

CAL POLY

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To whom it may concern:

August 11, 2016

I am writing this letter to express my support of an important role that I believe Peter Schwartz plays at Cal Poly. I have known Pete for over a decade as colleague in the College of Science and Mathematics. What impresses me most about Pete is that he expends a tremendous amount of energy in support of causes that normally go unnoticed by other faculty or the academy but are incredibly important to the current generation of student. The current generation especially cares about the environmental, social, and economic impacts our society's activities have on the planet and the organisms that live on it. For much of human existence humans did not think their activities could alter resources or even the climate upon which all living things depend. Science has revealed that indeed, we can and have had an impact. Pete brings a highly unusual gift of fascination and ingenuity for how we might ease the agonies and challenges many people of the world face such as basic cooking, transportation, or bringing food to the table.

Pete brings in guest speakers who are current experts on sustainability and he teaches courses that nurture sustainable lifestyles. His course topics in Appropriate Technologies cover alternative energy generation, filtering water with minimal technological input, and how to harness the power of the sun to cook. These are examples of the topics that a significant portion of the current generation find fascinating and compelling. His classes are purposefully group focused, so students are not only learning technical skills but they are also learning the social skills required to change a cultural mindset built on a long tradition of resource consumption. Pete gets students to think about themselves and their own activities, how they impact others and the world around them. This can be uncomfortable at times because students may realize their lifestyles are significantly impacting to others. It is through these uncomfortable realizations that students learn the most and become motivated to change themselves as well as others. I have overseen Pete's activities at the Student Experimental Farm with fascination and, quite frankly, at times trepidation. That's because Pete teaches students outside the classical teaching model: with him they must discover things with his guidance but for themselves. This self-discovery model can be tricky sometimes, especially to an administrator. However, it is incredibly impacting for student learning. Pete brings a focus on sustainable human existence that every faculty member should incorporate into our specific disciplines. For example, because I am a weed scientist, Pete reminds me that my curricular mission should be to teach students methods of weed control that minimize herbicide use since they are the most impacting of methods, and to use them only as a last resort.

It is for these reasons that I write this letter in support of a ideology about human impacts that is incredibly valuable for our current generation of student. This is especially important because even though this generation of student thinks they are the "greenest" generation in history, it turns out that they are the worst from the standpoint of carbon footprint. For this reason, Pete's message is especially important. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me at (805) 756-5142 or email ssteinma@calpoly.edu.

Sincerely,



Scott Steinmaus PhD
Department Head
Horticulture and Crop Science