



Oct. 30, 2008

A Letter from President Baker to the Campus Community

Followed by a Letter from the Cal Poly Crop Science Department

To Cal Poly Faculty and Staff:

As Cal Poly's president, I join the dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and the faculty of the Horticulture and Crop Science Department in condemning recent incidents reported at Cal Poly's Crops House that involved display of racially charged symbols that harken to a shameful period of American history.

Such hurtful and indeed hateful expressions have no place in a university that prides itself on an ethic of openness and mutual respect among all peoples and a commitment to rational and civil discourse. The students have taken a first important step by apologizing for their actions. The department and the College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences are working with them to ensure they understand fully the effect of their actions and to pursue options for addressing the impact such incidents have on our community.

I would like to offer a few thoughts about the vitally important place of diversity in the life of the University. With the increasingly global scope of life and work, the extraordinary diversity of California's population and the growing diversity of our own student body, it is important for us to provide a learning environment that engages our students in ways that will prepare them for success in a multicultural world. This means that students will need to learn with people of different backgrounds, to think globally and to understand the value of different perspectives and ideas, as well as appreciate and embrace cultures beyond their own.

Students from different personal, social and cultural backgrounds enrich the University with their varied perspectives and life histories. All of our students in turn expect that Cal Poly's learning environment will help and support them in their personal growth and intellectual development.

We must take care that we are doing all we can to support and realize the full potential of the University's rich and increasingly diverse student community.

Creating and sustaining a diverse learning environment is essential to a 21st century education. This deeply disturbing incident shows that we have much more work to do before we can say we have achieved this goal. While faculty, staff and administrators have special responsibility for doing everything we can to build an inclusive educational community, students also share responsibility for recognizing and upholding the values of openness and mutual respect without which it is not possible for a modern university – for our university – to function and carry out its vital educational mission.

We all are responsible as members of this university community to foster a welcoming, inclusive and civil community so that learning can flourish.

Warren J. Baker, President
California Polytechnic State University

**Statement from the Faculty of the Horticulture and Crop Science Department
College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences**

Reports of two student parties recently held at Cal Poly's Crops House contained allegations of a sign displaying racial epithets and other derogatory language, as well as the presence of other questionable materials.

We are investigating details of these incidents and meeting with students involved. We, as department and college leaders, wish to express our dismay over these reprehensible incidents.

As members of the larger university community, we found the incident reports disturbing and completely counter to the principle of civil discourse which the college and university try to impart to all our students.

CAFES has often been described as the friendliest college at Cal Poly, for good reason. The vast majority of our students are responsible, hard-working, ethical young people, with respect for different points of view.

The potential harm to our Horticulture and Crop Science Department, CAFES, and university from these incidents should not be underestimated. Our supporters expect us to provide well-rounded graduates with a global perspective to fuel the state's workforce. These supporters include current and prospective students, their parents, alumni and friends, our donors and employers who hire our graduates.

We would like to assure our stakeholders that the Horticulture and Crop Science Department, CAFES and Cal Poly strongly endorse the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and respect for all people.

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