

Food Systems Leadership Institute California Session 2023 Speaker Biographies



Andrew J. Thulin Dean, College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, Cal Poly

Andrew J. Thulin has led Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) as dean for 10 years. A Cal Poly alumnus, he joined the college in 1998 as head of its Animal Science Department. In that time, he has worked to ensure the college is continuously poised to prepare future generations of students in sustainable agriculture practices that will build long-term food safety and security, environmental sustainability, and climate-smart agricultural systems.

During his 25-year tenure, more than \$230 million has been raised for numerous new laboratories and the construction of a new Beef Center, Animal Nutrition Center, J & G Lau Meat Processing Center, Oppenheimer Family Equine Center, Boswell Ag Tech Center in the William and Linda Frost Center for Research and Innovation, and the \$22 million JUSTIN and J. LOHR Center for Wine and Viticulture, which has been recognized as the largest donor-funded project in California State University history. All projects were built to reflect Thulin's vision of offering advanced technologies to provide students with the hands-on experience needed to succeed and thrive in varied industries.

As dean, Thulin has hired nearly 100 new faculty and numerous full-time lecturers to support the college's nine departments and 15 majors, with an emphasis on adding international and diverse expertise. His focus on expanding student and faculty success has helped pave the way for faculty to grow research grant funding to \$21 million in 2022 from about \$5.5 million in 2014. In addition, his passion for providing students the opportunities to innovate and conduct undergraduate research showed through the development of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP), which has supported as many as 100 students and faculty with up to \$400,000 each summer.

Thulin has consistently partnered with industry leaders who recognize and share the value of investing in the future to provide significant funding to launch the Cal Poly Strawberry Center, the Grimm Family Center for Organic Production and Research, and the Wildland-Urban Interface FIRE Institute, and to reinvent the Dairy Processing and Technology Center, all of which are poised to expose students daily to existing challenges and prepare them to be future leaders in industries that sustain life.

Thulin graduated from Cal Poly with a bachelor's degree in animal science and completed his master's and doctorate degrees at Kansas State University. He sits on several academic, industry and government boards, including: founding member, Cal Poly Foundation Board of Directors; secretary-treasurer, Cal Poly Corporation; site director, Food Systems Leadership Institute; and site dean, California Ag Leadership Institute.



Karen Ross
Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Karen Ross was appointed Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture in 2019 by Governor Gavin Newsom. In re-appointing Secretary Ross, Governor Newsom cited her unmatched leadership experience in agricultural issues nationally, internationally, and here in California, in areas including environmental stewardship, climate change adaptation, and trade. Secretary Ross was initially appointed by Governor

Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2011.

Before joining CDFA, Secretary Ross was chief of staff for U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, a position she accepted in 2009. Prior to that appointment, she served as president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers from 1996-2009, and as vice president of the Agricultural Council of California from 1989-1996. Her prior experience before moving to California included staff work for a United States Senator, a presidential candidate, and government relations for rural electric cooperatives and public power districts.

Secretary Ross is passionate about fostering the reconnection of consumers to the land and the people who produce their food, and to improving the access of all California citizens to healthy, nutritious California-grown agricultural products, celebrated for their diversity and abundance in serving local, national and global markets.

During Secretary Ross' tenure, the Department has focused on core functions to protect and promote California agriculture, investing in the Department's employees to provide the best service to farmers, ranchers and consumers and fostering an agricultural industry that embraces its role as a global leader on everything from the most technical aspects of farming to the broadest environmental imperatives.

Secretary Ross has strengthened partnerships across government, academia and the non-profit sector in the drive to maintain and improve environmental stewardship and to develop adaptation strategies for the specific impacts of climate change. She has initiated programs to provide greater opportunities for farmers and ranchers to engage in sustainable environmental stewardship practices through water conservation, energy efficiency, nutrient management, and ecosystem services; and she has worked to provide greater access to farm-fresh foods at school cafeterias through CDFA's Farm to Fork Program.

Secretary Ross grew up as a 4-H kid on a farm in western Nebraska. She owns 800 acres of the family farm where her younger brother, a fourth-generation farmer, grows no-till wheat and feed grains, incorporating cover crops and rotational grazing for beef production. Ross has a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is a graduate of the Nebraska Ag Leadership Program. She has served on numerous boards and committees in California agriculture and with various academic institutions.



Dorene D'Adamo
Vice Chair, California State Water Resources Control Board

Dorene D'Adamo was appointed to the State Water Resources Control Board in 2013 and reappointed by Governor Newsom in 2022. She serves as vice-chair and also as the member with experience in the field of water supply and water quality relating to irrigated agriculture. D'Adamo is on the board of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley and previously served on the Valley Coalition for UC Merced's Medical School and on the Governor's Drought Task Force. She was a member of the

California Air Resources Board from 1999-2013 under the Brown, Schwarzenegger and Davis Administrations, where she was instrumental in the board's air quality and climate change programs and regulations.

D'Adamo served in various capacities for members of Congress from the San Joaquin Valley over a 20-year period, working primarily on environmental, water and agricultural legislative policy. She earned bachelor's degree from the University of California at Davis and a juris doctor from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law.



Bill Newlands
President and CEO, Constellation Brands

Bill Newlands is Constellation's president and chief executive officer, responsible for providing strategic leadership and working with the board of directors to establish long-range goals, strategies, plans and policies. He leads the executive management committee and is a member of the board of directors.

Newlands joined Constellation in 2015 as executive vice president, chief growth officer. In 2016, his role expanded to include leadership of the Wine + Spirits Division. In 2017 he became the company's chief operating officer and in 2018 his role expanded to include president. He previously served as president, North America at Beam, Inc. Under his leadership, Beam became one of the fastest-growing companies in its category.

Previous appointments include president, Beam Spirits U.S. (2008-2010); president, Beam Wine Estates (2005-2007); president and CEO, Allied Domecq Wines USA (2002-2005); CEO and board director, wine.com (1999-2001); managing director, U.S. and global marketing officer, LVMH Chandon Estates (1996 – 1999).

Constellation Brands (NYSE: STZ and STZ.B), a Fortune 500® company, is a leading international producer and marketer of beer, wine and spirits with operations in the U.S., Mexico, New Zealand, and Italy. Constellation is the No. 3 beer company in the U.S. with high-end, iconic imported beer brands such as the Corona and Modelo brand families, and Pacifico. Its high-quality wine and spirits brands include the Robert Mondavi and The Prisoner Wine Company brand families, Kim Crawford, Ruffino, Meiomi and SVEDKA Vodka. The company's portfolio also includes a collection of highly-rated, wine brands such as SIMI and Mount Veeder Winery, spirits brands High West Whiskey and Casa Noble Tequila, as well as new wine innovations such as Cooper & Thief, 7 Moons, and Crafters Union.



Dennis Albani
President, California Advocates

Dennis Albani has over 25 years of experience in advocacy and public policy. He specializes in energy, natural resources and water, food and agriculture, special districts, technology, and environmental protection including recycling and Proposition 65. He has served as an appointee in two Governor's Administrations and in the Senate as the consultant for the Agriculture and Water Resources Committee. He has extensive business experience in real estate, land use, finance and livestock production. Albani is a member of the California State Bar and graduated from McGeorge School of Law with distinction. Albani has a bachelor's degree in agricultural business and minor in water science from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he was recognized as an outstanding graduate. He was a fellow in the prestigious California Agricultural Leadership Program and a graduate from the Dale Carnegie Institute.



Soren Bjorn
President of the Americas, Driscoll's

Soren Bjorn is the president of Driscoll's of the Americas based in Watsonville, California, the global headquarters of Driscoll's. In his role, Bjorn leads the largest business unit for Driscoll's and is responsible for all aspects of the business enterprise from the strategic planning process and to its financial success. Family owned for more than 100 years, Driscoll's is the leading brand for fresh berries and distributes in more than 22 countries around the world.

Bjorn has been with Driscoll's for more than 10 years and has led several key functional areas. He served as the company's first senior vice president of international business and was responsible for oversight of Driscoll's Europe, Middle East and Africa business, an Australia based joint venture and a new start-up venture in China. In addition, Bjorn has led Driscoll's global research and breeding programs which focus on developing proprietary seedlings in order to deliver great tasting berries to consumers. This superior flavor is a competitive differentiator and one of the primary reasons Driscoll's is the market leader in fresh berries.

As a seasoned executive in the food industry, Bjorn spent six years with Del Monte Foods in San Francisco. There, his responsibilities included outsourcing of manufacturing operations globally, and the management of the company's sales and operations planning department. He also held the role of president and CEO for UniMark Foods, Inc., a vertically integrated citrus and tropical fruit growing and processing company headquartered in Texas.

Soren earned an MBA from Texas Christian University (TCU) in Fort Worth, Texas, and a bachelor's degree in marketing from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He was born and raised in Silkeborg, Denmark, where his mother still lives today. His brother, Thomas Bjorn is a world class professional golfer. He is the proud father of three boys.



Ian Maw
2021 APLU Food Systems
Leadership Award Recipient

Dr. Ian Maw served as APLU's Vice President of Food and Agriculture, leading the activities of the Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources and its associated boards, particularly the work of the Board on Agriculture Assembly. Dr. Maw worked diligently to oversee the BAA's advocacy strategy to increase funding for the research, Extension, and teaching missions of the land-grant university system. In that capacity, he established a close working relationship with the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture's leaders; supported the work of the Council on Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching, a lay advocacy group supporting the land-grant system; and partnered with stakeholders across the system, including non-land-grant universities, professional societies, and industry. Looking beyond D.C. matters, Dr. Maw worked tirelessly to encourage leadership development within colleges of agriculture through his support of programs like LEAD21 and the Food Systems Leadership Institute. In the international sphere, Dr. Maw worked to build relationships with the Association of Canadian Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, the Asociación Mexicana de Educación Agrícola, and the Global Confederation for Higher Education Associations for Agriculture and Life Sciences (GCHERA). He acted as GCHERA's senior vice president for 7 years. Dr. Maw began his career at APLU as the Executive Director of the Academic Programs Section, a role in which he served for two years.

Prior to his work at APLU, Dr. Maw spent thirty-four years at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. His career at Rutgers as a faculty member at Cook College spanned a wide variety of academic administration roles including the chair of two different departments (Education and Environmental Sciences), associate dean for instruction, director of administration and fiscal affairs, associate dean of the college. He further provided leadership to undergraduate and graduate education as Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and held the role of Interim Executive Dean and Director for a brief stint. He holds emeritus professor rank from Rutgers in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources.

Dr. Maw holds a B.S. from Indiana State University, and M.S. and Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University. He is the recipient of an honorary doctorate from the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of the Ukraine. He was inducted into the NIFA Hall of Fame and a recipient of the 2018 Experiment Station Section Award for Excellence in Leadership and was the 2021 recipient of the APLU (Association of Public and Land grant Universities) Food Systems Leadership Award.



Jeffrey D. Armstrong **President, Cal Poly**

Jeffrey D. Armstrong began his tenure as Cal Poly's ninth permanent president on February 1, 2011, with a determination to enhance the University's renowned Learn by Doing teaching approach.

Armstrong brings to Cal Poly a blend of experience as an honored teacher, respected researcher and experienced administrator. At Cal Poly, he has focused on ways to improve graduation rates. To further bolster student success, he has sought to expand university-industry partnerships to attract more applied research to the campus, thus increasing professional development experiences for faculty in order to enrich classroom instruction.

As a first-generation college graduate, Dr. Armstrong is particularly passionate about nurturing a campus climate that embraces inclusion and diversity. "To succeed in our increasingly multicultural society," Dr. Armstrong says, "our students need to experience the world as it really is."

As a member of the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) executive committee, Dr. Armstrong joins a dedicated coalition of senior business and higher education executives committed to advancing innovative solutions to U.S. education and workforce challenges.

Dr. Armstrong also served from 2011 to 2015 on the board of Aware Awake Alive, a national alcohol-awareness program created to educate young people on the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, create awareness on the conditions that enable it, and encourage responsibility for one another in situations where alcohol is consumed.

He participates in numerous California State University (CSU) committees, including the CSU Agricultural Advisory Committee, CSU Agricultural Research Initiative, CSU Water Resources and Policy Initiatives, CSU Technology Steering Committee, and CSU Council on Ocean Affairs, Science & Technology (COAST). Dr. Armstrong also is one of two CSU representatives on the Board of Directors of the California Council on Science and Technology.

Before joining Cal Poly, Dr. Armstrong served as dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and professor of Animal Science at Michigan State University (MSU), beginning in 2001. He was head of the Department of Animal Sciences at Purdue University from 1997 to 2001 and served in various positions at North Carolina State University (NCSU) from 1986 through 1997.

As a faculty member at NCSU, Armstrong was known for engaging students in the classroom and was awarded numerous honors for his teaching excellence. He also was named Alumni Distinguished Professor for Undergraduate Teaching.

A recognized leader in nutrition and reproduction in large food animals, Dr. Armstrong has helped raise more than \$9 million in grants and cooperative agreements to support research on social responsibility in the food chain. He has written or contributed to more than 45 scientific journal articles.

Over his career, he has served as chairman of the United Egg Producers Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and advised McDonald's Corp. on animal welfare and broader issues

related to corporate social responsibility. He served as chairman of the Michigan Board of Agriculture Assembly Farm Bill Committee and, in 2009, contributed to significant changes in Congress' farm legislation. Dr. Armstrong also served on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Committee and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Seventh District Advisory Council.

Raised on a beef cattle, swine, and tobacco farm in Western Kentucky, Armstrong attended Murray State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1981. He earned both a master's (1984) and doctorate (1986) in physiology from North Carolina State University.

Jeff and his wife, Sharon, have two children who currently reside in Michigan. Their son Zack is a financial advisor; and their daughter Jessica is a physician in obstetrics and gynecology, married to Dean Gibbie, who is a realtor. Jessica and Dean are parents to the Armstrongs' two grandchildren – Colton and Carter.



Terrance Harris
Vice President, Strategic Enrollment Management, Cal Poly

Terrance Harris serves as Cal Poly's vice president for Strategic Enrollment Management. He has spent most of his entire professional career in the enrollment space serving in roles in recruitment, as well as managing admissions advising and operations, data management, communications and enrollment development. Outside of his professional experience, Harris has coached high school basketball for 20 years and mentored hundreds of students as they navigated through this critical portion of their lives. His spouse and three young daughters are the inspiration for all that he does. Harris earned his bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in educational leadership from Cal Poly.



Jeff Huckaby
President and CEO, Grimmway Farms

Jeff Huckaby is the president of Grimmway Farms and Cal Organic Farms headquartered in Bakersfield, Calif. He is a fourth-generation farmer born and raised in the southern San Joaquin Valley. He learned to grow carrots and potatoes working for his grandfather at an early age.

Shortly After graduating from CSU Bakersfield in 1989 he went to work for Wm Bolthouse Farms in Bakersfield as a production manager. He also held positions as a grower rep and eventually farm manager before moving to Grimmway Farms in 1998 as a ranch manager. Huckaby was responsible for the organic program at Grimmway and in 2001 became general manager of the organic division when Grimmway purchased Cal Organic Farms. In 2006 he was promoted to executive vice president and in 2016 became president.

During Huckaby's tenure at Grimmway the organic program has grown from several hundred acres to over 40,000 acres of certified organic ground. Today Cal Organic Farms is one of the largest single growers of organic produce in the nation and grows approximately 65 different organic fruits and vegetables throughout California while Grimmway Farms grows and processes over 42,000 acres of carrots in seven states.

Huckaby has served on numerous boards and committees over the past 25 years and presently serves on the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Deans Ag Advisory Council for the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, the United Fresh Produce Association Board of Directors, and serves on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture.

Huckaby has been married to his wife Michelle for 30 years and has two boys, Matthew and Austin.



Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic
Affairs, Cal Poly

Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore is responsible for the formulation of academic policies and priorities and oversees the Academic Affairs division, which includes the university's six colleges, along with the international and extended education programs, the Kennedy Library and academic programs and planning. In addition, she shares oversight of research and economic development, graduate education, financial aid, the registrar, admissions and enrollment.

Jackson-Elmoore previously served as dean of the Honors College at Michigan State University and a professor with affiliations in the School of Social Work and the Global Urban Studies Program. She also co-chaired a university level Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee and was a presidential appointee to MSU's Strategic Planning Committee. She earned doctorate and master's degrees in public administration, with a public policy emphasis, from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Delaware.



John Lin
Production Automation Engineer, California Strawberry
Comission

John Lin serves a joint appointment as both the California Strawberry Commission's and the Cal Poly Strawberry Center's production automation manager. Lin received his doctorate from the University of Maryland in bioengineering. He has over 10 years of experience in research and development. His early professional experiences include work in tissue engineering and targeted drug delivery. His recent works focus on the application of machine vision and semi/fully autonomous systems in strawberry production practices.



Claudia S. Plaisted Fernandez DrPH, MS, RD, LDN
FSLI Leadership Core Director

Claudia Fernandez is a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and currently serving as the Associate Chair for Inclusive Excellence. She specializes in helping leaders meet the challenges of running complex organizations, communicating to public and media audiences, and engaging employees. She is the co- author of *It-Factor Leadership: Become a Better Leader in 13 Steps*. Dr. Fernandez has

extensive experience developing custom executive education programs that focus on personal leadership development, innovation, and business skills for senior, middle, and front line managers and leaders. For the past 17 years she has directed the *ACOG National Leadership Institute* for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and for the past 19 has served as the Director of the Leadership Core for the *Food Systems Leadership Institute* (www.FSLI.org), the flagship leadership program of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and targeted to academic Deans, Heads, and Vice Presidents, industry and government leaders. For the past eight years she has served as Co-Director and Co-PI for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded Clinical Scholars National Leadership Institute (ClinicalScholarsNLI.org). She is certified in a wide range of leadership and psychological assessment tools, including 360 assessments, the EQi-2.0 Emotional Intelligence Instrument, the FIRO-B, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Change Style Indicator, the Decision Style Profile, the Paper Planes, Inc. simulation, the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Instrument, the Dennison Organizational Culture Survey, The FourSight tool, The Influence Style Indicator, and the CPI 260 and the Coaching Report for Leaders. Dr. Fernandez is also a licensed and Registered Dietitian, and as such has a particular interest in leadership in healthcare systems and high-performing healthcare and public health teams. She earned her doctorate in public health leadership and health policy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

You can contact Claudia at Claudia_Fernandez@unc.edu.