

A HIGH-TECH LABORATORY NESTLED in the pastures of the Cal Poly campus has evolved into a major solutions center for cheese and yogurt producers throughout California.

A team of Dairy Products Technology Center students and scientists recently concocted a recipe for success for an up-and-coming player in the huge frozen foods industry.

Pinkberry, a frozen-treat chain so popular in Southern California that the *Los Angeles Times* called it “the taste that launched a 1,000 parking tickets,” contacted the DPTC to help ease their growing pains, after their solo shop multiplied to more than 30 stores in less than two years.

Although the DPTC team’s collective lips are sealed to protect the secret formula for the signature “pouty peaks” of Pinkberry creations, Director Phil Tong did reveal they helped the company determine how to make their product in larger quantities, while insuring compliance with California law and retaining the singular taste its avid followers clamor for.

As a result, more Pinkberry shops could be just around the corner, serving up their soft swirls of chilly bliss in the form of frozen yogurt, smoothies and shaved ice – with toppings that range from Coco Pebbles to coconut.

“We worked with other consultants and universities previously with little success,” Pinkberry President Shelly Hwang wrote in a thank-you letter to Tong last summer. “The advice you gave and the test trials you performed enabled us to continue with our development of the Pinkberry business and is

positioning us for larger-scale production.”

In fact, venture capital firm Maveron, co-founded by Howard D. Schultz of Starbuck’s fame, has announced it will infuse \$27.5 million into the budding business.

In another project, a DPTC team guided by Cal Poly Professors Rafael Jimenez and Nana Farkye is working to improve products for a California-cheese giant.

Hilmar Cheese Co., which produces more than 1.3 million pounds each day, not only seeks the services and expertise of DPTC scientists, it also hires dozens of industry-ready graduates from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

“It’s great to work with our recent graduates at Hilmar and solve real-world problems together,” says Jimenez.

“With Hilmar’s cooperation,” said Farkye, “we were able to effectively test and show that the DPTC approaches to improving the quality and taste of low-fat cheese actually work in the industrial situation.”

Like many of the companies it assists, the DPTC started as a small venture and has grown beyond expectations into a world-class education and research center. Tong says the center will mark its 20th anniversary in 2008 with plenty to celebrate and plans for the next 20 years.

“The DPTC is committed to helping California’s booming dairy industry by providing graduates and technology innovations for the next decade and beyond,” said Tong. □

TASTING SWEET SUCCESS



(L-R) Rafael Jimenez, Nana Farkye and Phil Tong