Like a tandem bicycle, Cal Poly’s endowment requires two sources of momentum to keep a steady pace forward. It’s a careful blend of donor generosity and protection of their investment.

"The growth of our endowment is an important step forward as Cal Poly looks toward its next century," said President Warren J. Baker. "Our endowment provides program support, allows us to fund endowed chairs and professorships, and helps to assure learn-by-doing experiences for our students. I am deeply grateful for endowed gifts because they are an investment in our future that comes with a tremendous vote of confidence."

Sound financial management provided a return of 18 percent last year, better than the national average endowment return of 15 percent. By pooling resources and using industry-leading advisors, the university is able to enjoy an important economy of scale.

"Our investment consultant is one of the most respected firms in the nation. Our partnership with them and the counsel of our Investment Committee have laid the groundwork for a model of fiscal responsibility and continued growth," said Frank Mumford, executive director of the Cal Poly Foundation, which manages the university’s endowment.

The combination of donors and investment returns has made Cal Poly’s endowment the largest in the California State University system.

“It is such a pleasure to see how the Cal Poly family has begun to recognize the power of a strong endowment," said Sandra G. Ogren, vice president for university advancement. "It signals they have faith in our ability to manage the funds and faith in the mission of our campus.”

Endowed funds are gifts made to the university that are invested to provide income to Cal Poly forever. They are a critical form of private support, as they allow the campus to implement new programs and plan new facilities.

During the Centennial Campaign, the university’s endowment more than tripled, growing from $43.1 million at the beginning of 1998 to $140.1 million at the end of 2004. The last 25 years are also impressive: a quarter-century ago, the endowment was valued at $1.7 million.