

PROPOSED AG CENTER GETS A BOOST

OREGGIA FAMILY FOUNDATION DONATES \$3.8 MILLION TO SUPPORT CAL POLY AGRICULTURE

BY TERESA HENDRIX

THE OREGGIA FAMILY FOUNDATION of Salinas has donated an additional \$3.8 million to the Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. The latest gift is earmarked for planning and construction of the proposed Agriculture Technology Center at Cal Poly and to provide instructional support for existing programs.

Including the latest gift, the foundation has donated a total of \$5 million to Cal Poly's nationally recognized agriculture program.

"Our goal is to support the priorities of the college, and the Agriculture Technology Center appears to be the No. 1 priority," said Oreggia Family Foundation trustee Robert Taylor. "We're happy to help, and we hope this gift will encourage others to support the center."

College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences Dean David Wehner said the new 35,000-square-foot center will provide critically needed lab space for faculty members to conduct applied research and to work with students on senior projects.

Currently in the planning stages, Wehner estimates the center will cost \$15 to \$20 million to complete. Cal Poly will need to raise almost all of the money from private funding.

"This latest gift from the Oreggia Foundation is a very important one," Wehner said. "It generously provides \$800,000 to support excellence in our current programs and \$3 million toward the center – including both design work and a \$1.5-million challenge grant to help secure the remaining private funding required for construction."

Plans call for the new Agriculture Technology Center to be built between the Erhart Agriculture Building and the Agricultural Engineering Building on campus.

Salinas grower Arden Oreggia and his sister, Sabina, created the Oreggia Family Foundation with their estates. Arden Oreggia grew up on the family dairy outside Gonzales and expanded the family's operations as a produce grower.

Though he wanted to, Oreggia was never able to attend college. After his father's early death, he stepped in to run the family farms. However, he developed a long relationship with Cal Poly, periodically hosting groups of students for field lessons on his operations, according to Taylor and Denny Bertelsman, also a foundation trustee.

A student-led tour through the Cal Poly Creamery at Cal Poly's 2005 Open House so impressed Oreggia that he decided to use his estate to set up a foundation to benefit the Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

"He wanted to see agriculture as a whole benefit," Taylor explained. "Arden thought that agriculture was important for the nation and for the area, and he wanted to support it. He decided that supporting agriculture at Cal Poly was the way to do that."

The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at Cal Poly is the fourth-largest undergraduate agriculture program in the nation, with more than 3,800 students. The college awards an average of 650 baccalaureate degrees each year, nearly half of all baccalaureate agriculture degrees granted in the state. For more details, visit <http://cagr.calpoly.edu>. □



Oreggia Family Foundation trustees Robert Taylor, left, and Denny Bertelsman visit the Cal Poly Creamery.

