

What Didn't Happen: Analyzing Cal Poly's Proposed Educational Assistance Program
Following the Korean War

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Dr. Andrew Morris, Course Instructor

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By

Sam McClintock

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Abstract: Following the Korean War, Cal Poly was approached to take part in a program to provide technical education assistance to vocational schools in the Republic of Korea by the newly formed United States Foreign Operations Administration. This paper seeks to analyze that program in the context of Cal Poly's history, especially in comparison to other international education programs and to other dealings between the University and the United States Government. Although Cal Poly ultimately never took part in the Korea Program, it still provides insight into the college's priorities and place in the context of US foreign policy in the 1950s.

Introduction

The decades following the end of World War II marked a turning point in United States history. America emerged as a global superpower, and foreign policy was dictated by a reluctance to engage in another total-war conflict on a global scale. Policies of containment and economic reconstruction developed between the United States and its allies with the goals of limiting the sphere of Soviet influence and promoting ideas of liberal capitalism. Foreign aid became an important arm of foreign policy under both the Western and Soviet spheres, with each superpower offering financial support to its allies in a bid for greatest global influence. Cal Poly, a school of just over 2000 students nestled along California's central coast, played a role in this game of Cold War Politics.¹

The California Polytechnic College was one of few schools of its kind in America during the 1940s and 1950s in providing practical agricultural and mechanical vocational education.

¹ Julian McPhee, California State Polytechnic College Annual Report, 1953-54, p.2, Office of the President Collection, 141.01 Office of the President Annual Reports, 1945-46 - 1954-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

Following the Korean War, Cal Poly was approached to take part in the ongoing effort of Korean Reconstruction following the country's occupation by Japan that ended after WWII. The college's educational niche likely made it an enticing candidate for the proposed Korean aid program in 1955. The 1955 contract was never signed though, and Cal Poly dropped out of negotiations with Foreign Operations Administration and the Korean Ministry of Education completely. That said, there is still value in looking back at the program to place the college in the context of US history during the period. Cal Poly's proposed Korean Program exemplifies the University's belief in its unique philosophy of "Learn by Doing" and reflects greater patterns of US foreign policy during the early years of the Cold War.

Historiography

In *The Korean War: A History*, author Bruce Cummings discusses the United States' interest in the Korean peninsula in the late 1940s and early 1950s: that interest being containment. The United States saw the region as important to containing the spread of Communism in the Soviet periphery, and Cummings describes its plans to utilize economic and military measures to pursue these interests.² Another work by the same author looks at what that aid was put towards. *Korea's Place in the Sun, a Modern History* describes the poor state of the Republic of Korea's economy in the 1950s, and how the US was reluctantly willing to foot the bill for President Syngman Rhee's plans for industrialization in order to cultivate a democratic and economically independent body in what it saw as such a contentious region.³

² Bruce Cummings, *The Korean War: A History*, Chapter Eight, A "Forgotten War" That Remade the United States and the Cold War, (New York, NY: Random House, 2010), EPUB version.

³ Bruce Cummings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, Chapter Six, Korean Sun Rising: Industrialization, 1953-Present, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2005), EPUB Version.

Looking at the greater project of Korean Reconstruction and United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA), the article “Sowing War, Reaping Peace: United Nations Resource Development Programs in the Republic of Korea, 1950–1953” by Lisa Brady in the *Journal of Asian Studies* discusses the impact of ecological damage caused by the Korean War affecting natural resources and livestock growth that harmed efforts to revitalize the Korean agricultural sector after World War II.⁴ Brady argues that unlike prior literature regarding Korean reconstruction after occupation by Japan, the Korean War greatly impacted efforts to revitalize the region due to destruction of resources and agricultural regions. David Ekbladh’s article “How to Build a Nation” in the *Wilson Quarterly* takes a more overhead approach to Korean reconstruction since 1945.⁵ Ekbladh focuses more on American leadership and looking at Korea as an independent, non-communist state as opposed to Brady’s closer analysis of factors that affect agricultural and industrial development.

Vernon Ruttan’s book *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid* devotes a section to the history of University involvement in US foreign aid. The section outlines how university involvement in foreign aid dates back to Truman’s Point Four Program in 1949 when the President of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities pledged to aid the program, all the way to the US Agency for International Development (AID) in 1991.⁶ In the chapter, Ruttan argues that the relationship

⁴ Lisa Brady, “Sowing War, Reaping Peace: United Nations Resource Development Programs in the Republic of Korea, 1950–1953,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 2 (May 2018): 351–63.

⁵ David Ekbladh, “How to Build a Nation,” *Wilson Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 12–20.

⁶ Vernon W. Ruttan, “Chapter 9, Universities, Voluntary Organizations, and Public Foundations: Interests, Clients, and Constituencies,” in *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 204-220.

between universities and foreign aid was often cause for frustration, with universities continually subject to bureaucratic red tape.

Taking a closer look, Cal Poly student Anthony Wong's paper "Cold War Culture: The Social Functions of the Cal Poly ROTC from 1953-57" analyzes the role of ROTC on campus during the Korean War. Wong concludes that while the ROTC may have been incepted to contribute to the military industrial complex, in reality Cal Poly's ROTC was vital in helping students defer military service in order to focus on studies, as well as serving as an important part of outreach with the community.⁷ This paper, however, does not discuss Cal Poly's foreign efforts after the war, and instead provides insight into the school's socioeconomic position during the conflict.

It is worth stipulating that little writing exists explicitly about Cal Poly's Korea Program. Most of what is written is not much more than meeting minutes, personal letters, and high-level administrative correspondence between the heads of Cal Poly in the early 1950s and various directors of California State and US Federal departments. Korean Reconstruction was part of a much larger foreign policy campaign, but the extent of Cal Poly's direct involvement probably mostly lies in the Kennedy Library Special Collections and Archives.

The Korea Program

The Korean War ended on July 27, 1953. Five days later, on August first, a letter appeared on Cal Poly President Julian McPhee's desk. This letter came from one L.H. Dennis, then former Executive Secretary of the Vocational Education Administration in Washington,

⁷ Anthony Wong, "Cold War Culture: The Social Functions of the Cal Poly ROTC from 1953-57," *The Forum: Journal of History* 7, no. 1 (2015), <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/forum/vol7/iss1/6/>

informing McPhee of a US educational program to aid in the reconstruction of Korea following the war.⁸ Both McPhee and Dennis were important figures in vocational education, and this was not the first time that the College president had been tipped off to a federal program that may have benefitted the school. Dennis suggested that McPhee write to J. Russell Andrus, University coordinator for the newly formed Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), “on the assumption that your institution might be interested in carrying out an educational contract abroad.”⁹ This letter was the catalyst that set off two years of negotiations between Cal Poly and the FOA to develop an educational assistance program to aid the Republic of Korea.

The FOA, as Dennis informed McPhee, was “The MSA [Mutual Security Agency], the TCA [Technical Cooperation Administration] and other Foreign Operations have been merged...in a new administration known as the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA).”¹⁰ The organizations comprising the FOA were consolidated under Eisenhower administration. As the President put it in 1955,

The Foreign Operations Administration established two years ago, was intended to centralize all governmental operations, as distinguished from policy formulation, that had as their purpose the cooperative development of economic and military strength among the nations of the free world.¹¹

The merging of these two agencies looked upon questionably, however. The TCA was part of Truman’s Point Four program to offer economic and humanitarian aid to contain Soviet

⁸ Correspondence from L.H. Dennis to Julian McPhee, 1 August 1953, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁹ Dennis to McPhee, 1 August 1953.

¹⁰ Dennis to McPhee, 1 August 1953.

¹¹ Letter from Dwight Eisenhower to Secretary Dulles, 17 April 1955, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/234127>

expansion, where the MSA offered economic and *military* support.¹² From the outside, this consolidation alluded to imperialistic ulterior motives influencing foreign policy.¹³ University involvement in the FOA was the result of Administration Director Harold Stassen's plan to "reduce MSA technical assistance staff" and shift the load to "private voluntary organizations and colleges and universities."¹⁴ This plan was not without problems though, but this will be expanded upon later.

McPhee promptly wrote to Andrus, who would be the liaison between Cal Poly and the US Government during the development of the program. McPhee's first letter to Andrus acted as a resume, both of himself and of the college; much like his letter to the Navy did ten years prior. In the letter, McPhee outlined his own qualifications as an administrator for agricultural and vocational education for the state of California and described the facilities at Cal Poly, attaching a course catalog to entice the University Coordinator with the college's offerings.¹⁵ Several days later Andrus responded to McPhee's inquiry, noting that he had not intended for Dennis to contact the schools that the two men had discussed as potential candidates for the program.¹⁶ Regardless, Andrus noted that Cal Poly was mentioned "as eminently suited for undertaking a contract in the field of training vocational education teachers--both in the agricultural and industrial fields."¹⁷ Andrus thanked McPhee for sending his and Cal Poly's credentials but stated that it was ultimately the decision of the Republic of Korea what school would be contracted for

¹² Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 206.

¹³ Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 206.

¹⁴ Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 205.

¹⁵ Correspondence from Julian McPhee to J. Russell Andrus, 26 August 1953, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

¹⁶ Correspondence from J. Russell Andrus to Julian McPhee, 31 August 1953, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

¹⁷ Letter, Andrus to McPhee, 31 August 1953

the program.¹⁸ While it may seem overzealous for McPhee to have written directly to the person responsible for contracting American institutions of education without prior introduction, it is important to consider the result. As a direct result of the letter, Cal Poly received a copy of the generic contract that the US government had used previously to broker deals between American institutions and foreign countries. Word quickly spread through the college, and within the first months of interest in the program Cal Poly instructors were writing to the President for their consideration in the program.¹⁹ The American Book Company, a textbook company, even wrote to McPhee, offering to provide the textbooks that would be used for the program.²⁰

McPhee had a knack for pursuing external projects that he felt would benefit the school. Prior to and during World War 2, Cal Poly was converted into a Naval Flight Preparatory School through a contract with the US Navy. The beginning of the negotiation process with the Navy is eerily similar to early negotiations with the FOA. In both cases, the US government had need to fulfill. McPhee, with all his connections, heard about this need and pounced on the opportunity. In a letter dated October 1942, McPhee wrote to L.H. Dennis, the same official who would contact him about the Korea Program a decade later, outlining Cal Poly's facilities and the advantages to hosting a Naval Preparatory Program at his school.²¹ In the letter, McPhee praised Cal Poly's location on the Central Coast and outlines the facilities that the school has in place, and how those may be used for a number of aircraft and engineering programs suitable to the

¹⁸ Letter, Andrus to McPhee, 31 August 1953.

¹⁹ Correspondence from Harry K. Wolf to Julian McPhee, 15 September 1953, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, Personnel—Applications, Salary Schedules, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

²⁰ Correspondence from Hilda E. Henke to Julian McPhee, 22 January 1954, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

²¹ Correspondence from Julian McPhee to L.H. Dennis, 21 October 1942, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 14, Navy Flight Program, 1942-1950, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

Navy.²² He ends the letter to Dennis by laying out a timeline of all the other people he had contacted about starting a Naval Program and then ask Dennis to use his connections in Washington to move the program along for him.²³ This strategy worked. A few weeks later, McPhee was contacted by the Navy, who had “plans to inaugurate a program to provide aviation ground school instruction for cadets prior to their pre-flight training,” and asked McPhee to outline the available facilities at Cal Poly.²⁴ In May of 1943, a contract between the Cal Poly Foundation and the US Government was drawn up. This contract would see the use of Cal Poly’s land and facilities as a Naval Flight Preparatory School.²⁵ This headfirst approach to contracts with the US government was clearly an MO for McPhee, which explains his upfront nature in advocating for the Korea Program. The Navy contract kept Cal Poly open during the war, and the resulting population expansion following it may have been in part to the visibility the Naval Program brought to the school. It is possible that a similar goal motivated the President’s approach to the Korea Program.

Within six months, a group was sent on a month-long fact-finding trip to Korea to analyze the conditions of vocational schools in the country and develop an initial report to decide how the United States, and thus Cal Poly, would aid those institutions.²⁶ The group consisted of Chester McCorkle, Cal Poly Dean of Instruction and McPhee’s right-hand man, Graham Sullivan, Contra Costa Junior College District Dean of Curriculum, and Dr. Raymond Gregory,

²² McPhee to Dennis, 21 October 1942.

²³ McPhee to Dennis, 21 October 1942.

²⁴ Correspondence from F.U. Lake to Julian McPhee, 31 October 1942, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 14, Navy Flight Program, 1942-1950, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

²⁵ Contract NOp 4 (formerly NOD 3114) between The United States of America and California Polytechnic School Foundation, 15 May 1943, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 14, Lease (NOp4) U.S. Navy--CPS Foundation, 1943, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

²⁶ Correspondence from Julian McPhee to Roy Simpson, 22 March 1954, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

Special Assistant to the Commissioner of Education and a big name in Vocational Education, who also directed the mission.²⁷ As a result of the trip, Gregory and McCorkle authored the “Report of the Vocational Education Mission to Korea, March 13, 1954, to April 17, 1954” in April 1954, and presented their findings to members of the FOA and UNKRA.²⁸ The shape of the program that was ultimately devised was this: A three-way contract between the Republic of Korea’s ministry of Education, the Foreign Operations Administration of the United States, and the Cal Poly Foundation was written.²⁹

It is interesting to note that the arm of Cal Poly that negotiated with the FOA and the Republic of Korea was the Cal Poly Foundation, which still exists today as the Cal Poly Corporation. The Cal Poly Foundation was founded in 1940, “for the purpose of furthering the educational aims and the administrative objectives of the College, the Foundation follows the policy of conducting business operations that will be a basis for instruction in best practices.”³⁰ Foundation programs at the time involved housing, dining, providing basic training from project work, health needs, and even loaning equipment and money for student projects.³¹ The foundation ultimately expanded the scope of what Cal Poly could do for its students while keeping money at the school through its organization as a non-profit corporation. And, although

²⁷ McPhee to Simpson, 22 March 1954.

²⁸ Interdepartmental Correspondence,” Report of the Vocational Education Mission to Korea” attached, Chester McCorkle to members of the President’s council, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea—April 8, 1955 Meeting, McCorkle & Wilson, 1935[sic.]-54, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

²⁹ (Draft) Agreement of The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, The Foreign Operations Administration of the United States of America, and The California State Polytechnic College Foundation, May 1955, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, 1955, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

³⁰ Julian McPhee, Annual Report California State Polytechnic College, 1951-52, p.12, Office of the President Collection, 141.01 Office of the President Annual Reports, 1945-46 - 1954-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

³¹ McPhee, Annual Report 1951-1952, p. 13.

technically a separate body, the foundation was still under the umbrella of the president of the College: McPhee.³²

Under the contract, each party had its mutually agreed-to role. The Cal Poly foundation would provide personnel and equipment to aid in agricultural and industrial education at Korean vocational training schools and would submit annual budgets of the cost to the other members of the agreement.³³ The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea would provide facilities and transportation in Korea and would advise on budgets and planning.³⁴ The FOA would provide transportation to and from Korea and cover allowances spent by instructors, essentially footing the bill until they saw a return from their Korean investment.³⁵ Many iterations of this contract were exchanged between the parties involved ironing out the specifics, but the general themes of Cal Poly providing instructors and equipment to aid Korean vocational education institutions while the FOA paid for it remains consistent throughout all versions. The rather general nature of this contract basically gave the Cal Poly Foundation freedom to structure its end of the program in a way it saw fit. The structure that McPhee eventually drew up was hierarchical in nature; the heads of the Cal Poly Foundation, including the president and the board of directors sat at the top.³⁶ The Foundation Manager and Program Director were below them, and project consultants were below them. Organization then split into two branches, one branch that would take up office space at Cal Poly comprised of two curriculum assistants, a clerical worker, and a bookkeeper.³⁷ The other branch consisted of the personnel that would be

³² McPhee, Annual Report 1951-1952, p. 12.

³³ Ministry, FOA, Foundation agreement, 1-5.

³⁴ Ministry, FOA, Foundation agreement, 14-16.

³⁵ Ministry, FOA, Foundation agreement, 6-13.

³⁶ Julian McPhee, Chart of Proposed Organization of Korean Project, 1955, 144.02 Julian McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, 1955, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

³⁷ McPhee, Chart of Proposed Organization of Korea Program.

on the ground in Korea: The Chief of Party, five agricultural instructors, five industrial instructors, an office manager, and three office workers.³⁸ Overall, by the summer of 1955, when the program was set to get off the ground, the Cal Poly side of the agreement had developed a robust plan according to their understanding of their role in the program.

Cal Poly's Other International Programs

In the context of Cal Poly's International Programs, the Korea Program was sort of a standout. It would have been the first program that had Cal Poly go abroad rather than the other way around. To get a sense of how the Korea Program was different, it helps to look back. Foreign students had been attending Cal Poly for many years. The first year that the school officially recognized the number of students enrolled from foreign countries is 1946.³⁹ Prior annual reports dating back to 1940 lump students from other states *and* foreign countries together as one statistic.⁴⁰ It is not until 1950 that the more precise records of foreign student enrollments are kept, keeping track of what countries these students came from and what majors they took at Cal Poly.⁴¹ The majors that international students took as well as countries of origin vary wildly throughout the fifties. Many came from throughout South and Central America: another important theater in US foreign policy during the Cold War. This is especially true of the early years that Cal Poly kept track of these numbers, with 22 of the 49 total foreign students enrolled at Cal Poly in the fall of 1950 hailing from 8 of the United States' Latin American neighbors.⁴² As the decade carried on, this trend of students from contentious satellite countries coming to Cal

³⁸ McPhee, Chart of Proposed Organization of Korea Program.

³⁹ Julian McPhee, 1946 Annual Report to the State Board of Education on the Progress of the California State Polytechnic School, January 1947, p.9, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴⁰ McPhee, 1946 Annual Report, p.9.

⁴¹ 1950-51 Student Directories, 612.03 Student Directories Foreign Students Redacted Copies, Box 5, Student Directories, Foreign Students [Redacted Copy] 1950-1951, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴² 1950-1951 Student Directories, Foreign Students.

Poly grew, with enrollments from throughout Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. It may seem surprising that the countries that consistently saw the highest enrollment at Cal Poly were Iran and Iraq; countries that would face turmoil caused by Cold War politics in the decades to come. Both countries had numbers of students in the double digits, with 39 of 197 total students in the fall of 1957 hailing from Iran alone.⁴³

Another international education program, similar to the Korea Program, took place in 1952 at Cal Poly. This was the “Farm Machinery” program with Indonesia.⁴⁴ Like the Korea Program, this program was in collaboration with the US Government. Unlike the Korea Program, the Indonesia “Farm Machinery” program saw the arrival of Indonesian Students at Cal Poly to learn farming techniques using the School’s facilities, such as tractors and irrigation infrastructure.⁴⁵ Additionally, the Indonesian students traveled to other Land-Grant schools in the US to learn about industrial farming methods. The goal was for these students to return to Indonesia with the technical training of industrialized agriculture in order to share that knowledge and advance the Indonesian agricultural economy.⁴⁶ Also, unlike the Korea Program, this program happened.

The Korea Program Falls Apart

Problems arise when three separate bodies attempt to negotiate something. Those problems can only be exacerbated when the parties involved are highly bureaucratic bodies and

⁴³ 1957-1958 Student Directories, 612.03 Student Directories Foreign Students Redacted Copies, Box 5, Student Directories, Foreign Students [Redacted Copy] 1957-1958, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴⁴ Revised Program and Itinerary for TA 97-34—Indonesia “Farm Machinery,” 31 October 1952, 451 International Education, AID Programs, Peace Corps (others), 1952-1973, USDA/Cal Poly: Program and Itinerary—Indonesia “Farm Machinery,” Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴⁵ Itinerary and Program—Indonesia “Farm Machinery,” 31 October 1952.

⁴⁶ Itinerary and Program—Indonesia “Farm Machinery,” 31 October 1952.

exacerbated further when the thing being negotiated is on a multi-national scale. Something is bound to slip up, and that's exactly what happened with the Korea Program. On July 28, 1955, Dean McCorkle sent a wire to Andrus declaring that it would probably be in everyone's best interest to cease negotiations about a Korean Program with Cal Poly.⁴⁷ McCorkle cites a series of meetings with state officials concerning the budget and legality of the program. The specifics of the decision to cease the agreement were clarified in another letter to Andrus later that summer. Essentially, because Cal Poly was part of the State College System, the State Departments of Finance and Education had concerns about the legality of the Cal Poly Foundation, an independent body, sending *state* college employees abroad; who would pay their salaries? How?⁴⁸ As a result, the possibility of including more parties to the contract to cover the legality of it was considered. This, however, would have unnecessarily complicated the negotiations and would have required new agreements be written.

Another problem was that of philosophy. In an earlier letter in June, McPhee outlined the problems with the most recent interim contract proposed by the FOA and the news that only \$60,000 for the first stage of the program, much lower than initially calculated, could be allocated to get the program off the ground.⁴⁹ In the letter, McPhee states that,

From the beginning, our main interest in this proposed Korean technical assistance program has been that interest aroused in us by officials of the FOA and the U.S. Office of Education who expressed confidence that the California State Polytechnic College,

⁴⁷ Correspondence from McCorkle to Andrus, 28 July 1955, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, 1955, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴⁸ Correspondence, McCorkle to Andrus, 29 September 1955, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁴⁹ Correspondence from McPhee to Andrus, 29 June 1955, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea--Contract Negotiations, Current, 1955, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

with its philosophy of practical education, could contribute significantly to the solving of agricultural and industrial vocational education problems in Korea. If we set out to provide only technicians with but little administrative time available for planning and guidance, which the interim contract clearly shows to be the intent, it will mean that we have a program in name only.⁵⁰

At this point in Cal Poly's history, "Learn by Doing" was an integral part of the college's educational programs, and a factor that made it particularly unique. The school had been in operation for more than fifty years at this point and was clearly very proud of its approach. It seems like McPhee was very protective of his school's philosophy, reacting to the FOA's offer like a slap in the face. Concerns about "Learn by Doing" had been hanging in the air since the first mutterings of the Korea Program. Internally, Dean of Agriculture Vard Shepard had expressed to McPhee the potential difficulties of doing "Learn by Doing" in Asia due to, as he felt, ingrained traditional practices there and reluctance to forego those traditions for American values.⁵¹

Organizational troubles and misfortune also plagued the program from above. FOA director Stassen had a tendency to issue policy directives without any consultation, leading to an explosion of university programs under his leadership.⁵² This would ultimately lead to conflict when the FOA dissolved in June 1955, transferring all programs to the newly formed International Cooperation Administration (ICA).⁵³ The newly appointed director of the ICA,

⁵⁰ McPhee to Andrus, 29 June 1955.

⁵¹ Interdepartmental Correspondence, from Vard M. Shepard to Julian McPhee, 24 September 1953, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, 042.1 Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁵² Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 205.

⁵³ Correspondence, Eisenhower to Dulles, 17 April 1955.

John B. Hollister, had little interest in technical assistance and believed supplying capital instead of personnel made for more efficient foreign assistance.⁵⁴ Lack of communication from Stassen likely caused Cal Poly administration to be blindsided by the sudden change in policy, souring a deal they thought they had more control over. Additionally, Dr. Raymond Gregory had passed away in June 1954, not long after returning from the Korea mission surveying vocational schools he had directed.⁵⁵ Gregory had been a driving force for the Korea program from the start, and his unfortunate passing likely sucked the wind from the program's sails in Washington.

Internationally, the UNKRA and the Republic of Korea had been at odds for some time, with Syngman Rhee proposing grandiose plans of industrial development to be built with blank checks, while the US and the UN wanted to ensure more focused efforts and were unwilling to indulge the President's lofty dreams.⁵⁶ The US sought to use military installations to pursue its goals of containment whilst cutting aid costs, while Rhee continued to leverage the value of his nation's position to keep aid dollars funneling into his pockets.⁵⁷

Legacy of the Program

None of this is to say that nothing *ever* came out of the Korean Technical Education Assistance Program. Just because Cal Poly never went to Korea in the 1950s does not mean that nothing good came of it. The ICA was reorganized into the US Agency for International Development (AID) in 1961.⁵⁸ AID and peace corps programs took off under Cal Poly President Robert Kennedy in the late sixties and seventies. The groundwork and networking that took

⁵⁴ Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 206-207.

⁵⁵ "Raymond W. Gregory," *School Life* 36, no.9 (1954): 138.

⁵⁶ Philip C. Rowe, "Korean Aid: Huge U.S. Economic Program Barely Moves, Rhee Demands More, Ignores Fiscal Reform," *Wall Street Journal*, (New York City, NY), 16 February, 1954.

⁵⁷ Bruce Cummings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, Chapter Six, Korean Sun Rising: Industrialization, 1953-Present.

⁵⁸ Ruttan, *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*, p. 208.

place as part of the Korea Program may have been influential in getting those programs off the ground. In a way, the Korea Program could have been a sort of dry run for Cal Poly's interactions with later US foreign aid programs. Cal Poly Study Abroad programs continue into the 21st Century, and fulfill the "Learn by Doing" philosophy for Cal Poly students that would have been absent in the final state of the Korea Program.

Ultimately, Cal Poly—and by a very short stretch McPhee—had its own priorities that it stuck to above all else. Firm, unwavering pride in the philosophy of "Learn by Doing" played a huge role in all parts of the Korea Program; participation in the Korea Program was a golden opportunity to advertise the idea and the school that McPhee pounced on, same as the Navy Program, and the failure of the program to live up to McPhee's esteem is what led to its end. At one point in the negotiations, McPhee expressed concern to McCorkle about the slow pace of the program in lieu of "so many other irons in the fire."⁵⁹ Annual reports from around this time refer to the time period as a "period of expansion" for Cal Poly.⁶⁰ 1955 was the first year that women were readmitted to Cal Poly.⁶¹ Administrative pressure from the State of California ultimately forced McPhee's hand on that decision, and if that pressure was one of the "irons in the fire," Cal Poly was all the better for it. While it is sad to see how bureaucratic gridlock and one man's insistence led to the failure of a program that may have been one-of-a-kind in its execution, Cal Poly's Korea Program acts as a microcosm of the college in the early years of the Cold War, and eventually led to an expansion of the school and its programs that still reverberate today.

⁵⁹ Correspondence, Julian McPhee to Chester McCorkle, 13 August 1954, 144.02 McPhee Presidential Papers Collection, Box 29, Korea, 1953-55, Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁶⁰ Julian McPhee, Annual Report, California Polytechnic State College, 1955-56, May 1956, 141.01 Office of the President Annual Reports, 1955-56 - 1979-80 Special Collections and Archives, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

⁶¹ Julian McPhee, Annual Report, 1955-56.

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