HOPPIN' AT HARVEST

Vines Wines
CAL POLY WINE & VITICULTURE DEPARTMENT | COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES | WINTER 2014
Reflecting on 2013

WVIT CELEBRATES DEPARTMENTAL STATUS, A PROFESSOR’S LIFE, AND MORE GOOD WINE

2013 was a significant year in many ways for wine and viticulture at Cal Poly. In July, we officially became the Wine & Viticulture Department (WVIT), Cal Poly’s newest academic department, and now sit at the table with nine other departments in the College of Agricultural, Food & Environmental Sciences (CAFES).

Also in July, Dean David Wehner was promoted to vice president for strategic initiatives, and Andy Thulin, wine lover and long-time chair of the Animal Sciences Department, became the interim dean of CAFES.

We launched the schematic design process for the new Wine & Viticulture Innovation Center in spring 2013, working with architecture alumnus Doug Thornley of Gould Evans. To date, we’ve raised nearly $4 million toward our goal, thanks in part to a recent $1 million gift from Mike Leprino and a gift from the parents of a current student that will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to $100,000 in other donations for the campus winery project.

Production of Cal Poly Wines resumed with the 2012 vintage, and the quality of Cal Poly wines – chardonnay, pinot noir and a new Rhone blend – is outstanding. Fruit from the 2013 harvest was superb, and the 2013 barrel samples are impressive.

The wine & viticulture faculty will be expanding as we search for a tenure-track professor of viticulture, two tenure-track professors of enology, and together with the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department, two tenure-track wine chemists who will teach courses for both departments.

As many of you have heard, Professor Keith Patterson lost his battle with cancer and passed away in March. The memorial celebration of Keith’s life attracted hundreds of his friends and family at Rancho Santa Margarita for reminiscing and tears.

The high demand for Cal Poly students for jobs in the wine industry continues, and industry requests for student interns now outstrip the number of available students by about three to one. More of our students are leaving the state and country to complete their internships, and Cal Poly sent students and recent grads for harvest positions in Argentina, Australia, France, Italy, New Zealand and Spain.

We all look forward to another great year with great students, and thank you all for your continued support.

Cheers,

WVIT Department Head Jim Cooper (center) and students (from left) Rachel Goffinet, Katey Larwood and Victor Guerrero welcome CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White to Trestle Vineyard. (See article, page 5.)

PHOTO BY BRITTANY APP
Perfect Pairings

STUDENTS FIND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS WITH WINES, CHEESES & CHOCOLATES

THE WINE & VITICULTURE DEPARTMENT (WVIT) continues to manage production of the Cal Poly commercial wines in partnership with Orcutt Road Cellars.

Student winemakers Clayton Boydston and Jordan Crabtree, working with winemaking mentor Christian Roguenant, produced three outstanding wines from the 2012 harvest using fruit from the student-maintained Trestle Vineyard on the Cal Poly campus as well as donated grapes from several local vineyards.

For the first time in many years, previous vintages of Cal Poly wines sold out before the new release, with the exception of the 2008 Poly Royal Red Dessert Wine that earned a gold medal in the 2010 Orange County Fair Wine Competition.

Current releases include the 2012 pinot noir, chardonnay and the department’s first-ever Rhone blend (60 percent syrah and 40 percent grenache).

Cal Poly utilizes three methods of distribution, said Adrienne Ferrara, wine business lecturer and CP wines brand manager: direct sales to Cal Poly departments, staff and faculty, who often pour CP wines for special events; retail sales at several San Luis Obispo markets; and online sales at calpolywine.com, especially for gift baskets designed for the holidays.

Two popular holiday gift packs sold in 2013 were the “Classic Wine & Cheese”: a bottle each of the 2012 chardonnay and 2012 Rhone blend, paired with three cheeses (Mustang Cheddar, Gouda or Monterey Jack); and the “Wine & Chocolate Lovers”: a bottle each of the 2012 Rhone blend and 2008 Poly Royal Red Dessert Wine, with a choice of a bittersweet chocolate bar or milk chocolate bar.

The cheeses and chocolates are student-made, and the chocolates are produced by the only university-based Fair Trade-certified chocolate business in the United States.

For a list of the San Luis Obispo County retail outlets that carry Cal Poly Wines, visit calpolywine.com/taste/.

Inside

3 Newsworthy Notes 14 Alumni Spotlight
8 Industry Awards 16 Field Studies
9 Industry Partnerships 18 Faculty Research
10 Looking Back: WVIT’S Roots 18 WVIT Advisory Council
13 Courses: Laying the Groundwork 20 Student Research Project

On the Cover

WVIT student Samantha Baronessa accrues practical skills in the campus winery during harvest. Read about the students’ winemaking and viticulture experiences throughout this issue of Vines to Wines.

PHOTO BY CHRIS LESCHINSKY
Educational Fun

DEPARTMENT PLANS BOOTH, RECEPTION FOR STUDENTS AND ALUMS AT 2014 UWGS

THE 2014 UNIFIED WINE & GRAPE SYMPOSIUM (UWGS), set for Jan. 28-30, 2014, in the Sacramento Convention Center, will showcase new developments in viticulture and enology and more than 650 suppliers to the wine and grape industry. The 2014 trade show set for Jan. 30-31, is one of the largest industry trade shows in North America. The 2013 event drew more than 12,000 participants.

The Wine & Viticulture Department (WVIT) will have an academic booth at the trade show and will host a reception for alumni, friends and students on Jan. 29. The Vines to Wines Club, which sponsored 35 student attendees at the 2013 symposium, encourages students to attend in 2014 by joining the American Society for Enology and Viticulture (asev.org).

Industry update seminars present the newest developments in enology, viticulture and the wine business. The displays of new winemaking and viticulture equipment in the trade show is always a big attraction for attendees, who get to meet suppliers of barrels, bottles, corks, chemicals, grapevines, software, irrigation systems, vineyard tractors and implements, and tasting room supplies.

For more seminar information, visit unifiedsymposium.org.

Students and a faculty member at UWGS 2013 were (above, from left) Devon King, Veronica Blanco, Lindsi Loflin, Maria Sotelo, Jacqueline Jones, Heradio Rios, lecturer Shohreh Niku and Rachel Bitter.

PHOTO BY CARRIE SOUTH

WVIT STUDENTS, FACULTY PRESENT POSTERS AT ASEV CONFERENCE

WVIT STUDENTS AND FACULTY presented three posters at the 2013 American Society For Enology and Viticulture (ASEV) National Conference, held June 24-28 in Monterey.

Poster topics were: “Genetics of Plant Defense Responses to Pesticides on Grapes,” presented by Michael J. Costello, Jeffrey C. Wong and M. Andrew Walker; “Comparison of Freeze-Thaw and Cold-Soak Pre-Fermentation Treatments on Phenolic Extraction in Syrah Wine Production,” presented by Ryan Pace, Katey Larwood, Peggy Rice and Jim Cooper; and “Development of a Micro-Vinification Procedure to Predict Problematic Malolactic Fermentation of Cool-Climate Chardonnay,” presented by Michael L. Swadener, Gerry S.P. Ritchie, Matt Brain and Josh Baker.

The 2014 national conference is scheduled June 23-27 at the Hyatt Regency in Austin, Texas. Visit asev.org for details.
Visitor from the Top

SPRING BRINGS CHANCELLOR TO CAMPUS

TIMOTHY P. WHITE, chancellor of the 23-campus California State University system, visited Cal Poly on May 1 and 2, 2013.

Led by Dave Wehner, former dean of the College of Agricultural, Food & Environmental Sciences (CAFES), and Wine & Viticulture Department Head Jim Cooper, White visited with students, faculty and staff at the Trestle Vineyard.

White regularly tours the campuses he supervises and has appeared on the television program “Undercover Boss.”

White attended Diablo Valley Community College in Pleasant Hill and transferred to Fresno State, where he completed his bachelor’s degree. He earned his master’s degree at California State University, East Bay, and his doctorate at UC Berkeley.

He spent much of his academic career at UC Riverside, where his research and teaching focused on physiology, kinesiology and human biodynamics, with an emphasis on muscles, injury and aging.

The CSU’s seventh chancellor, White took office in December 2012. He is a native of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Go to president.calpoly.edu/chancellor/ to read more about Chancellor White’s visit.

A Veritable Feast

VINES TO WINES CLUB KICKS OFF NEW YEAR OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND FUN

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF VIN transparent text

The club, which was started nearly 20 years ago, continues to offer important networking opportunities for Cal Poly students interested in the wine industry, and it provides student volunteers for many local wine industry events. This year, Vines to Wines is planning a number of field trips to explore varied aspects of careers in the wine industry.

The officers for the current academic year include President Jacqueline Jones; Vice President Connor Clarke; Secretary Kelly Allyn; Treasurer Hannah Maxon; Volunteer Coordinator Gianno Gallo; Activity Coordinator Emillie McKinney; Historian Madeline Woodward; Winemakers’ Dinner chairwomen Ally Peed and Anna Blair; barbecue team Mel Carter, Cory Auric and Joey Large; and Ag Council representatives Meredith Hansbury and Marissa Carlisle. For more information, email cpvinstowines@gmail.com.

Allie Ruettgers (left) and Michelle Valovcin joined other Vines to Wines members at the fall meeting for dinner and a speaker’s presentation.

PHOTO BY MADELINE WOODWARD
A Season of Celebration

SENIORS PACK SPRINGTIME SCHEDULE WITH FUN FESTIVITIES

SPRING WAS A BUSY TIME for wine & viticulture students, as they attended the Winemakers’ Dinner, the first-ever Senior Banquet, and formal graduation ceremonies.

The 18th annual Winemakers’ Dinner and Auction took place Saturday, April 27, at the Monday Club in San Luis Obispo. The dinner honored Professor William Amspacher and featured a tribute in memory of Professor Keith Patterson, who lost his battle with cancer in March. Alumni and assistant winemakers Michael Bruzus of Chamisal Vineyards and Samantha Taylor of Hope Family Wines paired hand-selected wines with a five-course meal prepared by another alum, Ian McPhee.

The first-ever Senior Banquet was held on June 15 at Edna Valley Vineyard. Friends and family of 47 seniors, along with faculty and staff, gathered to celebrate the graduating class. The banquet, hoped to become an annual tradition, is a final opportunity for students to gather and celebrate their hard work and the friendships they have created during their years at Cal Poly. The group of seniors, who organized the event, announced each graduating student present and gave them a commemorative “Senior” shirt. On behalf of the class, each faculty and staff member was given a personalized gift celebrating their unique relationship with the seniors. The department recognized the top academic leaders from each concentration, and awards were presented to the winners of the student winemaking competition (see article on page 7).

WVIT had 47 graduates who participated in commencement ceremonies on June 16 in Spanos Stadium. A reception followed in the Bonderson Building’s plaza. Department Head Jim Cooper and Professor Marianne McGarry Wolf announced names and presented certificates of participation to each graduate.

Recognizing Excellence

CONGRATULATIONS TO WVIT’S 2013-14 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

EACH YEAR, SCHOLARSHIPS ESTABLISHED by our generous donors are awarded to talented WVIT students. Seventeen students were awarded scholarships for the 2013-14 academic year. Congratulations, students, and thank you, donors!

American Vineyard Viticulture Scholarship
Katherine Favor and Victor Guerrero
Arthur E. Nora Scholarship
Shannon Leary
Joe and Florence Silva Memorial Scholarship
Nathan Haydon and Madison White

Orange County Wine Society Scholarship
Nicole Berge, Morgan Brett, Trace Brueske, Marissa Carlisle, Christine Gomez, Ella Johnson, Emily Lider, Zachary Merkel, Jessie Poletti and Qing Zhou
Tony and Janet Moreno
Alexandria Olmstead
Woodward/Graff Wine Foundation Scholarship
Nicole Mares
Tasteful Projects

STUDENTS POUR CLASS-MADE WINES AT INAUGURAL COMPETITION

AS GRADUATION APPROACHED LAST SPRING, Drew Nenow (WVIT ’13) initiated a new Student Winemaker Competition for wines produced by the Winemaking I, II and III classes as well as wine produced as senior projects. The idea for such a tasting came to him during his junior winemaking class, Nenow said.

“We threw it together really quickly,” he said, but nearly 140 students, parents, faculty and staff attended on June 14. Nenow hopes the competition continues as an annual event.

Guests tasted one-ounce pours of the white, rosé and red wines and ranked the efforts by each class and project. A 2012 chenin blanc, produced by the senior winemaking series class, won Best White/Rosé honors. A 2011 syrah from Trestle Vineyard, produced by student winemakers led by Nenow, also in a senior winemaking series class, won both Best Red and Best of Show. The awards were presented at the Senior Banquet.

Nenow worked the 2013 harvest at Villa San Juliette in Paso Robles, Calif., with winemaker Matt Ortman, Cal Poly alumnus and WVIT Advisory Council member. Nenow said he is looking forward to helping with the 2014 Student Winemaker Competition. Interested students can contact the WVIT Department office at 805-756-7308 for more information.

Partnering with the Pros

WVIT URGES WINE INDUSTRY FRIENDS TO RECRUIT NOW FOR 2014 INTERNSHIPS

OF THE NEARLY 300 WVIT students enrolled in the 2013 fall quarter, 72 were interning at wineries in the U.S. in California, Oregon and Washington and in France, Germany and Spain.

Companies sponsoring WVIT interns are encouraged to offer students at least 200 hours of work, although full-time harvest internships typically involve more than 400 hours, said Adrienne Ferrara, lecturer, internship coordinator, and Cal Poly wines brand manager. “We encourage students to take the entire fall quarter off to devote to a harvest.”

Ferrara urges members of the wine industry to contact her with available jobs but cautions the competition for interns is intense, with two to three opportunities for every available student. “Being proactive will garner a better fit,” she said.

The department also encourages students to scout internships beginning in April. “We hope the industry will reach out to us sooner rather than later because we have a list of students looking,” Ferrara said. Most students have secured their fall harvest internships before the end of spring quarter, she noted.

Interning abroad appeals to some WVIT students, but many are eager to work with area industry professionals. Internships focusing on the wine business are among the new opportunities offered to students, Ferrara said.

For more information, contact Ferrara at 805-756-6781, 805-286-5073 or alferrar@calpoly.edu.
SLO COUNTY WINE INDUSTRY HONORS GEORGE DONATI AND KEITH PATTERSON

The late Cal Poly Viticulture Professor Keith Patterson and viticulturist George Donati of Pacific Vineyard Company, a longtime member of the Wine & Viticulture Advisory Council, were honored by colleagues in the Central Coast wine industry July 20 at the Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles, Calif. The 2013 San Luis Obispo County Wine Industry Awards recognized Donati as the Wine Grape Grower of the Year and Patterson, posthumously, as its Wine Industry Person of the Year.

Patterson, featured in our winter 2013 newsletter, had an enormous impact on all who knew him. He passed away on March 21, 2013. A memorial celebration of his life was held at the Santa Margarita Ranch on May 11, when hundreds of friends and colleagues from around the country gathered to reminisce, commemorate his life and contributions, and pass Patterson’s famous mint bucket in celebration. Patterson’s daughters, Rachel and Victoria, accepted the industry award in his honor.

Donati is the fourth generation of his family to work in Central Coast agriculture. He is the general manager of Pacific Vineyard Company, which farms 80 percent of the vineyards located in the Edna Valley. Donati graduated from Cal Poly in 1974 with a degree in agriculture business management and a minor in crop science.

“I was surprised and honored to be not only voted on, but recognized by my peers, Donati said. He credits the company’s vineyard manager, Scott Williams, and viticulturist, Erin Amaral, for the accolade.

Members of the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, the San Luis Obispo Vintners and Growers Association, the Independent Grape Growers Association, and the Central Coast Vineyard Team vote for the recipients of the annual awards.
A TRIO OF WINE & VITICULTURE (WVIT) SENIORS, Kelly Allyn, Erik Knapp and Ella Johnson, were selected as the Cal Poly student winemakers for the 2013 vintage. All three are working under the mentorship of Christian Roguenant of Niven Family Wine Estates and Orcutt Road Cellars in Edna Valley, Calif.

Roguenant, a native of Burgundy, France, praises San Luis Obispo County, and Edna Valley in particular, for its terroir and grape varietal diversity. The student interns work with Roguenant to produce Cal Poly wines, as well as the six wine projects he oversees for Niven Family Wine Estates: Baileyana, Trenza, Cadre, Zocker and True Myth.

In addition to their work with Roguenant, the three continue the Learn by Doing method in the campus's pilot winery, taking notes in their final year of the winemaking class series with Matt Brain, cellar master and lecturer.

During the third lecture of the quarter, Brain called for volunteers to test for volatile acidity and secondary, or malolactic “ML” fermentation, as some of the current vintage of chardonnay would need “barreling down” in a few days.

“Remember to check for head space in the barrels,” he told his class. “Air plus ML equals danger for the wine.”

Because it’s difficult to predict when a particular wine might finish, Brain also reminded the students to be patient and monitor both tanks and barrels. “Getting to the end of ML is this quarter’s goal,” he said.

The three young winemakers gathered after class and arranged to carpool to the campus winery. Each voiced enthusiasm for the classes, the faculty and lecturers, and the hands-on learning for which Cal Poly is famous.

Allyn, 21, and a native of Salinas “with no agriculture background but parents who are wine aficionados,” said she “fell right into place” in WVIT and plans to minor in ag business. “I get to see all aspects of the vineyard and the wine side, from pruning to inoculations, and I love the science and the art of winemaking.” She interned at E & J Gallo during the 2012 harvest.

Knapp, 21, who came to California from Kutztown, Penn., said he chose Cal Poly for its San Luis Obispo location and the faculty and staff. “It’s unique here, and this is one of the most progressive wine and viticulture departments in the United States,” he said, praising the “new technologies, practical tools, and the chance to get your hands dirty.”

Knapp completed an internship at Pinnacle Ridge Winery, established in 1993 by his father, Bradley Knapp, in Kutztown.

Johnson, also 21, is a native of San Francisco. She’s a fan of the small classes and likes the enthusiasm that Brain, himself a winemaker, brings to the table. “The whole (department), and Dr. (Jim) Cooper, are great,” she said.

Johnson has completed four internships: at Domaine Boudeau in Rivesaltes, France; Constellation Brands in Templeton, Calif., where she was a vineyard tech; Phelps Creek Vineyards in Hood River, Ore., where she worked as a lab tech and in hospitality; and at Orcutt Road Cellars, again as a lab tech and as a Cal Poly winemaker.

Students make the Cal Poly wines with student-grown chardonnay, syrah and pinot noir from the campus’s 12.5-acre Trestle Vineyard, as well as commercially grown grapes. The wines are produced and sold under Orcutt Road Cellars’ bond.

In the winemaking class, grape donations for the 2013 vintage include grenache donated from J. Lohr Vineyards & Winery; nebbiolo from Pomar Junction Vineyard & Winery; and malbec from Steve McIntyre’s Mission Vineyard Ranch, part of Monterey Pacific Vineyards, Brain said.

Several area vineyards that have donated for many years will do so again this year: Riverbench Vineyard & Winery, Presqu’Ile Wines, Hampton Family Vineyards, Sculpterra and Gallo Vineyards.
FROM ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS as a wine business certificate program, Cal Poly’s Wine & Viticulture Program has grown up and become the newest academic department in the College of Food, Agriculture & Environmental Sciences (CAFES).

Integration of viticulture, enology and wine business into a comprehensive major makes Cal Poly’s program unique, and the program has quickly become one of the nation’s largest, enrolling as many undergraduate students as the UC Davis and Fresno State programs combined. Student demand for the major continues to grow, with 2013’s incoming class the largest ever, with more than 90 new students.

Started as an academic minor in 1999 by faculty from the departments of Agribusiness, Food Science & Nutrition, and Horticulture & Crop Science, the Wine & Viticulture Program enjoyed immediate popularity. The Learn by Doing curriculum attracted so much recognition that, with the endorsement of faculty and staff, it became an official major in 2004.

In the mid-1980s, however, before the degrees existed, how did students interested in viticulture and winemaking pinpoint classes to satisfy their curiosity?

Through Extended Education, which offered weekend-long classes via Cal Poly’s Agribusiness Program, recalled Professor William “Bill” Amspacher, who has been a Cal Poly faculty member since 1985.

“Those classes were two units each, and attracted both students and people working in the local wine industry,” he said, noting the WVIT minor has since been phased out because resources ran dry. “It became a victim of its own success.”

Amspacher, a quantitative economics analyst, focuses his

Cal Poly’s Trestle Vineyard, first planted in 2002, was expanded by WVIT students and faculty in 2009. FILE PHOTO
teaching efforts on forecasting and analyzing historical wine industry trends and figures. “I try to find out where the future is going, based on the past. I’m the numbers person – although not to the extent of an accountant,” he said. And, he emphasized: “I am not a marketer – not like Phil Doub.”

Doub, a professor of agribusiness, retired from the program in 2009 after 24 years of contributions to “California agribusiness and to the wine industry in particular,” according to an article in the winter 2009-10 edition of The Cluster, the program’s previous newsletter.

In the years before WVIT’s major curriculum was in place, Doub, Amspacher and the late Professor Keith Patterson encouraged students to explore all facets of viticulture and winemaking. The Vines to Wines Club was founded, and together with the faculty members, students worked their way into San Luis Obispo County’s booming wine industry.

As connections between the program and the local community were solidified, more and more students interned in Cal Poly’s “backyard” as well as overseas, and winemakers up and down the Central Coast began to pay attention.

The program grew each year, and from its “piecemeal” beginnings, Amspacher recalled, morphed into one that now attracts students from across the nation.

During his career, Doub garnered many teaching awards, including the Cal Poly Distinguished Teacher Award in 2000-01. Students nominate instructors for that honor, said Amspacher, who noted the standards are very high. “We wouldn’t have the Wine & Viticulture Program without Phil,” he said.

Along with Patterson, Doub had a knack for motivating WVIT students, Amspacher recalled. “Students loved Keith and Phil; they just gravitated toward them.”

Another supporter of the program in its earlier days was Oliver Robert “Bob” Noyes, a professor in Food Science from 1974-2001. He passed away in 2009.

The WVIT’s faculty’s enthusiasm and dedication was, no doubt, bolstered by the support of alumni and industry friends, whose generous monetary and in-kind donations strengthened the program every new year.

“The Wine & Viticulture Department would not be possible without the continuing support of our friends,” said Department Head Jim Cooper.

Instrumental in the development of Cal Poly’s WVIT Program were (from left) professors Bob Noyes, Keith Patterson and Phil Doub.

WVIT DepartMent Thrives, Thanks to Industry Friends’ Generous Support

MEMBERS OF THE WINE & VITICULTURE faculty reiterate their indebtedness for donations of grapes, winery equipment and supplies, for these gifts have helped the program evolve into one of the nation’s largest and most respected. Most of the equipment in the pilot winery was gifted, said Professor Gerry Ritchie, adding, “We really want to emphasize how supportive the local wine industry has been.”

In a word, the support of Niven Family Wine Estates and Orcutt Road Cellars is “huge,” said Professor William Amspacher. Led by Jack Niven, the family planted vineyards in the Edna Valley in 1973 and were pioneers of the Edna Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA) designation in 1982. Amspacher also praised Ken Volk (Kenneth Volk Vineyards) and Jerry Lohr (J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines) for their direct financial support and offering internships to the students.

WVIT also thanks World Cooperage, Tonnellerie Leroi, and D&S Barrels for barrel donations; Riverbench Vineyard, Presqu’ile Vineyard, White Hills Vineyard, Marins Vineyard, Pomar Junction, Cass, Sunnybrook Vineyard and J. Lohr for fruit; Gusmer Enterprises, Inc. and Laffort for fermentation supplies; Halter Ranch, Edna Valley Vineyard, and Baker and Brain for bottles; G3 Enterprises for bottles and corks; Edna Valley Vineyard and E & J Gallo Winery for supplying the Senior Banquet venue; and Winemaker’s Dinner auction item donors and attendees, whose support benefits the Vines to Wines Club.
“Every quarter for two years, I wrote a new course,” she recalled.

Today, the pilot winery is staffed by a cellar master and the students in the winemaking series of three classes that lead students from fall through spring quarter, harvest to bottle.

“The winemaking series has evolved every year, and the classes all link together. We put into practice all that the students have learned,” Ritchie said.

When the winemaking series started anew in September 2013, Ritchie was not at the helm. “This is my first year not teaching it,” she noted. Lecturer and Cellar Master Matt Brain has taken the reins, and Ritchie will retire in December.

Ritchie met Brain when she took students to Edna Valley Vineyard, where he was assistant winemaker at the time. “We talked about involving a winery in the program, and he offered to help,” she said. “Having members of the Central Coast wine industry associated with WVIT helps solidify the program.”

The program’s reputation as one of the nation’s most progressive comes from having students “in touch with wineries for collaboration in winemaking and having people from the outside help amend our classes and keep our technologies cutting edge,” Ritchie said.

When asked to share teaching’s rewards, Ritchie described how students gain self-assurance as they learn.

“Seeing the change in their knowledge and confidence … when they first come into the winery and are told to return every item back to its place, they struggle. But soon, they learn everything and move with a purpose.”

Ritchie earned a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in soil science from the University of Reading in Berkshire, U.K., and a doctorate in soil chemistry from the University of Western Australia. For 16 years, she taught soil chemistry at the University of Western Australia before “changing over to enology.” At the University of Adelaide in southern Australia, Ritchie earned a graduate diploma in enology.

An offer to intern for the Roederer Champagne House brought Ritchie to the Anderson Valley in Northern California. “I came for harvest, and I stayed,” she said.

Looking ahead to her departure, Ritchie isn’t calling it retirement, per se, but “the next phase of my life. I won’t be bored,” she said.

Professor Gerry Ritchie
PHOTO BY CARRIE SOUTH

Background: Since the program’s early days, the nearby Chorro Creek Vineyard has also served as a training ground for students.
PHOTO BY CHRIS LESCHINSKY
WE CAUGHT UP WITH JAMES ONTIVEROS on Sept. 18 at his family’s Rancho Ontiveros Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. He first planted this site in 1997 while still a student. Vines in the eight-acre site are sparse, with minimal canopies and don’t appear to be 16 years old. But Ontiveros couldn’t be happier with the grapes they yield: small, tight clusters that are turned into the richly flavored pinot noir for the award-winning Native 9.

“From day one, I wanted small vines. For six or seven years, I’ve farmed organically, using only green waste and grape pumice for compost. And I water very sparingly.”

Ontiveros graduated in 1999 with dual bachelor’s degrees in crop science and fruit science. He worked for Gallo of Sonoma as southern Sonoma manager of operations in the Russian River and Sonoma Coast appellations before moving back to Santa Barbara County. In 2001, he started as director of sales and marketing for Bien Nacido, Solomon Hills and French Camp vineyards, as well as Central Coast Wine Services in Santa Maria and Paso Robles, a position he filled until 2012.

In addition to his winemaking endeavors, Ontiveros now is owner, with Cal Poly alumnus Matt Turrentine, of Grapevine Capital Partners, which manages vineyard and agricultural properties in Paso Robles and Santa Barbara County.

Of the WVIT Department, Ontiveros said: “I think it’s great to see its evolution from humble beginnings to being a heavy hitter in the industry. And it’s great to see the new team moving it so far forward.”

The friendship and eventual partnership between Ontiveros and Paul Wilkins started with a small group of friends who were members of Vines to Wines, the community service club advised by the late Professor Keith Patterson.

Wilkins started at Cal Poly in the College of Architecture & Environmental Design, but after two quarters, he realized
he could not compete, and he fell back on what he knew: agriculture. "Over time I fell in love with viticulture and my time at Cal Poly," he said.

After internships with Pacific Vineyard Company and Edna Valley Vineyard, Wilkins secured a third, working with John Alban of Alban Vineyards in Arroyo Grande. After his 1998 graduation with a bachelor's degree in fruit science paired with a concentration in viticulture, he landed a full-time harvest job there in the fall.

During his years at Alban, he worked his way up to assistant before leaving to become a consulting winemaker for others, including Augie Hug of Hug Cellars.

Since 2004, Wilkins has partnered with Ontiveros as winemaker for Native 9 and since 2005, for their shared label, Alta Maria Wines. He produces Rhone wines under his Autonom Wines label. All three wines are available at the Alta Maria tasting room in Los Olivos.

Chrissy Wittmann, general manager and director of winemaking at Wild Horse Winery & Vineyards in Templeton, earned her master’s degree in agriculture in 2004 while working full time at Courtside Cellars as lab manager and production winemaker. Todd Ricard, assistant winemaker at Wild Horse, is also a graduate of the WVIT program.

Wittmann had previously graduated from Cal Poly with a bachelor’s degree in ecology and systematic biology. At the time that she completed her second degree, the Wine & Viticulture Program was still in its infancy, but the instructors, including professors Keith Patterson and Joe Montecalvo, helped “shape the knowledge I needed, almost like an independent-study program,” she recalled.

Armed with her new degree, Wittmann became assistant winemaker at Scheid Vineyards, where she worked for about six years before moving to Wild Horse in 2007. Hired as assistant winemaker, she was promoted one year later to her current position, in which she oversees winemaking for the large facility that was founded and subsequently sold by fellow Cal Poly graduate and Central Coast wine industry veteran Kenneth Volk.
IN THE TRESTLE VINEYARD on the western edge of campus, students in the Wine & Viticulture Department learn and practice every aspect of viticulture, from planting to pruning to harvesting.

Year-round vineyard maintenance is the responsibility of the student Vineyard Team under the leadership of Corey Auric and under the supervision of new lecturer Craig Macmillan. (Mike Walsh continues lecturing and mentoring viticulture students, but passed the vineyard manager torch to Macmillan in 2013).

For the 2013-14 academic year, the Vineyard Team includes Auric, Margarito Lua, Caylin Crivello, Victor Guerrero, Trace Brueske and Victoria Patterson. All but Crivello are seniors. They team with Macmillan to lead the rest of the students in the daily tasks and observation the site demands of its caretakers.

Guerrero, a resident of Orcutt, Calif., transferred in fall 2012 to Cal Poly from Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria. At Hancock he studied viticulture under Michael Walsh, now a WVIT lecturer and former vineyard manager.

At age 28, Guerrero is not a traditional student; he spent five years in the U.S. Army in Fort Bragg, N.C., as an infantryman in the 82nd Airborne Division and is attending Cal Poly on the GI Bill of Rights.

Guerrero will graduate in 2014 with a minor in plant protection sciences and already is focusing on his pest control adviser (PCA) exams. He has set his sights on a job with Central Coast Vineyard Care Associates, where he hopes to work with legendary viticulturist Jeff Newton and his partners.

As do many of his fellow students, Guerrero especially values the department’s Learn by Doing mantra and the knowledge shared by instructors with diverse backgrounds.

“Hands-on learning is the best,” he said. “We learn from various managers and learn a bit from every person.”

One of those people is Macmillan, who brings his students nearly 22 years of vineyard consulting experience.

He earned a master’s in agriculture at Cal Poly in 2005 and a doctorate in sociology at Washington State University in 2011. But before earning his degrees, “I made wine and grew grapes,” Macmillan said.

In 2002, the Trestle Vineyard was planted with just under three acres each of chardonnay and syrah and slightly more than six acres of four clones of pinot noir. In 2009, just under an acre of tempranillo was added.
The department’s goal for its own site is the same today as it was then: “To pick the highest quality wine grapes possible,” Macmillan said.

The current growth year has been “tricky” because grapes ripened early. “Unlike in more typical years,” Macmillan said, “there hasn’t been a long hang-time window where grapes can take their time to reach maturation.” This year, higher-than-average summer temperatures drove an early harvest, and several grape varieties ripened within days of one another. Sugar levels were stable, but most grapes still needed more flavor.

“We’ve utilized frequent and small doses of irrigation so that leaves stay on the vines as long as possible,” he explained. “Otherwise, vines believe ‘we’re done,’ and begin to shut down for the season.”

On Sept. 18, before any grapes had been picked, Macmillan estimated the yield for 2013 would be “up by a third to a half” over the tonnage harvested in 2012. “It’s been a kind year weather-wise, with a mild winter and minimal rain, followed by a warm summer. Most importantly, we’re going to have a very high-quality harvest this year,” he said.
professor marianne mcgarry wolf continues her wine business research, focusing on consumer buying trends, gender-based purchases, and U.S. wine drinkers’ attitudes toward global wines – most recently, wine produced in South Africa.

McGarry Wolf and her collaborators, Professor Mitch Wolf and Assistant Professor Lindsey Higgins, presented three papers at the seventh annual meeting of the American Association of Wine Economists in June in Stellenbosch, South Africa: “Examining the Purchase Interest for a new South African Wine in the United States”; “Purchasing Wine in the Information Age: The Role of Quick Response (QR) Codes”; and “When Choosing a Wine Label, Women are from Hollywood and Men are from Boston.”

Cal Poly agribusiness and management graduate Wil Dasovich (2013) contributed to the third paper. Their research found that female wine buyers opt for bottles with labels that are more ornate, creative, colorful and eye-catching. Men, however, gravitated toward those that were more plain and simple. See more details at wine-economics.org/2013-stellenbosch/.

Another recent paper authored by McGarry Wolf explored how social media can be used to benefit the wine industry in academic settings.

McGarry Wolf joined Cal Poly’s Agribusiness Department in 1994 and teaches wine marketing research and strategy, and branded wine marketing courses. She has studied food and wine consumers in Australia, Colombia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States, and her research has been published in peer-reviewed journals and books and presented at conferences around the world.

The team researched consumer interest in South African wines.
**Meet Our Team**

**GROUP’S EDUCATION + EXPERIENCE = EXTRAORDINARY**

---

**William Amspacher**, Professor – Ph.D., Agricultural Economics, UC Davis; M.S., Agricultural Economics and B.S., Animal Industries, Clemson University, Clemson, S.C.

Main focus: quantitative analysis of California wine and wine grape industries. He has presented his work to the Wine Symposium Group in Napa, Calif., on the Central Coast, and at the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium in Sacramento, Calif.

**Matt Brain**, Lecturer/Cellar Master – Professional Wine Degree, Enology & Viticulture, UC Davis; M.S. and B.S., Biological Sciences, Sam Houston State University, Texas

Brain brings naturalist philosophies and technical abilities to winemaking with his biological sciences/ process engineering backgrounds. He is co-winemaker/co-owner of Baker & Brain Wines in San Luis Obispo, Calif. Prior work: Associate Winemaker, Edna Valley Vineyard, San Luis Obispo.

**Jim Cooper**, Professor/Department Head – Ph.D., Plant Biology, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.; B.S., Biology, Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Penn.

Research focus: Grapevine stress tolerance; genomics of wine quality characteristics; plant cell wall biochemistry; plant-microbe interactions; and sustainable vineyard practices. Prior work: Director, BioMolecular Science and Engineering Program, and Associate Dean of Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences, both at UC Santa Barbara; Tensley Wines, Los Olivos, Calif.; founder, enology testing and consulting company, 2010, in Santa Ynez, Calif.

**Michael Costello**, Professor – Ph.D., Entomology, UC Berkeley; B.S., Crop Science/Plant Protection, Cal Poly

General research field: Cultural controls for insects and mites on grapes. Current project: Genetic analysis of vine response to environmental variables, such as drought, pesticides and spider mites. Other research interests: Grape pest management; cultural controls for insects and spider mites on grapes; genetic response of grapevines to environmental stress; deficit irrigation; vineyard cover crops; spiders in vineyards; general viticulture, and grape pest management.

**Adrienne Ferrera**, Lecturer/Cal Poly Wines Brand Manager – MBA, Cal Poly; B.S., Business Administration, Marketing, Cal Poly


**Craig Macmillan**, Lecturer/Vineyard Manager – Ph.D., Sociology, Washington State University, Wash.; M.S., Plant Protection Science, Cal Poly; B.A., Philosophy, University of Iowa

Goal: to bridge the gap between scientific/technical knowledge and the social environment in teaching and research. Prior work: Viticulture instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria, Calif.; Central Coast Wine Industry Consultant since 1991.

**Shohreh Niku**, Lecturer – M.S., Food Science & Nutrition, Cal Poly; M.S., Food Science and Technology, Iran Institute of Nutrition Science and Food Technology, Tehran, Iran; B.S., Food Science and Technology, College of Nutrition Science and Food Technology, Tehran, Iran

Niku was born and raised in Tehran, Iran, and moved to the U.S. in 1986. She began teaching at Cal Poly in fall 2000. Her graduate research in wine chemistry and analysis helped the development of a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives-certified wine analysis lab at Cal Poly in 2000. She teaches in both the Food Science & Nutrition, and Wine & Viticulture departments.

**Gerry Ritchie**, Professor – Graduate Diploma, Enology, University of Adelaide, Southern Australia; Ph.D., Soil Chemistry, University of Western Australia; B.S. with honors, Soil Science, Reading University, Berkshire, U.K.

Research interests: Practical solutions to the enhancement of aroma and flavor development and retention in grapes and wines, and sustainability in winemaking. She enjoys watching students succeed through Learn by Doing and meeting graduates around the world to hear about their adventures in the wine industry.

**Carrie South**, Administrative Support Coordinator – B.S., Social Science, Cal Poly

Prior work: Cal Poly’s Architectural Engineering and Agribusiness departments. Plans: to continue her pursuit of a master’s degree in agriculture with a specialization in recreation, parks and tourism management and a thesis on wine tourism. She worked her first harvest in fall 2013 at [j] Cellsars in San Miguel, Calif.

**Michael Walsh**, Lecturer – M.S., Horticulture (Viticulture), UC Davis; M.S., Marine Biology, UC San Diego; B.S., Zoology, San Diego State University, San Diego, Calif.


**Marianne McGarry Wolf**, Professor – Ph.D., M.A. and B.A., Economics, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.

McGarry Wolf loves teaching and engaging her students with current news and hands-on research about wine industry issues. Research interests: factors, including technology, that motivate consumers to buy a particular type or brand of wine or food. McGarry Wolf is an author, a social media and wine consumer research specialist, and is co-founder of ValuePulse and Wolf Consulting. Prior work: Yankelovich Partners, Xavier University, and Illinois Institute of Technology.

---

**WVIT.CALPOLY.EDU | CAL POLY 19**
Wine & Viticulture students are immersed in research for area wine industry clients in WVIT 460, a new Wine Business Senior Project class taught by Professor Marianne McGarry Wolf. Projects this fall involved a marketing study for Talley Vineyards in Arroyo Grande, Calif., and a feasibility study for the Cal Poly SLOcavore Program. SLOcavore is examining interest in workshops, symposiums and events that explore local wine and food pairing, wine making, artisan cheese making and gardening. The students are (from left) Angela Muscarella, Angelina Calvelli, Stephen Harmer, Jennifer Shreeves, Taylor Bolton and Danielle Hollywood. PHOTO BY MARIANNE McGARRY WOLF