The recent success of Cal Poly Athletics, first among Big West Conference schools in the 2000 Sears Trophy standings, can be attributed to the hard work and commitment to excellence by student-athletes, coaches, and staff. Another contributing factor to this success has been the addition and upgrade of several athletic facilities on campus. The recently completed "Building the Advantage" athletics capital campaign has led to the remodeling of Mott Gymnasium, the resurfacing of the track, a new weight room, the addition of an academic resource center, and the completion of Baggett Stadium (baseball) and Bob Janssen Field (softball) at the new 47-acre Sports Complex.

The $12 million Sports Complex was a partnership between the students of Cal Poly, the Athletics Department, and the university. During the dedication on Oct. 20, 2000, the many capital campaign contributors were recognized for their outstanding support, and co-chairs Bob Neal (ASCI '55) and Robin Baggett (BUS '73) were praised for their leadership in helping raise more than $5 million during the campaign. In early 2001, both Baggett Stadium and Bob Janssen Field were officially unveiled with opening-day ceremonies and wins over Stanford and UC Riverside, respectively.

As the athletics program continues to reap the benefits of new facilities, it plans to mount new initiatives as Cal Poly's Centennial Campaign gets under way. Among these are the renovation and expansion of Mustang Stadium, completion of seven new tennis courts, continued improvements to the academic resource center, and an increased emphasis on building a scholarship endowment. To achieve these initiatives, the Athletics Department will once again rely heavily on alumni and community support. The completion of these projects will "strengthen our advantage" and ensure the continued success of Mustang Athletics.

A crowd of more than 3,000 fans fills Baggett Stadium in January for the season baseball opener and inaugural game against Stanford.
CAL POLY ATHLETES:
CONTENDERS FROM THE START

Currently a Division I member of the Big West Conference, Cal Poly’s athletics program comprises a tradition of success and excellence that includes national championship trophies, All-America honors for several hundred athletes, and national academic honors.

Each decade following the first university athletic event in the early 1900s has produced memorable moments, including an undefeated and unscored-upon football season in 1933. In October 1960, the university experienced its greatest loss when 16 football players, the team manager, a local supporter, and four others perished in an airplane accident. The remainder of the season was canceled.

In the tragedy’s aftermath, Cal Poly’s athletes returned to the playing fields as a closer-knit and stronger family. In 1966 Cal Poly’s first national championship was secured by its wrestling team. Coach Vaughan Hitchcock led the Mustangs to eight national titles over the next nine years. Track and field would follow with four national titles in the 1970s. And after an NCAA playoff in 1978, the football team captured the NCAA national championship in 1980—almost 20 years after 1960’s airplane accident.

In the 1980s Cal Poly won 17 national championships, including men’s tennis and men’s and women’s cross country and track and field. Cross country teams dominated during this decade, winning all but one title, while the university’s track teams took home four championship trophies.

Among the most significant events in Cal Poly’s athletics history were moving to Division I in 1994 and joining one of the premier athletic conferences in the nation in 1996—the Big West. These were moves that the athletics program made and adjusted to with little difficulty. Teams continue to shine with conference championships, NCAA appearances, and two individual Division I national champions. In the past two years, the Athletics Department has had more than 50 student-athletes named to the Big West Conference All-Academic team, as well as several to the West Regional All-Academic team that includes all West Coast Division I schools.

Finally, the university has seen improvements, not only with the caliber of competition, but with athletics facilities that have helped Cal Poly recruit top student-athletes from throughout the state.

While Cal Poly’s athletics past may only be a memory stored in record books and the Hall of Fame, the future remains bright with promise, not just for students competing within the conference but at the NCAA Division I level as well.