Sept. 18, 2006

CSU Chair Roberta Achtenberg Delivers Fall Conference Keynote Address

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- CSU Board of Trustees Chair Robert Achtenberg told Cal Poly faculty and staff gathered today for the annual Fall Conference that the system must take the lead in helping the state provide “true access” to higher education.

Referring to the dramatic increase in the number of first- or second-generation, non–native speaking students in California, she said access is an important driver of the CSU mission.

“There is a great need for California to do something about the potential loss of a generation,” she said. “It’s time to push ourselves and the state to do more.”

She added that California needs a comprehensive plan for the state’s entire educational system, and the CSU must be a major player in development of a new strategic plan.

Citing a study conducted at UC Berkeley, she explained that while there will be a cost associated with implementing such a plan, there is also a cost to neglecting education. “We will forgo revenues and pay more to support a population with increasing levels of poverty and incarceration.”

While the payoff won’t come immediately, she pointed out, it will come soon. “Ten years after the generation graduates, the public sector will show a positive balance,” she said.
Any increase in access should also be accompanied by an increase in excellence, according to Achtenberg. “In recruiting and retaining a high quality faculty we face a huge challenge. This was a priority…that we have not delivered,” she said.

A commitment to close the salary gap of faculty and staff needs to be “reaffirmed” by the CSU Board of Trustees, she said, adding, “I have every reason to believe it will. We need to march up to the Legislature every year till we fill that gap.”

She also pledged that the Board’s planning will include dialog with faculty and staff on every one of the CSU’s 23 campuses. “And we will be publicizing our goals and timetables to gain the public’s confidence.”

Because the CSU is the largest, most diverse and most complex institution in the nation, its actions are closely watched, she said. “If we choose worthy, bold and consistent goals, they will be emulated and California will again lead the way for public higher education.”

Other events at Monday’s 2006 Fall Convocation in Harman Hall in the Performing Arts Center’s Christopher Cohan Center included:

Also recognized were the recipients of the Distinguished Scholarship Award, Distinguished Teaching Award, Outstanding Faculty Advisor, and Outstanding Staff.