

*Professor Alex Small loved learning, teaching and academic freedom—and admired others who shared those passions. The following are expressions made by his CalPoly physics colleagues in Spring 2024:*

- Learning the basic physics of the universe is something all STEM students (and, I'd argue, all students, period) should have as part of their higher education.
- I am proud of the accomplishments of my research students, and how many of them came into this university not knowing or believing they could succeed, and who are now pursuing graduate education or a good career.
- I have always felt that every professor in the department had my back.
- The number of physics majors we attract is way above the national average. This is not an accident.
- I have several students every semester that seem shocked when I am willing to work with them when they are going through difficult times. I am proud to be able to show students that compassion has a place in academia.
- I hope it could be said we improved the lives of our students, both through classroom education and through department culture.
- Our strong connection with alumni speaks to the effectiveness of our approach. In many aspects, such as the Industry Advisory Board [established by Professor Small], our department is setting the standard to be followed by other departments.

"I can only show you the door. You're the one who has to walk through it." --Morpheus, *The Matrix*