allocate CAED's budget effectively and strategically for success.

Lead a committed and talented faculty and staff ready to leverage their expertise in support of students and interdisciplinary goals and objectives

It will be a team effort to fulfill their many ambitions, and the dean will be expected to leverage the expertise of CAED faculty and staff, determine priorities, find new ways the CAED can contribute more broadly to the university community, and inspire the college for success. The dean will set the tone early on in their tenure by bridging the CAED community around a new, interdisciplinary vision; finding new ways to support the teacher-scholar model; establishing trust and transparency by working together to establish goals and priorities; and encouraging a culture across faculty and staff that is more collaborative and cohesive in fulfilling ambitions for the college and university. This will include encouraging creativity and problem solving, finding efficiencies and new ways to partner within the college and across colleges, and working together to determine strategies for maximum effectiveness. Also, unifying academics and practitioners as well as tenured faculty and lecturers across distinct disciplines, to represent a wide range of interests under a common vision. The dean will provide professional development and mentorship opportunities appropriate for faculty and staff to grow and advance within roles and areas of expertise, acknowledging the various pathways to success and encouraging interdisciplinary

collaborations where possible, while also developing support and expertise for Academic Affairs and university-wide goals, such as the year-round calendar and equity, diversity, inclusion, access, and student success efforts. In turn, these efforts will provide ripe ground to recruit and retain a multifaceted, dedicated and diverse faculty and staff by fostering a stronger sense of community and purpose across the college.

Cal Poly is committed to recruiting and graduating a more diverse student body to better reflect California's demographics, and CAED's faculty and staff will play a vital role in these initiatives through outreach efforts, ensuring students' success, and their preparation for entry into the workforce. This will include working with faculty and staff to develop inclusive pedagogy and bridge equity gaps to reduce barriers to success. The CAED community will ensure all students are able to take full advantage of CAED's interdisciplinary curriculum, impactful Learn by Doing philosophy, and internship, study abroad, and other experiential learning opportunities to best prepare their students to be leaders of the built environment, ready to enter their professions on day one after graduation.

Be a highly collaborative and strategic university partner at Cal Poly and in the CSU System

The dean will be a highly collaborative leader who will support Academic Affairs and university-wide goals, as well as CAED and CSU objectives. This important work will include helping Cal Poly prepare for enrollment growth, supporting the conversion from a quarter to semester calendar, encouraging new interdisciplinary and innovative initiatives within and outside of CAED, and promoting Cal Poly's mission and values. The dean will empower and support the CAED community to develop and implement new initiatives and endeavors, leveraging its talents and seeking opportunities to work across colleges in support of Cal Poly's aspirations. In doing so, the dean will champion Cal Poly's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts broadly, especially in support of Cal Poly's goal to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The dean will work across the CAED, Cal Poly, and CSU System to achieve common ambitions, model collaborative leadership, and create a shared sense of vision and purpose.

Serve as a visible spokesperson locally, nationally and internationally

As a dean within a premier polytechnic university, they will have a high level of visibility and will represent the college and university on local, national, and international stages to build

on Cal Poly's strong reputation and provide thought leadership in the spaces CAED represents. The dean will broadcast CAED to a wide range of audiences, including the university community, practitioners and professional societies, community groups, and academic organizations, and ensure broad visibility of CAED's distinct identity and approach to education, scholarship, and practice around the built environment. In doing so, the dean will foster robust, mutually beneficial relationships in the university, local community, statewide, nationally, and beyond that will aid in facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations, promote new scholarly activity, highlight the great work of the individual disciplines, help ensure student job placement before and after graduation, and advance academic excellence. The dean will also leverage the experience and talents of the Dean's Leadership Council for increased exposure and cultivation of new partnerships in support of the college's sustainability and prominence.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The next dean will have a distinguished record of achievement in at least one of the five disciplines represented in the CAED and credentials appropriate for a tenured appointment at the rank of professor, including the terminal degree. The dean will also have a proven record of engaging with industry leaders to build meaningful partnerships and support; a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and student success; and the ability to work effectively with the various stakeholders associated with CAED, including academic leaders across Cal Poly.

The ideal candidate will also possess many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A leadership style that inspires and fosters community building and mutually beneficial partnerships
- Experience in crafting, leading, and implementing a vision and strategy
- Demonstrated experience and/or commitment to supporting the teacher-scholar model and faculty research and scholarship, particularly within the built environment
- Demonstrated commitment to the importance of hands-on experiences for students and an enthusiasm for Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy and the CSU's mission
- The ability to work effectively with a diverse campus community and to support inclusive excellence for faculty, staff, and students

- Demonstrated commitment to and/or a record of being a good university citizen and working towards shared goals with a variety of university partners
- 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 diversity of industry partners
- Experience working closely with most, if not all, of the disciplines within the CAED; a deep appreciation for all disciplines
- Experience 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 \$252-262K. 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/california-polytechnic-state-university-san-luis-obispo-college-architecture-and>. **All applications (including CV, cover letter, and diversity statement) should be submitted through the Cal Poly portal for the search at <https://jobs.calpoly.edu/en-us/job/540122/dean-college-of-architecture-and-environmental-design>.**

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At California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 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.