



Call for Applications: Faculty Fellow for First-Year Experiences

****Updated September 29, 2025****

Summary: A student's first year of college is a critical time that can shape their academic trajectory, sense of belonging, and long-term success. Research from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) underscores the profound impact of structured first-year experiences, showing that students who participate in first-year seminars, residential learning communities in university housing, and high-impact practices (HIPs) are more likely to persist, achieve higher GPAs, and engage meaningfully with faculty and campus resources. First-year experiences provide students with the foundation to develop self-efficacy, academic confidence, and essential career competencies, setting the stage for long-term achievement.

At Cal Poly, strengthening first-year experiences is a focus of Student Success and Academic Innovations & Programs in Academic Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management-Student Affairs. This strategic priority aligns with the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 Year of Engagement goals of increasing clear curricular and co-curricular pathways to students' academic and career goals, providing opportunities to gain real-world skills and to build professional networks through experiential learning, and advancing personalized journeys to success. To advance this mission, we seek a faculty member to support benchmarking and developing strategies for inclusive excellence and universal student success around such topics as: first-year preparation and orientation courses (e.g., UNIV 100), evaluating high-impact educational practices (HIPs), and enhancing academic- and career-integrated learning within first-year programming, service learning, and residential learning communities.

The Faculty Fellow for First-Year Experiences will assess and improve evidence-based first-year initiatives that ensure students transition successfully into college, develop a strong sense of belonging and community, and acquire the skills necessary for academic and career success while in college. This includes but is not limited to:

- Benchmarking and making recommendations to structure first-year courses at Cal Poly SLO and Solano campuses, as well as their learning communities and orientation programs against peer institutions
- Researching national best practices for FYE to inform practices at Cal Poly.
- Assessing the implementation of High-Impact Practices (HIPs) across Cal Poly in the first year of the student experience to ensure they are effectively engaging students in meaningful learning.
- Exploring Residential Learning Community structures and mapping outcomes against national best practices, identifying gaps and strengths in existing programs, and developing recommendations to enhance the current RLCs as a core HIP/ part of the FYE.
- Enhancing academic and career readiness by exploring the ways in which other universities approach embedding career competencies (e.g., teamwork, communication, problem-solving) into first-year curricula and co-curricular programming.
- Aligning first-year experiences with efforts to enhance student degree completion, reduce opportunity gaps, and strengthen first-year retention and persistence.
- Collaborating with faculty, staff, and administrators to develop innovative, equity-centered approaches that support first-year students on their journey to success.

This Faculty Fellow role is ideal for faculty members passionate about student success, engaging with beginning students as they start their college experiences, advancing equitable education, and exploring evidence-based teaching and learning practices. The Faculty Fellow reports to the Associate Provost for Student Success. In addition, the Fellow will also be responsible for sharing reoccurring progress updates with the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and other leaders as requested.

Appointment & Compensation

The Faculty Fellow for First-Year Experiences appointment would ideally start in winter 2026 and would continue in spring and fall 2026. A summer 2026 appointment is possible. A final report and presentation delivered by the Faculty Fellow will be due at the close of the fall 2026 term. The role comes with 4 WTUs of reassigned time for winter and 4 WTUs of reassigned time for spring and 3 WTUs of reassigned time for the fall 2026 term. An appointment for summer 2026, the equivalent of up to 4 WTUs of additional compensation for the summer term, if mutually agreeable, would be determined at a later date. The successful candidate will retain their faculty appointment in their home department, depending on the fellow's availability and program needs.

Duties & Responsibilities

The Faculty Fellow for First-Year Experiences is expected to establish ongoing collaboration with Academic Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management-Student Affairs to ensure coordinated student success support and enhance overall student experience. Key responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, three key areas:

1. Benchmarking & Program Assessment

- Inventory UNIV 100 series for better practices across Cal Poly, marking curricular strengths and opportunities for growth and improvement.
- Research UNIV 100 administrative and organizational structures across different universities and assess learning outcomes and impacts of these courses related to FYE engagement.
- Analyze student learning outcomes, retention data, and engagement metrics to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in FYE programming.
- Identify best practices in first-year seminar courses, residential learning communities, peer mentorship, and summer bridge programs to enhance student persistence.

2. Enhancing High-Impact Educational Practices (HIPs)

- Evaluate the integration of evidence-based HIPs such as collaborative learning, undergraduate research, writing-intensive experiences, and service learning into first-year programming.
- Work with faculty and program leaders to expand a documented menu of experiential learning opportunities that align with student success goals.

3. Academic & Career Readiness Integration

- Identify opportunities to embed career readiness competencies (e.g., teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy, communication) into first-year curriculum and co-curricular programs.

- Work with academic advisors and Career Services staff to align first-year programming with long-term student career pathways and Graduation Initiative 2025 goals of increasing degree attainment and closing equity gaps.
- The Faculty Fellow will be expected to produce regular updates on their progress including quarterly reports as well as the delivery of a final annual report detailing impact, key reflections on learning and recommendations. In addition to the final report, the Faculty Fellow will also be expected to prepare a presentation/talk in conjunction with the Office of the Provost or the CTLT to share key insights and learnings gleaned throughout the year with faculty and staff across campus.

Required Qualifications

- Tenure-track, tenured faculty member, or lecturer
- Demonstrated experience working with first-year students in an academic or co-curricular setting.

Desired Qualifications

- Demonstrated leadership working with FYE programs, which may include FYE program design/development, management, implementation, and assessment.
- Experience teaching first-year seminar or orientation courses (e.g., UNIV 100) or mentoring first-year students.
- Superior interpersonal and communication skills.
- Faculty or administrative leadership experience.
- Project and personnel management experience.
- Knowledge of High-Impact Educational Practices (HIPs) and their role in student success.
- Experience conducting program assessment, curriculum design, or faculty development related to student success.
- Strong ability to analyze data and translate findings into actionable recommendations.
- Experience in collaborating across departments and divisions to enhance student learning experiences.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, particularly in writing program reports and presenting findings.
- Faculty leadership or administrative experience in student success, faculty development, or first-year programs.

Application Process

To apply, please submit:

- C.V.
- A one-page statement of interest explaining how your background and experience qualify you for the Faculty Fellow for First-Year Experiences role.
- Confirmation that you have consulted with your head/chair with a positive indication of their support for your release time.

Deadline for applications is Tuesday, October 21, 2025. Application materials should be submitted to Dr. Susan M. Cheng, Associate Provost for Student Success, at scheng45@calpoly.edu

Regards,

Susan M. Cheng, Ed.L.D., MPP
Associate Provost for Student Success

Jo Campbell, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs