IT IS A PLEASURE to update you on the progress of Cal Poly’s Wine & Viticulture Department (WVIT). I have been with Cal Poly’s Agribusiness Department for 19 years and most recently with the WVIT Department for two years. I became WVIT’s interim department head when Jim Cooper returned to his job at UC Santa Barbara after a two-year leave of absence.

My teaching and research passions have focused on examining the factors that motivate consumers to buy a particular brand of wine. I work with students to develop business plans. We also help wineries choose the most appealing wine labels, varietals, blends, packages and production methods for their wines. We examine differences between generations and the uses of social media in wine marketing and technology in wine purchasing.

Cal Poly’s WVIT is unique since it is the only department in the country that integrates the three key aspects of the wine industry into its curriculum for all majors: viticulture, enology and wine business. All of our students learn the basics of all three and concentrate in one of those areas.

Our hands-on learning approach includes working on projects for industry. In fall 2014 the department had its first multidisciplinary senior project involving students from all three concentrations collaborating on research for local wineries. The students examined the importance of AVAs (American Viticultural Areas) to wineries, consumers and trade groups. First, they examined the soils, climate and grapes grown in the areas, and then regulations for AVA designations. Next, they conducted survey research among wineries; buyers for retail, restaurants and bars; and consumers to understand the importance of the growing region on grape and wine purchasing. They presented their results to industry leaders and learned that the project was useful and relevant to industry.

We look forward to strengthening our program and the wine industry through continued hands-on collaboration with industry.

Warmest regards,

Marianne McGarry Wolf  |  Interim Department Head

On the Cover
Wine & viticulture students Jenna Mathias and Temo Cadena tend to the vines in Cal Poly’s Trestle Vineyard. Read about students’ winemaking and viticulture lessons throughout this issue.

PHOTO BY BRITTANY APP
Seeing Is Believing

FACE OF THE LONG-PLANNED CENTER FOR WINE & VITICULTURE EMERGES

THE VISION KEEPS GETTING BIGGER, and better. It wasn’t that long ago — summer 2013 — that Cal Poly formally established the Wine & Viticulture Department. Now comes the next big step in hands-on learning for Cal Poly students: the Center for Wine & Viticulture.

The vision is for a 22,000-square-foot learning facility that will include crush, fermentation, barrel, bottling, teaching and meeting facilities. There will be sensory, enology and viticulture teaching labs and a commercial-grade bonded winery that will allow students to gain a comprehensive understanding of vineyards and grape cultivation, the winemaking process, and the business of wine marketing and distribution.

This three-pronged curriculum is unique in academia and gives students insight into the realities of the wine industry.

“We’re hoping to break ground on the Center for Wine & Viticulture in the next few years,” said Marianne McGarry Wolf, interim head of the Wine & Viticulture Department. “This will be a teaching facility as much as a working winery.”

“Several industry leaders and even parents have pledged their support,” Wolf continued. “They are the visionaries — the ones who saw what this program would become and now envision what this program will be in 10 years.”

Cal Poly is perfectly positioned for this next step. Its Central Coast location gives students access to some of the best growing conditions and internships in the industry. The many wineries to the north and south of campus provide an ideal environment in which students can learn, experiment and conduct research with world-class viticulturists and winemakers.

The new center will provide state-of-the-art Learn by Doing experiences. That academic edge, coupled with real-world internships, will give Cal Poly graduates the knowledge and tools necessary to enter — and lead — the multidimensional wine industry anywhere in the world.

ALUMNI, FRIENDS: JOIN THE EFFORT!

A variety of giving opportunities are available, including the naming of the center and funding to support vineyards, labs, classrooms, lecture halls, scholarships and endowed faculty. For details, contact Grant Kirkpatrick at 805-756-2173 or gkirkpat@calpoly.edu.

“The Cal Poly Center for Wine & Viticulture is the critical next step in ensuring our students graduate ready to make an immediate impact in this booming industry,” said Andy Thulin, dean of the College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences. “It’s a key area of focus for the college, and we’re excited at the momentum we’ve experienced over the past few months.”

In a study published by the Wine Institute, California ranked as America’s top wine producer, making 90 percent of all U.S. wine and generating more than $61.5 billion in economic impact.

“There is a need for new talent in the industry, and that need will increase with even greater demand in the coming years,” Wolf said.

Cal Poly can help fill that void, and the new Center for Wine & Viticulture can help do so in a first-rate, hands-on manner.

“The university has committed space and some infrastructure to develop the Center for Wine & Viticulture,” Wolf said. “Now we need the investment of alumni, parents and industry partners to make this happen. We’re hopeful that there will be people who will step up and join forces with us to take this to the next level.”

A rendering of the Cal Poly Center for Wine & Viticulture
COURTESY GOULD EVANS SAN FRANCISCO
Jean Dodson Peterson’s Passion
VITICULTURE PATH TRUMPS MEDICINE, LEADING EVENTUALLY TO CAL POLY

AS A FRESHMAN PRE-MED STUDENT at UC Davis, Jean Dodson Peterson didn’t think taking the elective Introduction to Winemaking class at UC Davis would make much difference in her life. She was wrong.

Now, instead of healing people, Dodson Peterson focuses on the health of plants — specifically the health of grapevines.

Dodson Peterson, an assistant professor of viticulture and the newest member of Cal Poly’s Wine & Viticulture Department, switched majors after completing that class and hasn’t looked back.

She remained at Davis, earning a bachelor’s degree in viticulture and enology and master’s and doctorate degrees in horticulture and agronomy with a viticulture specialization.

At Cal Poly, Dodson Peterson appreciates the uniqueness of her students.

“Wine & viticulture students are in a specialized area of study. They are here because they truly love it,” she said.

Cal Poly’s 12-acre vineyard gives balance to her classes.

“We take lecture theory and allow students to run field experiments,” she said. “We also have amazing industry relationships. Integrating industry presence with academia helps learning come alive.”
A Prestigious Honor

INVITATION TO WORLD OF PINOT NOIR

THIS YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME, Cal Poly was invited to pour at the World of Pinot Noir (WOPN), an event held at The Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara from March 6-7.

“This is one of the top two Pinot noir events in the country,” said lecturer Adrienne Ferrera. “Being invited is a real triumph.”

Wine & viticulture senior Dylan Pecchenino poured Cal Poly Pinot noir alongside some of the world’s best winemakers.

“Their love for wine and passion for the industry was evident in the way they spoke about their product,” Pecchenino said. “They seemed genuinely excited for us to be entering the industry at such a revolutionary time. Many tasted through their wines with us, describing the techniques used and the background of their wines to broaden our understanding of Pinot noir.”

Cal Poly was the only school represented at the event. “That spoke volumes about our dedication and ‘pull’ in the industry,” Pecchenino said. “And while many people said our wine was fantastic, many more were talking about how impressed they were with the Wine & Viticulture Department.”
TWENTY-TWO STUDENTS traveled with faculty and staff to the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium (UWGS), held Jan. 27-29 in Sacramento. The annual symposium is the largest wine and grape conference in the nation, providing current information on the issues shaping grape growing and winemaking.

“Our students are given access to the latest information that the professionals in the industry come to the symposium for,” said Shohreh Niku, Cal Poly enology lecturer. “Networking with industry representatives, making vital professional connections, and discussing information and ideas goes hand-in-hand with Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing educational philosophy.”

An evening reception, hosted by WVIT at the Vines Café, was well-attended by alumni and industry friends. Architectural renderings were on display to highlight the building campaign for Cal Poly’s new Center for Wine & Viticulture. (See story, page 3.)

The students’ travel costs are funded by a portion of the proceeds from the annual Winemakers’ Dinner & Auction. (See story, pages 14-15.)

“It’s a great off-campus learning experience,” Niku said.
ON JULY 22, 2014, CALIFORNIA GOV. JERRY BROWN signed Assembly Bill 1989, known as the “sip and spit” bill, making it legal for underage students to fully partake in classes where tasting wine is part of their curriculum.

The law doesn’t lower the drinking age, it lowers the tasting age. Students who are at least 18 years old can taste wine and beer if it is in a winemaking or beer-brewing course that is required by their curriculum and they spit out the alcohol after tasting it.

Before this, students between 18 and 20 were excluded from the winemaking and sensory evaluation courses in the curriculum. This held back some students from graduating in four years because they could not take the required courses until they were 21 years old.

Senior wine & viticulture student Shannon Leary testified in front of the Senate committee on behalf of Cal Poly.

Marianne McGarry Wolf, interim department head, said, “We are very pleased the bill passed. It will help our students graduate in a timely manner and be better prepared for the wine industry.”
Supply And Demand

ROBUST INTERNSHIP PROGRAM CAN’T KEEP UP WITH INDUSTRY’S NEEDS

EVEN WITH EACH WINE & VITICULTURE student needing to complete an internship before graduating, the Wine & Viticulture Department (WVIT) has more requests for interns than it can fill. “The demand far outweighs what we can supply,” said Adrienne Ferrara, a lecturer specializing in marketing and sales. “In April we were already getting inquiries daily from industry trying to recruit interns for the fall harvest.”

The calls come from near and far. Last year students filled internships in Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez, Santa Maria, Lodi, Modesto, Napa, Sonoma and Temecula. “Literally, everywhere in California where there is wine produced, there are WVIT interns,” said Ferrara. “We also had students in Oregon, Michigan, Texas and Washington. All 50 states are now producing wine. We can’t begin to fill the need.” And that’s not including the 10 interns who this year went to New Zealand, Australia and Argentina.

“Industry hears about us by word of mouth,” Ferrara said. “They come to Cal Poly because our students are known for being job ready.”

In April, the Wine & Viticulture Department hosted a new networking event: the WVIT Internship Mixer with Industry. The event, co-hosted by Talley Vineyards in Arroyo Grande, is an opportunity for students and industry to connect. “The response was overwhelming, with industry representatives from as far away as Napa and Sonoma attending the evening event,” said Ferrara.

A Barrel of Fun

The graduating class of 2014 gathered with family, friends, faculty and staff to extend their gratitude and celebrate achievements at the 2014 Senior Banquet, held last June at Edna Valley Vineyard. The seniors gave each faculty and staff member a personalized gift of thanks, and the department recognized top academic leaders. Former WVIT cellar master and lecturer Matt Brain (right) accepts a gift from Connor Clark (left) and Jonathan Hoang. | PHOTO BY CARRIE SOUTH
Recognizing Excellence

CONGRATULATIONS TO WVIT’S 2014-15 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

EACH YEAR, SCHOLARSHIPS ESTABLISHED by our generous donors are awarded to talented wine & viticulture students.

Eighteen students were awarded scholarships for the 2014-15 academic year. Congratulations, students, and thank you, donors!

American Vineyard Viticulture Scholarship
Jenna Matthias
Zach Merkel

Arthur E. Norman Scholarship
Shannon Leary

CHS University Scholarship
Cristina Gomez

France Family Agriculture Scholarship
Lisa Abeles

Joe and Florence Silva Memorial Scholarship
Dylan Ellis

John S. Maher Scholarship
Madison White

Knights of the Vine/Steve Pessagno Scholarship
Robert Sanford

Orange County Wine Society Scholarship
Trace Brueske
Joseph Lundeen
Riley Hasche
Hayley McIntyre
Sydney Lara
Natalie Perez and
Emily Lider
Jessie Poletti

Tony and Janet Marino Scholarship
Nicole Berge

Woodward/Graff Wine Foundation Scholarship
Melissa Paris

MEET KEATON BURLINGTON, STUDENT WINE BRAND MANAGER

WINE & VITICULTURE SENIOR Keaton Burlington has stepped into a new role as the first Cal Poly Wines student business manager. The new position was a logical step.

“We have two student winemakers overseeing wine production,” said Adrienne Ferrara, marketing and sales lecturer. “It made sense to have one managing the business and sales aspect of the industry.”

Burlington works up to 25 hours a week. He pours at events, forecasts production growth, and more.

“Staying on top of tasks is huge,” he said. “Failing to complete duties on time could mean losing out on an opportunity for the brand.”

One of his more challenging tasks is projecting case sales over the next few years and translating that into how much fruit will be needed for processing. He generates forecasts by variety and channels of distribution.

Burlington is grateful for the experience. “As an enology student, I wasn’t exposed to many wine business classes,” he said. “This job has taught me more than I could expect from any classes I am required to take.”

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS: WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

WVIT WANTS TO HEAR FROM ALUMNI and friends. Stay connected by “liking” us at facebook.com/CalPolyWineAndViticulture.

To continue getting a free subscription to the Vines to Wines newsletter, please update your contact information by scanning the QR code or visiting wvit.calpoly.edu/pages/sub.
Harvest Notes

THE FACTS • THE FIGURES • THE FUTURE

We caught up with enology lecturer John Crandall recently to ask about the 2014 harvest.

What was the tonnage of the various grapes harvested?
For the Cal Poly wine that is sold in retail outlets and online, all the grapes came from our Cal Poly Trestle Vineyard. We harvested 3 tons of Chardonnay, 6.7 tons of Pinot noir, and 4.6 tons of Syrah. For wine produced in our winemaking class, the grapes are donated from various industry sources. For the 2014 vintage the class used 1 ton each of Chardonnay and Chenin blanc from White Hills Vineyard, 1 ton of Sangiovese from Catfish Vineyard, 1 ton of Cabernet Sauvignon from Sunny Brooks, 1 ton of Grenache from Le Mistral Winery, and 1 ton of Tempranillo from Cal Poly’s Trestle Vineyard. In addition, we had 1.5 tons of Zinfandel from Catfish Vineyard and Tres Ninos Vineyard and half a ton of Syrah from Big Baldy Vineyard.

When did harvest start; how long did it last?
Harvest was about two weeks earlier than usual and was the earliest I’ve seen it on the Central Coast in the 27 harvests I’ve worked here. Harvest dates vary depending on variety, location, degree of ripeness, and the season’s weather pattern. The general timeframe for harvest is mid-August to October. This year I heard of grapes coming in before the end of July. Since our students need to learn about winemaking from harvest to bottling, we were lucky that our grapes ripened late enough for class to start before they needed to be picked.

How does the 2014 fruit compare with prior years?
I think the quality is strong this year. I’m very happy with what I’m tasting — ripe-forward fruit and well-balanced.

What comes after harvest?
In winter we’re mostly doing quality control and making sure the wine maintains its quality by protecting it from oxidation and potential spoilage. We will also start thinking about ways to improve the wine through additions like fining agents (which can remove bitter or astringent tannins) and with blending. In spring we finalize our blends, clean them up with some filtration, and then bottle. The summer involves evaluating the upcoming vintages of grapes and preparing the winery for harvest.

Was there anything unusual or of particular interest about the 2014 harvest?
The 2014 harvest started with a drought, which caused a certain amount of fear among growers and winemakers. Had there been any significant amount of frost in spring, many vineyards would have had to use sprinkler irrigation to protect the vines. Luckily this didn’t happen, and the drought had little immediate effect.

Early bud break and warm weather during ripening led to an early harvest. Many people also had a compressed harvest, which is when the grapes come in quickly over a shorter-than-normal time period. This can cause logistical problems in the winery. With the student/campus winery only doing about 8 tons, this was not a problem for us.

Do you have predictions about the outcome?
As I mentioned earlier, the wines are looking good, but only time will tell how they’ll turn out. I’m excited and look forward to seeing how they grow up.
CAL POLY STUDENTS have a full plate just keeping up with their studies, but the ever-industrious wine & viticulture students also manage to make time to help out at various local wine events. It’s not completely altruistic, though; the students are volunteering at some of the area’s most popular gatherings while also adding value to their education and making important industry contacts.

**GARAGISTE FESTIVAL**

Garagiste Festival Event Director Lisa Dinsmore defines the unusual term: “The word ‘garagiste’ (garage-east) originated in the Bordeaux region of France to denigrate renegade small-lot wine makers — sometimes working in their garage — who refused to follow the ‘rules.’”

Those rule-breakers produce some of the best wine in the world, according to Dinsmore, and the wine festival is designed for them — commercial winemakers who craft fewer than 1,500 cases of wine per vintage. It is the only festival dedicated to under-recognized artisan producers turning out the finest handcrafted small-lot production wines.

Dinsmore sought the help of Cal Poly wine & viticulture students partially “to inspire them in their future endeavors. Many alumni are now pouring their own commercially made wines at our events,” she said.

The students helped set up for the Grand Tasting and seminar panels, worked the silent auction table, and poured wines they...
had made. “They put forth great effort, were energetic, upbeat, and helped the event run smoothly,” Dinsmore said.

Besides offering a stimulating experience to participating students, Garagiste Festival organizers also donate a portion of their event’s proceeds to Cal Poly’s Wine & Viticulture Department. (See article, page 14.)

Shannon Leary, a senior who poured the student-produced wine, enjoyed connecting with “passionate winemakers who are either just getting started or who believe that small-production wines are the best way to make wine. I learned their philosophies and techniques to produce wines at that level,” she said.

CAMBRIA SCARECROW FESTIVAL KICKOFF PARTY
As the title suggests, scarecrows are at the heart of this whimsical festival showcasing the artistic talents — and humor — of community members and businesses during October. While the festival has been running for seven years, the kickoff party was introduced in 2013 to give members of the media a chance to mingle with the artists, according to Taylor Hilden, president of the Scarecrow Festival board of directors.

This year more than 200 tickets were sold for the party at Cambria Pines Nursery. “The nursery provided a beautiful setting, and we displayed more than 30 scarecrows, to the delight of all who attended,” Hilden said.

Cindy Bitto, festival event coordinator, turned to the university for help because, as an alumna (B.S., English, 1987), she knows the energy the students bring. “I knew they would help us rock this event,” she said. And they did. “They greeted guests, handed out wine glasses, and did whatever was needed,” Bitto said, “and they did it with grace and good cheer!”

Third-year viticulture student Madison White had nothing but praise for the event. “It was so well-run, the volunteers ended up chatting with people and doing a little cleanup,” she said.

White especially appreciated being exposed to the event side of the wine industry. “These events give us real-world experience — show us how the industry functions.”

Third-year transfer student Kelsey McClure welcomed the chance to market herself as a potential employee. “I would definitely do it again,” she said. “I got a job offer the next weekend!”

CHARDONNAY SYMPOSIUM
Billed as the biggest gathering of Chardonnay producers in America, the fifth annual Chardonnay Symposium was held at Dolphin Bay Resort in Pismo Beach over three days in February 2014.

Producers and wine enthusiasts from all over the world gathered to taste and learn about this grape varietal and its impact on viticulture, tastemakers and the market. In other words, it’s the perfect event for Cal Poly wine and viticulture students.

Danielle Hollywood (B.S., Wine & Viticulture, 2014) poured wine and enjoyed connecting with alumni at the Grand Tasting event. “It was great; a lot of Cal Poly alumni attended. Everyone wants to come to the Cal Poly booth,” she said.

Now in the Bay Area, Hollywood works for Full Circle Wine Solutions, putting on marketing and educational events. “Those events gave me the opportunity to gain hands-on experience,” she said. “I’m on the planning side of these events now, and I know how to lead them.”

SAN LUIS OBISPO HARVEST FESTIVAL
Heather Muran, executive director of SLO Wine Country, organizes the San Luis Obispo Harvest Festival, which celebrated its 24th year in 2014. The event, intended to raise awareness of the San Luis Obispo coastal wine region, drew 1,200 people to the Avila Bay Resort, where member wineries — including Cal Poly Wines — poured wines, restaurants offered food samples, and live and silent auctions were held.

Fourth-year student Keaton Burlington poured and promoted Cal Poly Wines and was surprised by the number of people unaware that Cal Poly made its own commercial wines.

“I learned how important it is to get out there and represent Cal Poly,” Burlington said. “Getting hands-on experience with the consumer is something you can’t get in the classroom.”
IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE, the Garagiste Festival has exploded since its first event in 2011. “We had 45 wineries and 500 attendees at the first festival,” said Lisa Dinsmore, event director. “In 2014, we had more than 100 wineries from six California regions participate in our three main events. Attendance topped 2,000 people.”

And that’s good news for Cal Poly’s Wine & Viticulture Department, a beneficiary of the Garagiste Festival’s proceeds. Festival organizers recently presented the department a check for $20,000 from its 2014 events to fund the Garagiste Scholarship program and announced that the Cal Poly program will continue to benefit from its 2015 festivals.

Donations from previous festivals have been used to buy spectrophotometers, which help students accurately and routinely measure a variety of wine chemistry components critical to the production of superior wines.

In addition to shining a spotlight on small-lot, innovative artisan winemakers, a large part of the Garagiste mission is to further the education of future winemakers. Many alumni of Cal Poly’s program have gone on to be exceptional winemakers, said festival co-founders Stewart McLennan and Doug Minnick. “We want to help shape the future of the industry, starting with its next generation of winemakers.”

Thank You, Garagiste!

WVIT DEPARTMENT BENEFITS FROM FESTIVAL’S POPULARITY, GENEROSITY

LEARN BY DOING ACTIVITIES

PHOTO BY MELANIE WEBBER | MWEBB COMMUNICATIONS

WVIT lecturer Shohreh Niku (second from left) and Interim Department Head Marianne McGarry Wolf accept a generous donation from Garagiste organizers Stewart McLennan (left) and Doug Minnick.
THE INTERMITTENT RAIN THAT FELL earlier in the day on Feb. 28 did nothing to dampen the spirits of those working and attending the 20th annual Vines to Wines Winemakers’ Dinner & Auction at Greengate Ranch & Vineyard in San Luis Obispo.

Attendees dined on a five-course dinner, bid on silent and live auctions, and listened to inspiring stories from influential women in the wine industry, the theme of this year’s fundraising event.


In addition, two guest winemakers generously donated their companies’ wines to accompany the dinner.

Chelsea Franchi (B.S., Agricultural Business and Wine & Viticulture, 2008), assistant winemaker at Tablas Creek Vineyard in Paso Robles, and UC Davis graduate Jaime “JJ” Dowell, assistant winemaker at Alpha Omega Winery in Napa Valley (owned by Cal Poly alumnus Robin Baggett), spoke briefly about their careers and described the wines that were being poured.

Students in the Cal Poly Vines to Wines Club spent eight months preparing for the dinner and auction, the WVIT program’s largest annual fundraising event. Their efforts were justly rewarded. The evening raised $19,000, with all proceeds supporting Learn by Doing activities for the students in the Wine & Viticulture Department and the club.

“What a fabulous outpouring of industry support for our Wine & Viticulture Department and the new Cal Poly Center for Wine & Viticulture,” said Andrew Thulin, dean of the College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences. “It is so gratifying to see that level of energy and enthusiasm from the people who are committed to making the center a reality.”

Cal Poly Provost Kathleen Enz Finken also attended. “How appropriate it is for Cal Poly to celebrate the wine industry and in particular, women in winemaking,” she said. “We are thrilled with the success of our students and alumni and grateful for the support these wonderful people provide.”
CAL POLY’S 2014 SUMMER INTERNATIONAL WINE INSTITUTE enabled 37 students and faculty from Cal Poly, Australia and Switzerland to experience winemaking at renowned wineries near and far.

The institute kicked off with a week of lectures and tours of the Central Coast AVA (American Viticultural Area). The group then traveled to Ceres, Napa Valley, Sonoma County, southern Oregon, the Willamette Valley, Portland, the Columbia River Gorge, and the Walla Walla region of Washington.

Created and organized by the University of Changins in Switzerland about six years ago, the program has alternated between countries and gives students an understanding of the diversity of the wine industry and an awareness of the various types of jobs it offers.

“In the vineyards, we saw how different vineyard practices are used to grow grapes; at the wineries, we learned about different winemaking practices; and in the tasting room, we learned about and experienced varied marketing strategies,” said Marianne McGarry Wolf, interim head of the Wine & Viticulture Department. “Our majors were exposed to the three integral areas of industry: viticulture, enology and business. The institute gave our students access to some of the most prominent producers in the wine industry.”

The group toured wineries with production levels ranging from 1,000 to millions of cases of wines and learned that every winery has a different way of doing things.

“There’s a great deal of science involved in winemaking,” McGarry Wolf said. “But it also has a lot of art. The mixture of science and art was made clear by visiting numerous wineries in a three-week period and comparing the variety of vineyard and winemaking practices among the experts.”

Domaine Serene in Oregon (top) and Woodward Canyon in Washington state (left) were among the 2014 institute’s stops.

Participants toured Phelps Creek (opposite, left) and Archery Summit (far right), both in Oregon.

PHOTOS BY CARRIE SOUTH
and Dale

THE WINERIES AND VINEYARDS
LISTED IN ORDER OF DATE VISITED)

Halter Ranch Vineyard, Paso Robles, Calif.
Tablas Creek, Paso Robles, Calif.
J. Lohr, Paso Robles, Calif.
Tolosa Winery, San Luis Obispo, Calif.
Talley Vineyards, San Luis Obispo, Calif.
Bronco Winery, Ceres, Calif.
Kunde Family Estate, Sonoma, Calif.
Alpha Omega, Napa, Calif.
Seguin Moreau Cooperage, Napa, Calif.
Opus One, Oakville, Calif.
Paraduxx, Napa, Calif.
Frei Ranch Gallo, Healdsburg, Calif.
Merry Edwards Winery, Sebastopol, Calif.
Van Duzer Vineyards, Dallas, Ore.
SE Wine Collective, Portland, Ore.
Domaine Serene, Dayton, Ore.
Archery Summit, Dayton, Ore.
Trisaetum, Newberg, Ore.
Chehalem, Newberg, Ore.
Phelps Creek Vineyard, Hood River, Ore.
Woodward Canyon, Lowden, Wash.
Pepper Bridge, Walla Walla, Wash.
Chinook Wines, Prosser, Wash.
Where the Wine Grapes Grow

SENIOR PROJECT LOOKS AT WHAT MATTERS TO CONSUMERS, TRADESPEOPLE

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE GRAPES that go into your favorite wine were grown? Do you care?

Faculty member Anna Heacock was asked to find out how much it matters to consumers and to industry insiders.

“Industry wanted to examine the attitudes of consumers and the trade about the importance of the American Viticultural Area (AVA) on wine purchases,” said Marianne McGarry Wolf, interim head of the Wine & Viticulture Department.

Personal interviews were conducted with wine consumers in San Luis Obispo, and emails were sent to trade contacts nationwide. The senior project team found consumers tend to buy wine that is a good value for the money and is made from a varietal they like. Grapes from a respected wine grape-growing region were considered to be only “somewhat desirable.”

Industry members look for a premium-quality product and grapes from a respected wine grape-growing region. However, when asked how important it was that grapes come “from a well-known AVA,” trade members rated it as only “somewhat to very desirable.”

McGarry Wolf said this reveals a lack of knowledge of the meaning of an AVA. “The research shows that the growing region is not an important factor for the typical wine consumer,” she said. “However, those who purchase the wines to sell in shops, restaurants and bars do consider growing regions in their decisions. They are the gate keepers and should be the focus of industry information about growing regions.”

Rootstock Research

STUDY Examines its ABILITY to CONTROL LENGTH of the growing season

JEAN DODSON PETERSON, assistant professor of viticulture at Cal Poly, has been conducting research into understanding how grapevine rootstocks affect the length of growing seasons.

Her work, “Grapevine Rootstock-Scion Interactions and Influence on Ripening Periods and the Initiation of Senescence,” deals with the role grapevine rootstock parentage has on extending or shortening ripening periods.

In a poster presentation at last year’s national conference of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture in Austin, Texas, Dodson Peterson spoke about why this research deserves further examination.

“Rootstock decisions are primarily based on their resistance to pest and disease and abiotic stresses such as drought,” Dodson Peterson said. “If we can establish a better understanding of how specific rootstocks impact the length of the growing season, growers could potentially conserve water by selecting a rootstock that induces a shortened growing season, resulting in earlier dormancy.”

With California entering its fourth year of drought, conserving water is a top priority for vineyard owners throughout the state.

“Conversely, a rootstock that extends the growing season in wine grape regions could increase the time available to accumulate phenolics in berries and positively impact sensory characteristics,” Dodson Peterson said. “There is still a great deal of work to be done in this area. Additional rootstock field trials are a valuable means of continuing to classify commercial rootstocks and help in the screening of new germplasm and rootstock selections.”
WHILE RESEARCHING HER SENIOR PROJECT, “Click, Ship, Sip: Who is the Online Wine Buyer,” Rachel Bitter (B.S., Wine & Viticulture, 2012) made a surprising discovery: Millennials — those individuals born between 1982 and 2004 — are not likely to purchase wine online. The group that grew up in the electronics-filled, high-tech world of online fervor prefers to buy wine at wineries, grocery stores and specialty shops.

So who is buying wine online?

Bitter and fellow researchers Lindsey Higgins, a Cal Poly agribusiness professor; Marianne McGarry Wolf, interim head of the Wine & Viticulture Department; and William Amspacher, wine & viticulture professor, found that the typical U.S. online wine buyer is an older, married man with an income higher than other wine consumers. Online buyers are also more likely to be wine connoisseurs, and they enjoy talking about wine.

Despite convenience and technology know-how, Millennials, the researchers found, prefer to buy wine they have an experiential connection with. Millennials also cite shipping time and costs as deterrents to online buying.

Bitter’s research shines a light on the typical U.S. wine buyer. “As a result of this research, online retailers and wineries have a better understanding of how to position themselves to appeal to the individuals who are purchasing wine online,” Bitter said. “This research identifies many opportunities to expand online wine sales through untapped consumer markets.”

Bitter presented her findings at the Eighth International Conference of the Academy of Wine Business Research held in June 2014 in Geisenheim, Germany.
Cal Poly's Wine & Viticulture Department (WVIT) commemorated its first graduating class in June 2014, handing out 56 diplomas. Although the program’s roots date back to 1999, WVIT’s departmental status became official in July 2013. PHOTO BY OBSESSION PHOTOGRAPHY