



STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES BRIGHT LIGHT AWARDS



FALL 2009

CAL POLY

BRIGHT LIGHT AWARD WINNERS

MICHAEL McTHROW, COMPUTER SCIENCE, EOP/CAS
JOHN VU, MATHEMATICS & COMPUTER SCIENCE, EOP

MESSAGE FROM SAS DIRECTOR –

Welcome back to an already-busy and exciting 2009-10 academic year! To our graduating seniors, may this be your very best and most successful quarter yet. I want to send my congratulations to all the graduating seniors, acknowledging the hard work, high standards and determination you've accomplished to graduate from Cal Poly. We enjoy honoring our Bright Light awardees in this issue of the *Enhancer* and hope that you appreciate the lessons they share, the many experiences that have brought them to successful graduation. This quarter be sure to connect with your Student Academic Services advisors and settle in to a great new academic year

With sincerity and support,
SUSAN SPARLING, DIRECTOR
Student Academic Services

MICHAEL McTHROW



EOP/CAS BRIGHT LIGHT

MICHAEL McTHROW

When it was time to research colleges, I knew I wanted to attend a college that not only had a strong computer science curriculum, but also had small class sizes and personal interaction with professors. I then discovered Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, my first choice school. I remember being accepted to Cal Poly in February 2005 and attending Open House. I loved the environment of the campus and the student clubs. I also met many of the computer science professors, and I loved the student projects. It was there when I confirmed my acceptance.

My academic career has not been easy. Transitioning from high school to Cal Poly was difficult. Cal Poly is much harder due to both the intensive quarter system and the course demands. My identity before coming to Cal Poly was defined by academic perfection. With that identity gone, I also had a difficult time emotionally on campus, although I masked this from most people.

However, my identity since has developed in other ways. I became very involved on campus. Since Week #1, I've been a member of the Society of Black Engineers and Scientists, Cal Poly's chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers. NSBE taught me how to be a leader. I served on the Regional Executive Board, which serves the West Coast, for two terms. I've made many friends in NSBE throughout

the country. I also had the opportunity to learn about other cultures. Since I was ten years old, I've been passionate about the Japanese language and culture. I joined Japanese Cultural Exchange (JCE) during my sophomore year. My passion for leading JCE led to becoming vice-president and ultimately president of the club. Finally, I've also grown spiritually. I was invited to Asian American Christian Fellowship during February 2008 and became a member of Journey Christian Fellowship, a church, the following month. I became a Christian later that year. I've learned so much spiritually and have rededicated my life to walking the narrow path outlined in Matthew 7:13.

I have many plans after I graduate in December. I will travel to Kawasaki, Japan from January to August 2010 to intern at Fujitsu Laboratories Limited. Since I was ten, I dreamed of visiting Japan, and I am excited that I finally have the opportunity to experience it. When I return to the United States, I plan to enroll in a PhD program. My career goal is to become a computer scientist, either in an industrial research lab or at a research university.

Although my journey at Cal Poly has been difficult, I'm grateful for the many opportunities that were afforded to me and for the friends that I have made here.

JOHN VU

When I arrived at Cal Poly, I never imagined that I would accomplish so much. Being raised under the poverty line by a single mother, I am proud to earn a Master's in Computer Science, and two Bachelor's degrees in Computer Science and in Mathematics. Thanks to Cal Poly's "learn by doing" philosophy and outstanding reputation, I was able to have internships at Adobe and IBM.

Nevertheless, the road to success was not easy nor was it without mistakes. When it came to academics, I was not a genius nor was I a fast learner. I am grateful to José Millán, my EOP advisor, who gave me the resources and advice to overcome these obstacles. Also, taking study sessions and supplemental workshops honed my critical thinking and study skills. However, the biggest challenge in my life was learning to love and appreciate myself in college. During my freshmen year,

I tried to end my life because I couldn't accept that I was a devout Christian who happened to be gay. My life was turned upside down because I lost my full-ride scholarship and I was suspended from Cal Poly. Fortunately, I did not give up. I was blessed when I met Father John Ulrich from the Newman Catholic Center who challenged me to love myself and love others.

After seven years, I know that I've grown a lot. There are three important things that I've learned. First, it is important to get involved with both the university and the community. Getting involved has sharpened my public speaking skills through Poly Reps, my leadership skills through Society of Women Engineers, and my spirituality and faith through the Newman Catholic Center. Second, it is important to find genuine and loving friendships with those around you. These friendships will mean the most to you during the happiest and saddest moments in your life. These are the people who will not only tell you the truth, but who will accept you for who you are. Third, it is important to have a purpose in your life. Morrie Schwartz wrote, "The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning."

After graduating from Cal Poly, these three important things that I've learned will continue to stay with me. I will reside in the City of San Jose with my partner that I met at Cal Poly and, although I plan to work at a software company, I also plan to give back to Cal Poly, my community, and my church. However, my ultimate goal in life is to live out the Latin motto of the Jesuits *ad maiorem dei gloriam* – "For the greater glory of God."

A portrait of John Vu, a young man with dark hair, wearing a green polo shirt with white trim on the sleeves. He is smiling and has his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with stone walls and greenery.

JOHN VU

EOP BRIGHT LIGHT

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

NOVEMBER 11	WEDNESDAY	ACADEMIC HOLIDAY – VETERANS' DAY
NOVEMBER 25–29	WEDNESDAY–SUNDAY	ACADEMIC HOLIDAY – THANKSGIVING
DECEMBER 7–11	MONDAY–FRIDAY	FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD
DECEMBER 12	SATURDAY	MID-YEAR COMMENCEMENT
DECEMBER 13–JAN 3	SUNDAY–SUNDAY	ACADEMIC HOLIDAY
JANUARY 4	MONDAY	BEGINNING OF WINTER TERM – CLASSES BEGIN

SAS DIRECTORY

SAS DIRECTOR	PHONE
Susan Sparling	756-2301

SAS ADVISORS

Maria Arvizu-Rodriguez – AGRICULTURE	756-2301
Donna Davis – LIBERAL ARTS	756-6774
José Millán – ENGINEERING	756-2301
Sarah Clark – ARCHITECTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN	756-1256
Maria Arvizu-Rodriguez – BUSINESS	756-2301
Susan Sparling – SCIENCE & MATH	756-2301

CONNECTIONS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS (CAS)

Donna Davis – PROGRAM COORDINATOR	756-6774
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SAS OFFICES	PHONE
Academic Skills Center	756-1256
Connections for Academic Success	756-6774
Educational Opportunity Program	756-2301
Educational Talent Search	756-2301
Student Academic Services-Hillcrest	756-2301
Student Support Services	756-1395
Summer Institute	756-2301
Upward Bound	756-2301

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS)

Cesar Margarito – DIRECTOR	756-1395
Tracee Duerson – PROGRAM COORDINATOR	756-1395
Courtney Neiswanger – GRADUATE INTERN	756-1395
Nicole Ozuna – GRADUATE INTERN	756-1395

ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

	PHONE
STUDY SESSION – Bill Sydnor	756-1256
STUDY SKILLS LIBRARY – Academic Skills Center	756-1256
STUDY SKILLS SEMINARS – Academic Skills Center	756-1256
FREE TUTORING RESOURCE LIST – Academic Skills Center	756-1256
SUPPLEMENTAL WORKSHOPS-MATH – José Millán	756-2301
SUPPLEMENTAL WORKSHOPS-SCIENCE – Maria Arvizu-Rodriguez	756-2301

