

# A Techy Tour

## A new spin on the campus visit

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, is taking the GPS concept out of the car and putting it onto the quad.

When prospective students cannot make a regularly scheduled student-led campus tour, they pick up a global positioning system device at the admissions office to show them around campus.

The patent-pending GPS Ranger, put into use last fall, tells prospective students where they are and how to get to the next stop. An interactive map helps users find their way, and video, music, audio, and still photography are triggered automatically, corresponding to a particular location.

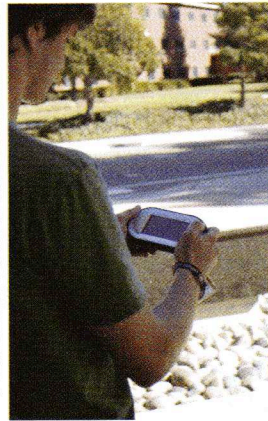
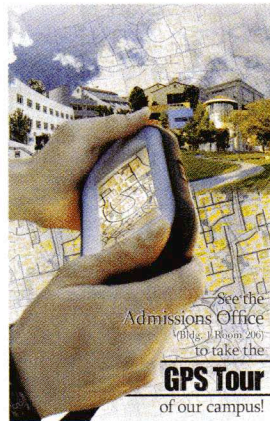
The tour includes 18 points of interest, ranging from academic buildings to campus hot spots, and lasts an hour and a half—about the same time as one led by a student.

On the most basic level, the electronic tour is still student-led, since Cal Poly students determined the stops, wrote and narrated the script, filmed the footage, and edited the final version. “The GPS Ranger Tour is the next best thing to a live student tour,” says Jim Maraviglia, assistant vice president for admissions, recruitment, and financial aid. “We really wanted to keep personality and a human connection in it.”

Campus officials acknowledge that there are some limitations. The GPS tour works better for small groups or individual families. If visitors have questions along the way, they must wait to ask the admissions staff when returning the GPS device.

Currently, there are six Ranger units available for use at Cal Poly, and officials plan to add more. They are still tracking the growth in the Ranger’s usage, but feel it is a natural fit for this technology-driven campus.

Says Maraviglia: “One of our key objectives is to build relationships in ways our public best respond [to], and this seemed like the perfect tool.”—Julie Nicklin Rubley



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN LUIS OBISPO

## PODCAST PUSHERS

A new study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project shows that while podcasts aren’t being downloaded in droves, their use is steadily growing, and higher education is helping. In May 2008, 19 percent of all Internet users said they had downloaded a podcast, up from 12 percent from a similar survey two years before.

The Pew researchers point out that many colleges and universities now provide podcasts of various lecture series and speakers on campus. Some professors also are producing their own podcasts, or they’re asking students to respond to readings and lessons via podcasts.

The findings of the study were based on a telephone survey of 1,553 Internet users from April 8 through May 11, 2008.—JNR

Trends in Podcast Downloading (% of Internet users)



wide that despite drops in state funding, academic medical education produces a high return on investment.

Pentella Marketing Communications, a public-relations company in Columbus, Ohio,



went on a media blitz to promote the “Medicine Means Business” campaign. The company sent e-mail blasts to university trustees, state and national

legislators, and key state officials and designed a comprehensive press kit for media outlets across the state. A Web site ([www.medicinemeansbusiness.org](http://www.medicinemeansbusiness.org)) also spread the word.

The story was picked up by the *Dayton Daily News*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Toledo Blade*, the

*Columbus Dispatch* E-Team blog, *Reuters*, the *Wall Street Journal* online edition, and several more Web sites and blogs, officials say.—JNR