



Entry details

Entry Name:	Julian's Kennedy Library
Institution Name:	Cal Poly
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Melanie Belanger, District Marketing Director

Julian's at the Library is an iconic coffee destination and part of the \$80 million renovation of Cal Poly's Kennedy Library. Relocated from a cramped second-floor nook to a well-trafficked, street-accessible, first-floor hub, it is a crucial culinary and social asset for library patrons and West Campus residents. The location serves locally roasted SLAKE Coffee and features an expanded menu that extends beyond artisanal brews to standout build-your-own breakfast bowls, rotating festive drinks, and fresh grab-and-go items for diverse tastes. Julian's honors a 40-year legacy of feeding and fueling students' academic pursuits with a dedicated chef and beautiful new space.

Essay:

The planning for Julian's at the Library's \$2.6 million renovation was a strategic and collaborative process integral to the library's overall revitalization. The approach focused on transformation: moving from an obscure, limited-service location to a prominent, full-service destination accessible from both the street and library. The style blends a warm, inviting "retro vibe" with modern functionality, reflected in custom equipment including enticing display cases.

Enhanced accessibility, an expanded menu, and community service were the guiding principles. Chefs and managers were active during construction, providing feedback on layout and specifications. Real-time research at the existing Julian's 1901 location informed menu development, resulting in the successful introduction of vegan/vegetarian options, grain bowls, and an elevated pastry program.

Cal Poly Dining Service used social media and the Dish newsletter to tell the story and build anticipation, highlighting the new space as indispensable to campus life, on par with the library. Pedestrians could witness the progress daily. Central Coast Refreshments was a vital partner, supplying and installing key retro-style espresso machines, grinders and brewers. Training was intensive and hands-on. Invited university staff attended immersive sessions where associates mastered new equipment and menus, supported by a cross-venue team that ensured a seamless, well-prepared launch.

Introduction:

Cal Poly Dining Service seamlessly integrated the marketing and launch of Julian's at the Library with the opening of the university's \$80 million jewel. A targeted social media campaign and the site's high visibility helped contribute to the growing sense of anticipation. The official launch was a celebratory event in conjunction with the Library's grand opening helping to generate immediate positive word of mouth. Ongoing marketing includes a multi-channel approach — social media, digital newsletters, web presence, and on-site materials — while its prime street-level entrance actively facilitates customer engagement activities, turning the café into a dynamic hub.

Essay:

The marketing and launch of Julian's at the Library successfully achieved its original goals of integrating the café as a core component of the new Library's identity and generating immediate community engagement. The launch was held concurrently with the grand opening of the \$80 million facility, attended by the university president, board members, and dignitaries. This event provided instant prestige and visibility, as guests enjoyed complimentary treats, contributing to a memorable inaugural experience.

Anticipation grew through a combination of observable progress as the Library took shape, regular updates on Instagram and other social media channels, and an invitation-only soft opening for staff. This soft opening provided an opportunity for associates to train while generating enthusiastic word of mouth.

Feedback from the campus community has been overwhelmingly positive, praising the quality of the fare and the aesthetic alignment with the modern Library. Financially, the location has consistently exceeded its operational goals. A diversified strategy encompassing social media, Cal Poly Dining's Dish newsletter, the web, and physical posters and table tents effectively markets Julian's at the Library. The strategic street-level entrance is actively leveraged for customer engagement activities and giveaways, establishing Julian's as a vibrant, engaging campus destination.

Introduction:

Every renovation is a collaborative effort. It was more so with Julian's at the Library since the coffee shop was on the ground floor of an \$80 million library renovation. Cal Poly Dining Services chefs and culinarians worked synergistically with designers and builders to ensure the space would be practical, productive and pleasing to the entire campus community. The café's grand opening was part of the larger library unveiling, so multiple university departments — from the administrative to the operational — were engaged in pulling off the spectacle, an event of this magnitude deserved. The successful launch demonstrated the power of partnership.

Essay:

Julian's at the Library was a major beneficiary of the Robert E. Kennedy Library grand reopening. Leveraging this opportunity required extensive collaboration from concept to ribbon-cutting. The team laid the foundation with Library leadership and Facilities Planning and Capital Projects to ensure Julian's design was seamlessly integrated into the renovated library's new aesthetic and functional blueprint. The President's and Provost's offices provided strategic alignment and institutional gravitas, framing the opening as a milestone for the entire campus.

Cal Poly Dining worked with Cal Poly Partners and University Communications to synchronize the execution of a carefully crafted narrative and coordinated publicity campaign. Conference and Event Planning managed the event. Critical broader support came from University Development, which engaged donors; Government Relations ensured external stakeholder awareness; and Divisional Operations facilitated smooth administrative integration.

The success of the larger event extended to Julian’s at the Library and was achieved only through a collaboration across departments. Julian’s was part of a campus-unifying event. Each department’s contribution was vital, transforming Julian’s from a dining outlet into an immediate landmark. The overwhelming positive feedback and its financial success are testaments to a partnership that encouraged the community to embrace Julian’s from day one.

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