International Town and Gown Association’s Fourth Annual
Larry Abernathy Award

Submitted by:
City of San Luis Obispo, California
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and
Cuesta Community College

Project for Consideration:
San Luis Obispo Neighborhood Wellness/Community Civility Effort Final Report

Background:

In May of 2013, personnel from the City of San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and Cuesta Community College embarked on a process to create the San Luis Obispo Neighborhood Wellness/Community Civility Effort. In May of 2015, the Final Report was presented to and adopted by the decision makers at these institutions.

The Report consisted of extensive collaboration and discussion over this two year time span among this landmark working group with the outcome being the development of an 86 page working document. This document now serves as a framework for consistent strengthening of these relationships, increased neighborhood vitality and student success in the community. San Luis Obispo city staff, including individuals ranging from department heads to employees working hands-on every day in the neighborhoods, Cal Poly and Cuesta College administrators, vice presidents, and students, City residents, and community representatives worked side by side with a focus on reinforcing relationships between all of these groups. As an outcome of the strong communication between these stakeholders, policies and guidelines were developed through the Report that help deepen the quality of life for all.

The strong lines of communication and collaborative engagement formed through this effort has already and will continue to result in improved neighborhood wellness in San Luis Obispo. As the document itself states, “Collectively, the working group has a vision of building a community in which year-round residents and students actively collaborate to build community and communicate in an environment that fosters mutual respect and understanding.”
The shared goal of the working group representing all impacted individuals and institutions as well as the completed and ongoing objectives of this effort are entirely consistent with the Joint City University Advisory Board (JCUAB) of The City of Clemson’s stated goal of selecting an award recipient that best exemplifies a full understanding and incorporation of the International Town and Gown Association’s Values and Mission Statement.

This project has strengthened town/gown partnerships between the City of San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and Cuesta College by providing a framework and plan for the consistent meeting of impacted professionals and the pooling of resources that can be leveraged to increase positive outcomes associated with town-gown issues. The plan clearly identifies and shares leading practices among all stakeholders involved, and implements multiple innovative solutions and professional development opportunities for the municipal and college communities involved.

The working group focused on six objectives identified by the San Luis Obispo City Council with subsequent recommendations, desired outcomes, implementation leads and partners, and timelines. These objectives are now each in varying stages of implementation. The full, Final Report is included with this submission. The objectives are:

- Define short-term actions to enhance the quality of life
- Define stakeholders’ needs and success
- Identify university/city best practices
- Review enforcement best practices
- Engage stakeholders: review current educational and information efforts
- Prepare for sustained engagement to achieve desired vision and goal
Outcomes:

Each of the six objectives includes a series of measurable outcomes that are detailed and explained in the attached final report. The substantial progress that has been made since the adoption of the Report is included below. Pictures, letters of support from varying stakeholders, surveys, workflow and responsibility charts are all included.

Updates as of 3/30/2016:

**Objective One:** Define short-term actions to enhance the quality of life

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:

- Schedule regular neighborhood tours with city council, mayor, neighbors, Cal Poly and Cuesta College leaders, etc.

Multiple tours have taken place as an outcome of this initiative with three more scheduled for the remainder of 2016. All parties described above participate. This initiative has proved to be enormously beneficial in identifying challenging issues residents face and allowing all parties to come together, sometimes into the late hours of the night, to brainstorm and identify solutions to these challenges. Here is one local new story describing one of the walks that took place in late 2015:


The tours held to date have been helpful by increasing the hands-on understanding by city and university personnel of some of the neighborhood issues associated with certain student related activities. The tours this coming year will focus on three separate issues: trash, parking and blight, and nighttime activity. The plan is to continue to host them well into the future.

- Investigate establishing Student Neighborhood Assistance Program (S.N.A.P.) Ride-Along program and promote current Police Ride Along program

The City-led tasks associated with this recommendation are completed. City staff recommended to not offer ride-alongs with SNAP as the program is not set up for this kind of activity and the liability is too great. This recommendation was accepted by the City Council.

- Explore the option of creating a noise ordinance in public spaces on streets and sidewalks for gatherings of more than 50 people by issuing citations or other alternative options.

City staff recommended to not infringe of individuals Constitutional rights to gather in places such as those recommended in this proposal. Council accepted the recommendation.
- Consider expanding tools to enforce ordinances for nuisance properties including, but not limited to, “tagging” properties that meet a definition of a public nuisance or unruly gatherings in terms of both property-maintenance concerns and behavior issues.

Proactive enforcement by Code Enforcement Officers is now in place to address chronic and nuisance properties. Behavioral issues are addressed by SLOPD in the enforcement of ordinances regulating noise and unruly gatherings. The Rental Housing Inspection Program now in place will also help address unsafe housing issues.

Hathway Alley, problematic location for trash behind student rentals. Focused problem solving and collaboration with garbage company completely changed the “landscape”.

- Evaluate policies so that new development or redevelopment does not unduly impact neighborhoods.

This effort is now in progress. A thorough plan for Neighborhood Sustainability is expected to be presented to the City Council prior to the end of this fiscal year jointly by the Community Development Department and City Planning Departments.
Objective Two: Define stakeholders’ needs and success

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:

- Evaluate best practices and implement strategies to reduce the number of disruptions from parties and noise in neighborhoods (as referenced in Objective Three)
- Implement a range of strategies to change the relationship and culture between students and non-students in neighborhoods
- Implement educational programs to increase the number of student-aged residents who bring in their trashcans on the same day the trash is picked up

As an outcome of the three objectives above, two programs were developed that are now being implemented:

1. Student Community Success Program - Teaching life skills to students who have received alcohol related offenses off-campus and how to be better community members.

The Mission of the Student Community Success Program is to foster student success off campus in the following ways:

- Promoting safety, neighborhood wellness and community involvement in the City of San Luis Obispo.
- Encouraging students to be positive community members of the San Luis Obispo Community through active participation.
- Bringing awareness to the student community at Cal Poly to issues that arise in our neighborhoods and empowers students to be a part of the solution.

We encourage all Cal Poly students to be successful off campus as well as on campus. We expect students to conduct themselves in a manner that will be considerate of their own personal safety and academic success as well as our community’s well-being. Students that receive a violation of the off campus behavior policy will be expected to go through the Student Community Success Program. The Student Community Success Program consists of one ninety minute workshop that includes:

- Community Video – encourages students to become invested in the San Luis Obispo community; also builds a bridge between students and permanent residents
- Scenarios - the Off Campus Coordinator will facilitate a discussion with students on how to safely address each scenario
- Leadership Panel – Volunteer opportunities for students in the San Luis Obispo community
Noise guidelines, and SLO City ordinances, conflict resolution training, office of neighborhood services resources, off campus living guidelines and standards for student conduct are all included as a part of this program.

2. **Educated Renter’s Certificate Program** – The transitional program helps students living on-campus make a successful transition to off-campus living. To obtain certification, students must review a number of good neighbor guidelines and city regulations and then successfully respond to a series of questions, receiving a score of at least 70%. Local community partners, including many property managers have signed on as partners when it comes to their consideration of students as renters that become certified through this program. The program also included specific guidelines on the handling of trashcans, which has been one of the major complaints of non-student residents.

Also in progress with the City’s Code Enforcement Officers; Neighborhood Services Specialists are participating in Walk and Talks to educate residents about the trash can ordinance.
• Develop and implement a rental housing inspection program

The Rental Housing Inspection Program was launched in December 2015. The first inspections began in March 2016. The program was established to ensure minimum health and safety standards are being maintained in the rental housing stock of San Luis Obispo. As 62% of housing in SLO are rentals, the safety standards of the housing stock is vitally important. Not only will this program ensure minimum health and safety standards are met, but this also ensures no illegal construction has taken place creating “extra” bedrooms in a property that is not large enough to safely house as many people as property owners are attempting to rent to.

• Implement strategies to reduce traffic issues in neighborhoods. Consider using strategies identified in the Land Use and Circulation Element update to achieve this objective

The Neighborhood Traffic Management Program is now in place. This program gives neighborhood residents the opportunity to work with staff to develop strategies to address identified issues.

• Continue to implement strategies to address homelessness in San Luis Obispo (particularly in the downtown area)
This effort is in progress and on-going. San Luis Obispo police continue to work within strongly established community partnerships to provide focused service on identified needs. Some examples include the Community Action Team, downtown bicycle offices, and a directed giving campaign.

**Objective Three: Identify university/city best practices**

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:

- To address student rental properties
  - Create and implement a transition to Off-Campus Living Education Program, to be shared with Cuesta College’s Student Life Office
    - Include expectations and responsibilities of living in neighborhoods in the City of San Luis Obispo (e.g. local ordinances)
    - The successful completion of a culminating test will result in a Preferred Renter Certification with potential benefits offered by landlords

As mentioned above, an Educated Renter’s Certificate Program is now in place to help students living on-campus make a successful transition to off-campus living. To obtain certification, students must review a number of good neighbor guidelines and city regulations and then successfully respond to a series of questions, receiving a score of at least 70%. Local community partners, including many property managers have signed on to give preferred consideration to students that become certified through this program.
Cal Poly Housing also completed a new guide in February 2016 that will be distributed out to students that are planning to move off campus. The guide is a supplemental item with the new Educated Renter’s Program. It focuses on similar messaging about community, however, it includes additional information for students to consider before they start looking for housing, including roommate agreements and budgets. Here is the link to the electronic version of the guide: https://issuu.com/cpslohousing/docs/educated-renters-guide-2016

- Work with the city to generate a neighborhood map of housing rental properties and provide outreach to student renters by funding welcome bags for neighbors to distribute to establish positive interactions (University of Colorado, Boulder)

City staff recommended that Council not direct resources toward a program of this nature. Council members agreed. This action, although explored, will not be pursued further at this point.

- Create a Renter/Rental Housing Inspection Program. Students and landlords can work together for preferred renter/rental designation
  - Beautification Program: “Door Decal” or “Golden Arrow” for upkeep of property and meeting standards for appearance and safety
  - Student Affairs Awards: Awarded yearly to no-complaint housing (LaSalle University)
  - Preferred rental properties listed with the city
  - Request the release of judicial information to off campus entities (Plymouth State University)

As noted above, the City created and is now moving forward with their own Rental Housing Inspection Program. However, as more research was done on the potential action of giving preference to certain renters, concerns were raised about liability. If a preferred rental designation was created and there was an issue with one of the properties on that list the university could be held liable. A potential solution that is still being explored is the creation of such a list through the City’s inspection program.

- To alleviate nighttime noise and to build compassion and understanding
  - Develop outreach and marketing efforts toward students (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

The Dean of Students Office, in collaboration with the University Police Department and the City of San Luis Obispo now have ongoing outreach through flyers and informational marketing pieces going out to students on various topics. So far, it appears that these outreach efforts are helping to alleviate or reduce some of these issues. Many of these informational pieces are included as attachments to this submission. More targeted outreach will take place in spring 2016.

- Implement a Party Registration Program. Develop a program to incentivize party registration that provides the opportunity for the San Luis Obispo Police Department to contact the party registrant and offer a 20-minute warning before dispatching S.N.A.P. or a police officer. This provides the students a way to minimize impacts on enforcement resources (University of Colorado, Boulder)
This program is now in the research and development phase. The plan is to have a recommendation from city staff to the City Council in the fall of 2016 with program guidelines.

- Initiate Dialog Dinners or Block Parties for students and residents to talk about what they like most about their neighborhoods (University of Colorado, Boulder)

The City approved and then awarded multiple neighborhood wellness grants in early 2016. One of the grant recipients will use this matching fund to host a block party of this nature. This is a pilot program for which ongoing funding will be considered once the success of these initial events is evaluated. Associated Students, Incorporated (ASI), the governing student body at Cal Poly, is also working on this item.

- Promote the principles of the The Mustang Way in neighborhoods:
  - Student Neighborhood Liaisons: Block parties/events for networking. (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities & Towson University)
  - Neighborhood Helping Hands: Volunteerism for neighbor assistance (e.g. fruit picking, ladder needs, barn raising, etc.).
  - Coordinate with campus departments to provide Learn by Doing experiences within neighborhoods for senior projects and other work-related majors such as horticulture, landscape architecture, construction management and others.
  - Peer-to-peer engagement for neighborhood policing; “Walk this Way Program” (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

Students after picking of large amounts of trash in two San Luis Obispo neighborhoods for “Make a Difference Day” in Fall 2015.

These action items are taking place through various efforts, many of which are implemented through ASI. Students have partnered with local nonprofits to participate in Make a Difference Day and other volunteer efforts throughout the community. These efforts include everything from going out to clean up the creek and downtown to helping in senior centers and organizing neighborhood gatherings.

- To improve collaboration and understanding among students, non-students and city groups, and to increase engagement in problem solving
  - Continue to engage and communicate collaboratively among students, non-students and city groups. See Student Community Liaison Committee (SCLC), below.
Utilize various on-campus departments and offices that support living off-campus (Off Campus Student Life; Cuesta College Student Life and Leadership; Student & Community Relations; Office of Neighborhood Life; Student Neighborhood Relations; Neighborhood University Relations and Neighbors; and Student Life and Leadership at Cuesta College) to:

- Support all students, non-students, and permanent residents in the communities surrounding Cal Poly
- Educate students about university policies and local ordinances.
- Continue to build and strengthen neighborhood relations by facilitating dialogue
- Promote civic citizenship to create a positive quality of life for everyone living in the neighborhoods (Georgetown University)
- Specific communications and strategies could include:
  - A 100 percent response policy for any time, any issue, by enforcing a prompt and meaningful response
    - The police provide a blueprint that lets students and neighbors know exactly what to expect when a community concern is registered with the university
    - The policy will establish a standard for reporting an incident (through a university helpline); clear steps that would be taken for follow-up with the student (through an updated sanction chart) and community members; and what data would be collected to create a metric to evaluate student success and outcomes (Georgetown University)
    - Sustained conflict resolution services such as “SLO Solutions,” a jointly sponsored citywide conflict-resolution program specifically designed to address student-neighbor issues and provide a means for constructive resolution. Since 2004, this program has used the services of Creative Mediation to resolve a variety of community disputes at no cost to those seeking mediation

All of the above mentioned efforts under this bullet point are ongoing. Teams and strategies among all of these organizations, committees and groups are taking place to strengthen the student and community relationships described.

- Quarterly walkabouts and coffee sessions with city residents and representatives from Cal Poly, Cuesta College and the city
  - One-hour walkabouts will be scheduled, every third month and will take place at various times throughout the neighborhoods surrounding the campus. During these walks they will explore student housing rentals, party atmosphere, traffic impacts and Greek housing

As mentioned above, multiple tours have been completed with many more planned for the future. Three neighborhood tours are scheduled for 2016 including all identified partners. The tours held to date have been extremely helpful in increasing the hands-on understanding by city and university
personnel of some of the neighborhood issues associated with certain student related activities. The tours this coming year will focus on three separate issues: trash, parking and blight, and nighttime activity.

- One-hour coffee sessions or “listening sessions” will be scheduled every third month, in the afternoon, at a local venue to discuss such topics as the Cal Poly Master Plan and vision for the future, diversity and inclusivity, students in the community, and yearend accomplishments and challenges.

These listening sessions are also ongoing and have resulted in a number of creative, innovative ideas to strengthen neighborhood relationships.

- Develop proactive engagement of law and code enforcement with visits to properties of concern; “Knock and Talk” (University of Maryland).

The Neighborhood Officers are now teaming up with the Neighborhood Services Specialists (Code Enforcement) to go through the neighborhoods and do “Walk and Talks”. The Neighborhood Officers focus on noise and behavioral expectations while Neighborhood Services Specialists share information about property maintenance expectations. There is a major focus on these in the fall when the majority of students move back into the neighborhoods but all neighborhoods are visited throughout the year.

- Implement a Joint Letter Program. Police contact with students in off-campus housing who generates letters signed by the university, police and city that outlines expectations. It is sent to the resident and landlord (University of Oregon)
  - Tagging for repeat offending or problem properties

The City identifies each summer a “Top 20” list of properties that have received the highest numbers of noise and blight complaints and citations within the past year. Those identified properties are then sent a letter from the City outlining the Neighborhood Wellness goals and objectives as adopted by Council. This helps property owners, who may not be residents of the City, understand what the City expects and offers resources to help mitigate the issues should they need them.

Protocol for the tagging of properties that are deemed a health and safety risk is in place. Code Enforcement will “red tag” a property and disallow anyone to live there until the property is brought up to code. Tagging of nuisance properties has been discussed by Council in previous years and is not currently being considered.

**Objective Four: Review enforcement best practices**

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:
• City and Cal Poly officials should craft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement between the city and university regarding police operational protocol

A City Police and University Police MOU was signed in August 2015. The University Police Department (UPD) officers are now able to write citations for municipal code violations including noise, unruly gathering, open container, and public urination up to 1 mile off campus. The additional enforcement by UPD in the neighborhoods adjacent to campus has been excellent as the unified effort between the two departments indicates a proactive approach to handling quality of life challenges in the neighborhoods.

Mayor Jan Marx and Cal Poly President Jeff Armstrong sign the MOU granting University Police the ability to issue municipal citations up to one mile off campus.

• Partner Cal Poly and Cuesta police officers with San Luis Obispo Neighborhood Officers to coordinate resources and achieve program goals

UPD now partners with SLOPD during historically busy times of the year such as the start of school to patrol and address problems in the neighborhoods. This has been highly effective as it shows the student age population that university police officers are working collaboratively with the city police officers to manage nuisance problems. Cuesta College Police will not be partnered in this process as the campus is at a much further distance from the City proper.

• Implement a keg registration program

After thoughtful research on this issue and surveys of local businesses selling kegs, this item will be going to the City Council on April 19th. Staff will be recommending to focus on education and enforcement efforts and to not create a municipal level program.
- Conduct an internal assessment of the San Luis Obispo Police Department staffing to prepare for growth within the city and on the Cal Poly campus to ensure staffing needs match the population

This proposal is in progress. The Police Department Strategic Plan was adopted in March 2016 and throughout the next two years, staffing levels will be analyzed to ensure the growth of both the university and the city are met with appropriate increases in patrol and support staff.

- Conduct an internal assessment of the University Police Department staffing to meet the growth on the Cal Poly campus

This is a consistent and ongoing effort by the Department. From parking officers to dispatchers to patrol officers, needs of the Department are constantly being reassessed to best serve the population they are responsible for.

- Explore the possibility of Cal Poly Police being able to issue City Municipal Administrative Citations

As stated above, the MOU granting Cal Poly Police the ability to issue municipal citations was approved in the fall of 2015.

- Location of a university police substation within the new residence hall project to coordinate law enforcement problem-solving efforts

The Department is in conversations about the location of a substation at dorms located at one of the entrances to campus dorms currently under construction. They are also considering other options near campus. There are no concrete plans for an off-campus substation at this point.

**Objective Five: Engage stakeholders: review current educational and information efforts**

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:

The recommendation is to collaboratively create an annual communications plan containing neighborhood wellness messages and a process for communicating the information effectively to maximize resources. The communication plan should be reassessed annually to evaluate effectiveness and to ensure resources are not duplicated or wasted. Communications plan participants could consist of representatives from Cal Poly, Cuesta College and the city.

This is an ongoing effort. A communication plan was created by a subcommittee consisting of residents, Cuesta College student government, Cal Poly staff from Orientation, Housing, Greek Life, Administration and ASI, City Code Enforcement and Neighborhood Outreach. The subcommittee will meet every six months to continue with the planning and delivery of neighborhood wellness messaging to ensure effectiveness. Examples of some of the outreach are included below:
Objective Six: Prepare for sustained engagement to achieve desired vision and goal

Recommendations and actions taken as part of this objective include:

- Re-invest in the Student-Community Liaison Committee (SCLC)

For more than 20 years, Cal Poly’s Associated Students, Inc. (ASI), Associated Students of Cuesta College (ASCC), the City of San Luis Obispo and the County of San Luis Obispo have served as leaders on the committee. It was established to further student and community communication and develop
positive relationships. Much of the work of the Neighborhood Wellness/Community Civility Effort has been done through the SCLC and acts as the identified body that each entity of the Civility Effort reports back to on progress that has been made of their specific tasks. This effort is also ongoing.

- The Student-Community Liaison Committee should assess the effectiveness of each recommendation once they have been implemented

This effort is also ongoing. As mentioned above, each task that was identified as a part of the Civility Effort is reported back to the SCLC as progress is made.

- Shift SCLC memberships

At the City Council meeting of December 1st, City led objectives of this report were discussed included a section regarding City membership of the Committee. The Council voted to maintain current staff membership. At the most recent meeting of the SCLC, the group decided to reach out to the community to add more Community Members At Large.