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Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker Announces Retirement



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SAN LUIS OBISPO – Warren J. Baker announced today that he is retiring as president of Cal Poly after more than 30 years.

CSU Chancellor Charles B. Reed praised Baker's accomplishments as visionary and enduring. "Over three decades Warren Baker has provided visionary leadership for Cal Poly and served the CSU system very capably.

"Under Warren's direction, Cal Poly emerged as one of the nation's premier polytechnic universities, with an outstanding reputation for graduating students who are highly sought after by employers. Warren is also admired by his colleagues around the United States for his leadership on policy issues, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

education and research. His extraordinarily thoughtful, incisive and results-oriented approach to leadership has resulted in a significant legacy that will continue to benefit Cal Poly, the CSU and the nation for many years to come," Reed said.

Baker's retirement will be effective after a successor assumes the presidency. The Board of Trustees of the California State University will conduct a search that is expected to be completed by the middle of 2010, Reed said.

Under Baker's leadership, Cal Poly consistently has earned national recognition for excellence and for its learn-by-doing teaching methodology that encourages students to explore real-world problems and develop practical solutions.

"It has been an extraordinary privilege to be associated with the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Cal Poly," Baker told Cal Poly's college deans today. "Working together, we have enriched the curriculum, raised standards and earned national recognition for academic excellence. Together, we have built Cal Poly into one of the nation's premier polytechnic universities."

As a polytechnic university, Cal Poly emphasizes majors in science, mathematics, engineering, architecture and agriculture. While nurturing Cal Poly's learn-by-doing methods, particularly in the polytechnic areas, Baker simultaneously worked to expand and strengthen offerings in the liberal arts and business to ensure that the university's graduates are well rounded, resourceful and innovative.

Since Baker became president in 1979, a total of 20 new majors and 72 minors have been introduced for undergraduates, along with 15 new master's degree programs.

As part of the learn-by-doing tradition, Cal Poly students participate in more than 400 clubs and organizations related to their fields of study. Their internships and co-operative education experiences contribute to what industry leaders have described as a hallmark of their professional abilities: "They are ready to contribute on their first day of work."

A key part of Cal Poly's reputation for producing resourceful professionals and innovative leaders is the university's study-abroad programs. Cal Poly regularly ranks in the top five nationally among master's universities for the number of students who participate in study-abroad programs in any given year.

Applied research programs also expanded over the Baker years. Among the new centers and institutes for applied research established since 1979 were the Irrigation Training and Research Center, the Environmental Biotechnology Institute, the Dairy Products Technology Center, the Collaborative Agent Design (CAD) Research Center, and the Brock Institute for Agricultural Communication.

Sponsored research grants and contracts have steadily increased, and the University is recognized for its outstanding programs to engage undergraduate students in research, an opportunity at many schools that is reserved for graduate students. In addition, the campus broke ground this year on the first phase of a university technology park that will house high-tech businesses interested in working with Cal Poly's faculty and students.

Baker also oversaw an aggressive upgrade and expansion of campus buildings and facilities that approached \$1 billion over his 30 years, thanks to investment from a variety of public and private sources.

Reputation for excellence

For the past 17 years, U.S. News and World Report magazine has ranked Cal Poly as the best public masters university in the West, and in 2009 the magazine ranked Cal Poly 6th overall in the magazine's list of western public and private masters universities. Also this year, Forbes magazine named Cal Poly one of America's top colleges and universities.

"This national recognition is a wonderful tribute to our faculty and students, and it has to be reassuring to our generous alumni that we are putting their contributions to good use," Baker said.

“But while national recognition is always welcome, what’s most important is what we are doing today to prepare our students for an increasingly complex world that requires all graduates to have more than a passing knowledge of science and technology. It’s also our mission to produce resourceful scientists and engineers who have the skill to broadly integrate knowledge and values to solve the complex social, scientific and technological problems facing the world,” Baker said.

Selective admissions, diversity

During Baker’s tenure, admission to Cal Poly has become increasingly competitive. Freshmen SAT scores and grade-point averages have steadily increased. Today, the freshmen entering Cal Poly are among the most competitive in the nation. Applications have increased nearly fivefold over the past 30 years making Cal Poly one of the most selective public universities in the nation.

At the same time, Cal Poly has become more accessible to California’s diverse population. When Baker became president, fewer than 1 in 10 Cal Poly students were from non-white ethnic groups. Today, nearly one in four of Cal Poly’s students are Asian, Hispanic/Latino, African American or Native American. Cal Poly also is a national leader in graduating Hispanic professionals in agriculture, architecture and engineering.

“It’s no surprise that Cal Poly is the top choice for many of the best high-school students,” Baker said. “We have steadily improved student graduation rates, our students are increasingly receiving national awards and our graduates are highly sought after.”

In a recent study on alumni earning power in Forbes Magazine, Cal Poly graduates ranked third among all U.S. public universities. New graduates typically earn salaries at the upper end of the scale because of the practical experiences they have had as undergraduates.

Generous alumni and industry supporters

Cal Poly now has more than 117,000 alumni living and working across the country and around the world, distinguishing themselves across a wide variety of professional fields, frequently crediting their experience at Cal Poly as the key to their success.

“It’s a pleasure, and a moment of great pride, when alumni tell us what Cal Poly means to them,” Baker said. “In a recent survey of alumni, one wrote what I believe is the essence of Cal Poly: ‘The learn-by-doing philosophy is strongly emphasized in every department, every class and every student. Graduates go into the world of work knowing what to do, how to do it and how to work as a team to successfully complete the task at hand.’”

“I hear that kind of appreciation for the Cal Poly experience all the time,” Baker said. “I know that’s why alumni, industry supporters and other friends have given generously of their time, talent and treasure on the university’s behalf.”

From the beginning of his tenure as president, Baker recognized that Cal Poly could realize its promise only by reaching out to friends beyond the university.

He established the President’s Cabinet, an advisory body of senior leaders from industry, government and the

community. He encouraged Cal Poly's colleges and departments to establish similar advisory groups, and today more than 800 volunteers provide advice, counsel and support across all of the campus' colleges and divisions.

"Warren Baker has built a remarkable network of contacts from industries across California and the U.S., and these business and technical leaders provide valuable advice as well as financial support to Cal Poly," said Steve Ciesinski, chairman of the President's Cabinet and SRI International's vice president for corporate strategic programs.

"Few people realize how effective he has been at this critical project, nor do many realize how important industry support has been in providing countless educational opportunities for students and faculty. It really is an extraordinary accomplishment," Ciesinski said.

Baker also made it a priority to develop the University's fundraising prowess, and succeeded in building the largest endowment among the CSU's 23 campuses. The Centennial Capital Campaign, begun on the university's 100th anniversary in 2001, exceeded the \$225 million target by an additional \$40 million. The campaign set a new national record for masters universities and in 2004 Baker received the Chief Executive Leadership Award, Far West Region of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

"Cal Poly receives very generous support from students, parents, alumni, and the university's many industry partners because they know that Cal Poly is delivering a student experience that builds confident, resourceful professionals and, ultimately, innovative leaders in their field," said Gary Bloom, a 1982 computer science graduate, former chairman, president, and chief executive officer of VERITAS Software Corporation and chairman of the Cal Poly Foundation Board, the university's major fundraising organization. "President Baker's tireless work over the years has been to make sure the student experience is challenging and relevant to what will be expected of students when they begin their professional careers."

Along with increasing private funding, Baker developed the Cal Poly Plan in 1996 in response to a change in California's funding that no longer recognized the higher cost of programs such as architecture, engineering and agriculture, programs that enroll a significant majority of Cal Poly students.

As permitted by a 1996 change in the CSU student fee policy, the Cal Poly Plan provided for investment of a special academic student fee in expanding learn-by-doing opportunities, increasing access to classes, reducing the time for students to complete a degree and giving student advisory committees considerable influence over how the fees would be spent. The university formed a compact with its students who three times have overwhelmingly endorsed higher fees to support the Cal Poly Plan since its inception in 1996.

Currently, the fees provide \$17 million annually for support of academic programs. Last spring, students approved another increase for the Cal Poly Plan. Nearly half of the student body voted and 78 percent endorsed the increase. Pending final approval by the CSU, the academic fee increase will support increased investment in learn-by-doing opportunities, expanded access to classes to guarantee students the opportunity to graduate in four years in most programs, and further improvements in quality.

Expansion of campus facilities to support learn-by-doing

To support the learn-by-doing curriculum, Cal Poly's investment in renovating and expanding campus facilities

during Baker's tenure approached \$1 billion.

In 2001, the CSU Board of Trustees approved a new campus master plan to increase academic year enrollment to 21,000, increase year-round instruction, and expand campus education and housing facilities. The new master plan is supported by a nearly \$1-billion program of capital improvements.

"Our polytechnic programs and project-based learning methods require extensive facilities, particularly in the sciences, architecture, engineering and agriculture" Baker said. "Learn-by-doing is the cornerstone of our success, and to do it well, we've worked hard to have the best laboratories, studios and other facilities possible. These facilities are absolutely essential to support our learn-by-doing in nearly all our programs from engineering and agriculture to architecture, design and the performing and visual arts."

Among the many campus improvements:

- Two buildings for the College of Engineering completed in the past six years.
- The Construction Innovation Center, completed in 2008.
- The Bonderson Projects Center, which was completely funded by Paul and Sandra Bonderson. Paul Bonderson, a 1975 graduate of the College of Engineering, saw a need to create space for student projects. The Bonderson Center, which provides work space for senior projects in engineering, was completed in 2006.
- The Advanced Technology Laboratories, completed in 1999. This was the first building funded entirely from private sources. Funds came from the National Science Foundation, the Keck Foundation and several corporate donors.
- The two phases of the Dairy Science Instructional Center, completed in 1994 with significant help from the California Dairy Industry.
- A Poultry Science Instructional Center, completed in 1994 with assistance from the California poultry industry.

"Undeniably, state-of-the-art buildings are necessary to provide a first-class education," said Provost Bob Koob. "But what goes on inside the buildings is what's important, and Warren's wide-ranging intellect coupled with his refusal to micro-manage the campus have allowed diverse ideas to grow and flourish here."

This fall, Cal Poly completed the final phase of Poly Canyon Village, a \$300-million on-campus housing project that houses 2,600 students in a village-like setting with community gathering places, restaurants, a swimming pool and study facilities.

"Research shows that students who live on campus their first two years tend to perform better academically than those who don't, and that was a big motivation in our decision to expand campus housing," Baker said.

During the Baker era, the University has developed a sophisticated information technology infrastructure to support teaching and learning. ITS resources include a campus-wide fiber optic data network, an array of smart classrooms, studio laboratories, and on-line student services that support new uses of technology in teaching.

In addition, the University has made significant improvements in athletic and recreation facilities including construction of a recreation and fitness center, a 30-acre outdoor sports complex with softball and baseball stadiums, a major renovation of Mott Gym and the expansion and renovation of Spanos Stadium. Under Baker's leadership, Cal Poly moved from Division II to Division I for intercollegiate sports, raising the national

profile of the university's intercollegiate sports teams, while preserving the athletic program's strong emphasis on student academic achievement and success. Moving up to Division I was supported by the students who have endorsed fees to help finance the programs and the opportunity to compete with UC and other CSU campuses in the Big West Conference.

Two campus resources were the result of unusual in-kind contributions made during the Baker era:

- In 1993, Cal Poly alumnus Al Smith, the founder of Orchard Supply Hardware, donated the 3,200-acre Swanton Pacific ranch in Santa Cruz County, valued at more than \$10 million, to be maintained as a working ranch and used exclusively for instruction and research in agriculture, natural resource management and the biological sciences. Smith also contributed \$12 million for an endowment to help support ongoing operations and learn-by-doing at the ranch.
- In 2001, Unocal donated its 3,200-foot pier at Avila Beach, valued at \$18 million, for research and marine science education. Unocal also contributed a \$4.5 million endowment to support maintenance and two professorships. As result, the facility today supports faculty and student research and Cal Poly is quickly becoming a major center for environmental marine research.

Another campus showpiece is the Performing Arts Center, which was completed in 1996 and financed by a three-way partnership led by Cal Poly with the City of San Luis Obispo and private donors through the leadership of the Foundation for the Performing Arts Center (FPAC).

"The PAC is an excellent model of collaboration between Cal Poly and the community, and serves as an excellent reminder of our mutual interdependence," Baker said. "Together we have been able to create a world-class facility for the performing arts."

San Luis Obispo attorney Warren Sinsheimer, a key community leader in the creation of the Performing Arts Center, recalled Baker's drive to see the PAC built. "President Baker brought vision, courage and moxie to a challenging process that has resulted in what many regard as the jewel of both the Cal Poly campus and the San Luis Obispo community.

"He grasped two important concepts: First, well-educated graduates of a polytechnic university need exposure to the best artists and performers, and second, collaboration between the campus and its surrounding community would build bonds vital to both," Sinsheimer said.

An academic leader on the national stage

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Baker earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in civil engineering from Notre Dame and his Ph.D. in geotechnical engineering from the University of New Mexico.

During his career in higher education, Baker has achieved distinction as a teacher, a scholar and a leader in setting national education policy. In particular, he has established an international reputation as a thought-leader and advocate for STEM education, through voluntary service on boards and commissions and through leadership of national and statewide initiatives.

Before joining Cal Poly as president in 1979, Baker served as vice president for academic affairs at the University of Detroit, where he was Chrysler Professor and Dean of the College of Engineering.

President Ronald Reagan appointed Baker to serve on the National Science Board, which is the governing body for the National Science Foundation. President Reagan also appointed him to the USAID Board for International Food and Agricultural Development.

During his 11-year tenure on these two boards, Baker was influential in advocating for programs that benefitted universities like Cal Poly. Opportunities opened up for programs to support undergraduate research and led to the NSF support of Cal Poly's Advanced Technology Laboratory and a contract from USAID to develop a College of Agriculture for the Humid Tropics in Costa Rica. Baker also co-chaired the National Science Board Committee that authored the report on "The Role of the National Science Foundation in Economic Competitiveness."

Baker is one of the longest serving members of the California Council for Science and Technology and has served on the Board of Directors since 1996. A member of the Business Higher Education Forum, he co-chairs the BHEF STEM initiative, along with Cal Poly alumnus Bill Swanson, who is chairman and CEO of the Raytheon Company.

Under the Baker-Swanson leadership, the STEM Initiative produced two significant reports on K-12 science and math education, "An American Imperative: Transforming the Recruitment, Renewal and Retention of our Nation's Mathematics and Science Teaching Workforce" and "A Commitment to America's Future: Responding to the Crisis in Mathematics and Science Education."

Baker, Swanson and Susan Hackwood, who is executive director of the California Council on Science and Technology, together chair a California STEM education planning initiative, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation.

Baker is currently a member of the Board of Governors of the U.S.-Mexico Science Foundation. This foundation is supported by both countries' governments along with grants from corporations and foundations and fosters efforts in technology development, research and science, math and engineering education.

Baker serves as the co-principal investigator and member of the Board of Governors of California MESA, an inter-segmental program operated by the University of California to promote Math, Engineering and Science Achievement in K-12 and the California Community Colleges and Universities.

Among the honors Baker has received include:

- 2004 Chief Executive Leadership Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE, Far Western Region).
- 1997 Cavanaugh Award from the University of Notre Dame, the highest award bestowed on an alumnus for outstanding public service.
- Outstanding Alumnus Awards, Colleges of Engineering, Universities of New Mexico and Notre Dame.
- Distinguished Education Achievement Award from the California Society of Professional Engineers.

On behalf of the CSU, Baker has led a range of information-technology initiatives, among them:

- From 1993 through 1997, he chaired the system-wide Commission on Learning Resources and Instructional Technology

with oversight for Project DELTA, which explored use of technology to enhance learning.

- He led a pilot program involving several CSU campuses that developed multimedia curricula for introductory courses, such as pre-calculus.
- Baker has been a member of the CSU Technology Steering Committee since 1995.
- From 1994 to 1996, Baker led the CSU, SUNY, CUNY Consortium for Educational Technology, which produced four discussion papers: "Fair Use of Copyrighted Works," "The Academic Library in the Information Age: Changing Roles," "Ownership of Works at the University, Unbundling of Rights and the Pursuit of Higher Learning," and "Information Resources and Library Services for Distance Learners: A Framework for Quality."

For his own professional and personal achievements, Baker credits the dedication, support and creativity of his wife, Carly Fitzsimons Baker.

In addition to helping him manage the social and development activities expected of a university president, Mrs. Baker has been a leader in the Foundation for the Performing Arts Center. She also has been a three-time gubernatorial appointee to mental health advisory panels. She also has worked on numerous local projects involving juvenile justice, homeless assistance and shelters for women. Along the way, Mrs. Baker completed a master's degree in counseling at Cal Poly with an internship at Atascadero State Hospital where she later served as chair of the advisory board.

The Bakers have four children, two with bachelor's degrees and one with a master's degree from Cal Poly, and eight grandchildren.

When Baker steps down from the presidency, he will continue to assist the chancellor with CSU science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) initiatives and will teach part-time at Cal Poly.

Presidential Search Process

The Board of Trustees of the California State University, in partnership with the chancellor, is responsible for the recruitment, selection and appointment of each campus president. Upon learning of a presidential vacancy, the chair of the trustees establishes a Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President (TCSP), which will include the chair of the trustees, the chancellor and three trustees designated by the chair. The chair of the trustees designates one of the trustees as chair of the TCSP. The chair of the trustees also adds an advisory group to the TCSP, known as the Advisory Committee to the Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President (ACTCSP), to include campus, alumni and community representatives as well as a president from another CSU campus, who will be selected by the chancellor. Following solicitation of applications, review and interview of candidates, campus visits by semi-finalists, and consultation with the ACTCSP, the TCSP will recommend a minimum of three candidates to the Board of Trustees. The "Board of Trustees Policy for the Selection of Presidents" provides a full description of the selection process (<http://www.calstate.edu/datastore/PresidentialSearch.shtml>)

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