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Cal Poly Architecture Department Receives Largest Single Gift Commitment in CSU History

SAN LUIS OBISPO – The Architecture Department at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, a nationally recognized program that has educated many of the professional architects who serve California and the nation, today announced a pledged bequest of $60 million.

It is the largest single gift commitment ever made to a campus in the California State University – the largest system of senior higher education in the country.

Nationwide, it is also one of the largest gift commitments ever made to an architecture department at a public university.

Cal Poly is respecting the donor’s request that his name not be announced.

Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker explained: “Even as we respect the donor’s desire for anonymity, we are honoring his wish to share his story. Although he was unable to complete his degree due to financial hardship, it is especially inspiring to know that the architecture program resonated with a student and inspired him to make it possible for generations of students to enjoy one of the finest architectural educations and experiences.”

While attending Cal Poly as an architecture major, the donor says he learned “a fundamental approach to seeing the world differently,” which continues to play an important role in his life.

As a successful entrepreneur, the donor now has the opportunity, through his gift commitment, to fulfill his expressed desire “to engage in creating a vision of how architects can contribute socially and culturally to our environment.”

College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED) Dean R. Thomas Jones said: “Our students and alumni value the high quality of learning that we provide, and the donor's generosity emphasizes the life-long impact this education offers. A gift of this magnitude to the department helps fulfill dreams of a future beyond any of our lifetimes.”

In discussing his decision to make the gift, the donor said it all started with a letter from Architecture Department Head Henri T. de Hahn.

Sent last fall to all architecture alumni, the letter described de Hahn’s enthusiasm about his role as the new department head and extended an invitation asking alumni to play an important role and continue to be part of the Cal Poly experience.

De Hahn believes that the donor’s passion for architecture validates his department’s mission, and it has inspired him to think about the enriched opportunities they can offer students.

“This gift will allow us to foster interdisciplinary education that will enable our graduates to contribute alongside other professionals – engineers, city and regional planners, landscape architects, construction managers – to ensure a better environment,” he said.

Paul R. Neel, former State Architect for California and former dean of the college, sees the gift commitment as a validation of Cal Poly’s educational learn-by-doing philosophy. “One man’s legacy, through generosity and vision,
becomes the legacy of all of us who believe so strongly in the particular education offered at Cal Poly.”

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