

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California



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Cal Poly Dean Phil Bailey Honored for Longtime Support African-American Students

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Phil Bailey, dean of Cal Poly's College of Science and Mathematics, will receive an Ambassador of Goodwill award April 21 at the ninth annual African Goodwill Awards ceremony in Los Angeles.

Bailey was nominated for the award by Cal Poly History Professor John Origi, a 2009 recipient of the same award from the African Focus organization.

The nonprofit group sponsors the annual African Goodwill Awards "to recognize, appreciate and celebrate the goodwill and contributions made by individuals, churches, organizations and corporations in response to the humanitarian needs of African people around the world."

"I nominated Dean Bailey because of the selfless and unparalleled services he has rendered to black students at Cal Poly for nearly two decades," said Origi, a native of Nigeria.

In his nomination, Origi stressed that Bailey has spent years mentoring black students, providing some of them with housing or financial support, and helping many find jobs. Bailey is also a longtime supporter of the university's Black Commencement Ceremony. Every year, he provides traditional Kente cloth from Ghana that is made into the stoles students wear during the ceremony.

Bailey was surprised and honored to be chosen to receive the award. He doesn't consider anything that he has done to mentor or help students extraordinary. "That's what you do as a teacher anyway," he said. "You try to help your students reach their full potential."

Bailey said his support for minority students grew out of his upbringing. "I grew up in Texas and went to segregated schools. I saw a lot of injustice, but I wasn't aware of what I could do about it at the time. Now, my role affords me the ability to reach out to students in need and offer a hand. We owe it to our students – all of our students – to do whatever we can to help them succeed."

The dean and his wife, Cal Poly Chemistry and Biochemistry Department Chair Christina Bailey, are the parents of four adopted multiracial children. Three of their children are African-American.

After their children were grown and out of the house in the 1990s, the Baileys took struggling Cal Poly students into their home. Some stayed a quarter, others as long as two years. In all, about 15 Cal Poly alumni have lived with the Baileys. Almost all were minority students.

The Baileys have also helped first-generation, immigrant and minority students in other ways – buying books, paying tuition for a quarter, financing needed medical care, or whatever else it took to help students get their degrees. For many more students, the couple dished out moral support along with invitations to a home-cooked dinner and a place to do their laundry.

"They have gone above and beyond what their jobs call for," said Donna Davis, an academic services coordinator at the university and member of the organizing committee for the annual Black Commencement ceremony.

Other past African Goodwill Ambassador award recipients include singer Chaka Kahn; actresses Mo'Nique and Stephanie Okereke; Nigeria's First Lady Dame Patience G. Jonathan; neurosugeon Deborrah Hyde (who became, in 1985, the second black female brain surgeon in the U.S.); and Richard M. Walden, president, CEO and founder of Operation USA, a Los Angeles-based nongovernmental organization specializing in disaster relief, medical access and economic development.

For more details on the African Focus organization or the annual African Goodwill Awards, go to www.africanfocus.org.

About Dean Phil Bailey

Bailey has served as dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Cal Poly since 1983.

He earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry at the University of Texas, Austin, and his doctorate in chemistry at Purdue University. He was hired as an assistant chemistry professor at Cal Poly in 1969, named associate dean of the College of Science and Mathematics in 1973, and became dean of the college in 1983. He served as the university's interim vice president for Academic Affairs in 1989-90. He is the most senior science dean in the 23-campus California State University system. Throughout his 43 years at Cal Poly, he has taught at least one chemistry class each quarter.

He has received Cal Poly's Advisor of the Year award, recognition from the university's Disability Resource Center, the Black Faculty/Staff Award, and the Cal Poly Provost's Leadership Award for Partnership in Philanthropy.

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