University Learning Objectives

Mission Statement

A mission statement describes an organization’s purpose. The Cal Poly Mission Statement describes the university’s purpose as a comprehensive polytechnic, while affirming its historical commitment to Learn by Doing and stating its values as an academic community:

Cal Poly fosters teaching, scholarship, and service in a learn-by-doing environment where students, staff, and faculty are partners in discovery. As a polytechnic university, Cal Poly promotes the application of theory to practice. As a comprehensive institution, Cal Poly provides a balanced education in the arts, sciences, and technology, while encouraging cross-disciplinary and co-curricular experiences. As an academic community, Cal Poly values free inquiry, cultural and intellectual diversity, mutual respect, civic engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

University Learning Objectives

A Cal Poly education is the result of experiences taking place in the major and in general education, as well as in the curriculum and co-curriculum. The University Learning Objectives (ULOs) allow these experiences to be aligned to a common set of academic expectations. The ULOs state that all students who complete an undergraduate or graduate program at Cal Poly should be able to:

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

Cal Poly shares some of these expectations with other universities (See ULO 1, 2 and 7). Others reflect Cal Poly’s unique character as a comprehensive polytechnic characterized by a preponderance of professional degree programs (ULO 3-6).

Diversity and Sustainability Learning Objectives

ULO 6 states that all Cal Poly graduates should be able to make reasoned decisions based on a respect and appreciation for diversity and an awareness of issues related to sustainability. Because of the complexity of these objectives, the Academic Senate adopted the Diversity Learning Objectives (DLOs) in 2008 and the Sustainability Learning Objectives (SLOs) in 2009, both as addenda to the ULOs. The DLOs state that all Cal Poly graduates should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power both in the United States and globally.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of contributions made by individuals from diverse and/or underrepresented groups to our local, national, and global communities.
3. Consider perspectives of diverse groups when making decisions.
4. Function as members of society and as professionals with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are different from their own.

Please see the University Policies (http://catalog.calpoly.edu/universitypolicies) webpage for the Statement on Diversity and nondiscrimination Policy.

Sustainability Learning Objectives

Cal Poly defines sustainability as the ability of the natural and social systems to survive and thrive together to meet current and future needs. The SLOs state that all Cal Poly graduates should be able to:

1. Define and apply sustainability principles within their academic programs.
2. Explain how natural, economic, and social systems interact to foster or prevent sustainability.
3. Analyze and explain local, national, and global sustainability using a multidisciplinary approach.
4. Consider sustainability principles while developing personal and professional values.

Both the DLOs and SLOs should be understood as operating at a level below the institutional level of the ULOs.

Sustainability Practices

Cal Poly has been a signatory of the Talloires Declaration, a 10-point action plan, since April 2004. This plan commits Cal Poly to sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, theory, and practice, as summarized below.

1. Increase Awareness of Environmentally Sustainable Development: In 2008, a Cal Poly team began SUSTAIN (Sino-US Strategic Alliance for Innovation), a partnership among faculty from Tongji University, Cal Poly and Stanford University. SUSTAIN (https://sustainсло.calpoly.edu/) formed as an institute committed to learning to innovate for sustainable design in China and San Luis Obispo. This commitment grew into a local research initiative involving over 200 freshmen from 50 different majors (see item 7).
2. Create an Institutional Culture of Sustainability: In 2010 the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences created the CAFES Center for Sustainability which joined other sustainability-related centers in the College of Engineering and the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.
3. Educate for Environmentally Responsible Citizenship: At Cal Poly, literacy in sustainability begins with a student’s first on-campus experience through presentations and modeled sustainable activities such as zero waste meals. Students may elect to fulfill general education and major requirements by enrolling in courses that focus in sustainability. See suscat.calpoly.edu. For students wishing to specialize in various aspects of sustainability, there are currently twelve minors.
4. Foster Environmental Literacy For All: In 2009 the Academic Senate proposed and the University accepted the addition of Sustainability Learning Objectives to Cal Poly’s University Learning
Objectives. As a result all faculty are encouraged to systematically incorporate sustainability into their courses.

5. **Practice Institutional Ecology**: Cal Poly has taken significant steps to reduce its environmental footprint. In 2013 classes began in the Warren J. Baker Center for Science and Mathematics, a 189,000 square-foot building embodying sustainability principles. In 2009 Cal Poly opened Poly Canyon Village a 1.4-million-square-foot mixed-use complex, which provides apartment-style housing for over 2,600 students – the largest LEED Gold project in the region and in the CSU. LEED certification is being achieved in all new buildings as well as selected retrofits.

6. **Involve All Stakeholders**: Cal Poly has reached out to others interested in learning how to contribute to a sustainable future. Cal Poly hosted the statewide 2008 UC/CSU/CCC Sustainability Conference, attended by some 1,100 people. The Graphic Communication Institute at Cal Poly partnered with SustainCommWorld in 2008 and 2009 to host the Business of Green Media Conference at Cal Poly. In partnership with California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), Cal Poly also hosts the annual Sustainable Agriculture Pest Management Conference which provides agriculture industry professionals with innovative strategies for controlling pests using sustainable agricultural practices.

7. **Collaborate for Interdisciplinary Approaches**: Several of the UNIV courses (university-level, co-taught by faculty from different colleges) address a wide range of sustainability issues. Numerous senior projects and courses reach across academic disciplines to engage students in learn-by-doing projects that address issues of sustainability and of meeting the needs of those less fortunate. From 2011-2015, the self-organized SUSTAIN learning initiative (https://sustainslo.calpoly.edu) involved over 200 freshmen and 50 different majors in over 40 community projects organized around sustainability; this effort linked courses from 16 different faculty collaborators across five of Cal Poly’s six academic colleges and 24 different community partners.

8. **Enhance Capacity of Primary and Secondary Schools**: Cal Poly’s STRIDE Program has worked with schools and government agencies to design and assess novel, comprehensive community-based education and intervention programs for promoting healthy living.

9. **Broaden Service and Outreach Nationally and Internationally**: Empower Poly Coalition serves as the center for student engagement and unifies the voice of over 27 sustainability-related clubs and groups on campus.

10. **Maintain the Movement**: Cal Poly became the 13th California campus to found a chapter of the Alliance to Save Energy’s “Green Campus Program”. In 2010 the National Wildlife Federation’s “National Report Card on Sustainability in Higher Education” rated Cal Poly as “Leading School for Environmental Sustainability Goal Setting” and “Leading Employer of Environmental Management and Sustainable Professionals.”

Through the combined work of the President’s Sustainability Advisory Committee, the Academic Senate’s Sustainability Committee and the numerous faculty, staff and students involved with sustainability, the University’s commitment to sustainability grows at all levels. For more information, please see http://sustainability.calpoly.edu/.

**Student Learning Assessment**

To determine the effectiveness of various educational opportunities, Cal Poly asks students to participate in learning assessments at the course, program, and university levels. These assessments provide a measure of student achievement over the course of their academic careers of course, program, and university learning objectives/outcomes. They may include the direct assessment of student work (assignments, exams, projects, performances, and theses), perhaps using standardized rubrics, as well as surveys and other indirect methods of assessment.

While grades may measure individual student progress, course-, program-, and university-level assessments provide evidence of the effectiveness of educational opportunities for groups of students. This information is intended primarily as the basis for program improvement, although it may also be used for accountability purposes, e.g., documenting educational effectiveness to accreditation agencies.

Students at Cal Poly should expect that their academic work may be used for assessment purposes.