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May 21, 2009
SAN LUIS OBISPO

Statement from Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker

Today's arrests are a sad reminder of the tragedy that took the life of a promising young Cal Poly student and caused so much pain to the family of Carson Starkey. Our sympathy again goes out to Carson's family.

To the Cal Poly community and the public, I want to underscore, emphatically, that Cal Poly has zero tolerance for hazing.

I also want to note that three separate and distinct processes have been underway since Carson's death last December.

First is the criminal justice process: Because the incident occurred off-campus, the San Luis Obispo Police Department and the District Attorney have had the oversight responsibility for the criminal investigation of this incident. As you would expect, Cal Poly has cooperated fully in that process.

Second is Cal Poly's student disciplinary process: The University has investigated more than a dozen students who may have been involved in this tragic event. As a result of those investigations and as an outcome of the campus disciplinary process, nine students have either permanently withdrawn from Cal Poly or been suspended for at least one academic year. Our investigations into other students who may have been involved are continuing. In addition the university has revoked the fraternity's charter indefinitely.

Third is Cal Poly's ongoing and expanded program to educate students about dangerous and unlawful behaviors such as hazing and the use of alcohol: We have initiated several new programs designed to eliminate hazing and promote responsible social behaviors. Among those programs are required training sessions for student leaders of Greek pledge activities. We also are hiring two staff people who will devote 100 percent of their time to working with and educating all fraternity and sorority members on these issues.

The Cal Poly community remains deeply saddened by this course of events but we are determined to draw lessons that may help us avoid future tragedies.

For additional questions or to schedule an interview, contact Stacia Momburg at 805-756-6260 or 805-459-8392.