Proposition 47 Would Bring New Engineering Building to Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Proposition 47, the education bond on California's November ballot, would pay for construction of a new, badly-needed engineering building at Cal Poly, fill it with high-tech engineering equipment, and also provide the university with money to design a new architecture building and prepare plans to remodel a 30-year-old engineering and architecture building.

If California voters approve Proposition 47 in the Nov. 5 election, Cal Poly's highly ranked College of Engineering will be able to start construction on the proposed Engineering IV Building to house its aeronautical, mechanical, civil, environmental, industrial and manufacturing engineering programs.

That would allow teachers and students to move out of corrugated metal buildings on the north side of campus that are 40 to 50 years old. They were originally built to house the agricultural welding and related farm shops. Because of their age, electrical wiring and physical limitations, those buildings are not capable of supporting the technology-intensive instruction required to educate engineering students in the 21st century, stressed Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker.

"Proposition 47 would allow Cal Poly to tear down outdated structures to make room for modern facilities designed and equipped to produce tomorrow's engineers," Baker emphasized. "We have worked hard to earn recognition as having one of the best public undergraduate engineering programs in the nation.

Our engineering students do receive an excellent education here. But the field of engineering has changed during the past 40 years - and our engineering classrooms and labs need to change with it if we are to continue to have one of the nation's top engineering colleges."

The brand-new, 112,000 square-foot Engineering IV Building would rise northwest of Kennedy Library, near two existing engineering buildings and one currently under construction -- concentrating much of the university's engineering programs in one area.

In addition to providing modern classroom space for the aeronautical, mechanical, civil, environmental, industrial and manufacturing engineering programs, Engineering IV would help to unify engineering facilities on campus.
Proposition 47 would also give Cal Poly the funding to purchase the latest high-tech equipment for the Engineering IV Building, including lasers for mapping, visualization, and velocity measurement in the wind and water tunnel laboratories; scanning electron and optical microscopes for the materials engineering laboratories; and helicopter controls and gyroscope controls test systems for the aeronautical engineering control laboratories.

Cal Poly's architecture program would also benefit from Proposition 47. The bond includes money to design, through the schematic drawing stage, a new multi-story building in the heart of campus for the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. The college educates one of five California architects.

The new architecture building would house the college's construction management and architecture programs and would provide added lecture space. It would be built on the site of the existing Heating and Air Conditioning facility in the campus core. That complex is a conglomeration of small buildings ranging from 40 to 60 years old.

Finally, Proposition 47 includes funds to prepare plans for remodeling and renovation of the 30-year-old Engineering West Building, which houses architecture laboratories and offices, engineering laboratories, and the industrial technology program. The 165,000 square-foot remodel would improve lighting, wiring and classroom and lab space in Engineering West, which was built in the 1960s.

All of the Proposition 47 projects are important to Cal Poly because they would allow the university to strengthen its advantage as having among the nation's top undergraduate engineering and architecture programs by offering students up-to-date facilities and the latest high-tech equipment.

Student demand for those programs is high, and graduates of those programs are in demand among California's expanding technology-based employers, Baker noted.

The university is not depending on bond money alone to improve technology, classrooms and labs. Cal Poly is currently in the middle of a $225 million campaign to raise money for capital projects like new classrooms, labs and equipment as well as endowed professorships and student scholarships. The university has already raised $170 million in private donations and will continue intensive fund-raising through 2004 in its Centennial Campaign.

However, Cal Poly still needs state and voter support to take many capital improvement projects from the drawing board to reality, Baker said. If Proposition 47 is not approved by voters, the university will be unable to fund and build those much-needed projects and they will be put on hold indefinitely.

For more details on what Proposition 47 would bring to Cal Poly, including photos of old buildings and architectural drawings of new buildings, visit www.calpolynews.calpoly.edu/general/prop47.html.

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