Cal Poly Joins Technology Pathways Initiative, Offers Bioinformatics Cross-Disciplinary Studies Minor

SAN JOSE, Calif. – December 12, 2017 – The Center for Advancing Women in Technology (CAWIT) announced that California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) is the fifth major California university to join the Technology Pathways Initiative (TPI). TPI brings together university faculty and high-tech industry leaders to help more college women excel in technology fields through interdisciplinary computing education, from campus to career.

Beginning in Fall 2018, Cal Poly will pilot a Cross-Disciplinary Studies Minor (CDSM) in Bioinformatics to its Biology, Biochemistry, and Computer Science majors.

According to Dr. Belle Wei, CAWIT Board Chair, "The Bioinformatics CDSM demonstrates Cal Poly's strong commitment to prepare students for twenty-first century jobs by equipping them with computing knowledge and skills." Dr. Wei is Carolyn Guidry Chair in Engineering Education and Innovative Learning and a former Dean of Engineering at San José State University.

TPI University-Industry Partnerships

Cal Poly joins other TPI University partners including San Francisco State University, San José State University, UC Berkeley, and UC Davis—prominent universities and major suppliers of talent to California's workforce. Their participation is driven by faculty interest in developing new and self-sustaining interdisciplinary degree programs and making them available to a broader cross-section of students.

TPI's industry partners include Intel Corporation, Salesforce, and KLA-Tencor Foundation. Each has committed $1 Million to sponsor participating universities in developing and implementing new interdisciplinary degree programs. They also provide mentoring, internships, and other campus-to-career opportunities for college students in TPI degree programs.

Cal Poly Faculty Leaders on the CDSM

"The Cross-Disciplinary Studies Minor in Bioinformatics enables us to provide students with pathways to emerging careers," said James Meagher, Dean, College of Engineering at Cal Poly. "By integrating these studies into our robust degree programs, we'll provide students with the experience needed to excel in the evolving fields of biotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical research, and specialized software development."

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According to Ed Himelblau, Professor, Biological Sciences Department, “The life sciences are making increasing use of computing, and our graduates must be prepared to apply statistics and computer science in their work. The Bioinformatics CDSM will integrate biology, computer science and statistics courses in a comprehensive program enabling students to demonstrate readiness in areas such as experimental design, genomics, molecular biology, computational biology, bioinformatics algorithms and databases.”

“At Cal Poly we engage our science and mathematics students in classes and research that ask them to think and work across disciplines,” said Dean Wendt, Dean, College of Science and Mathematics. “We share CAWIT’s goal of increasing the number of women in science and technology careers. This collaboration will create new opportunities to enhance the future success of our graduates.”

CAWIT plans to expand its University-Industry Partnerships in 2018 (www.cawit.org).

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