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California Polytechnic State University

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Rob Rossi Pledges \$1 Million-Plus to Cal Poly Colleges of Architecture, Environmental Design

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- San Luis Obispo architect, developer and Cal Poly grad Rob Rossi has pledged \$1 million-plus to the university's College of Architecture and Environmental Design -- the largest cash commitment ever to the college.

Rossi is to give \$500,000 to help build and equip a new facility for the college, \$250,000 to fund grants to students who have a special need or show exceptional talent, and \$100,000 to begin a program designed to spark student creativity by bringing practicing design professionals to campus and helping students visit professionals in the workplace. Another \$100,000 will help endow a professorship in honor of George Hasslein, the college's founding dean.

Rossi will also give \$50,000 toward the Cal Poly Scholars program, intended to attract the nation's most talented high school seniors, and \$15,000 to help fund a bronze sculpture of Hasslein, bringing the total gift to \$1,015,000.

"Much of what I learned at Cal Poly goes above and beyond what can be measured by a grade-point average," Rossi said. "Taking risks, working with a team, learning from mistakes and making the most of opportunities -- those were among lessons I learned that have served me well, both professionally and personally. In appreciation of the encouragement and support that I received from so many people in the college, I'm glad for the opportunity to provide a helping hand of

encouragement to current and future students.

"I hope," Rossi said, "that students will realize talent is hard to quantify and that success awaits each tenacious individual who has the courage to overcome difficulty and envision the possibilities.

"I also appreciate and care about the work this college does for the community, much of it through student projects, and I appreciate the contributions to society that inspired design can make," he said.

"While at Cal Poly, I was greatly influenced in particular by Architecture Professor Emeritus John Harrigan's insights on behavioral science and its effects on form and the built environment. And I certainly appreciate the way Cal Poly's approach rounds out a student's whole being, not just the academic side."

K. Richard Zweifel, interim dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, said, "This heartfelt gift is from someone who truly knows and cares about our college and its departments. Rob understands and appreciates the unique qualities of our programs and the special educational philosophy and advantage he himself experienced here as a student. His generous donation is in direct support of what is truly essential to sustain those qualities."

Rossi said he is also pleased to make this gift on behalf of others who hold a special place in his life. His wife, Laurie, and son Stephen are graduates of Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts. Rossi said he also dedicates the gift to his youngest son and three grandchildren with the hope they will continue the family tradition of attending Cal Poly.

Rossi began his studies in the architecture program at Cal Poly in 1970, graduating with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1975. He was named the college's Alumnus of the Year in 2000 in recognition of his generous support of his community and alma mater. He serves the university as a member of the President's Cabinet and as the college's chairman for the university's Centennial Campaign.

The gift brings Centennial Campaign donations to the College of Architecture and Environmental Design almost half way to the college's goal of \$10.5 million.

The largely state-funded structure for which Rossi designated \$500,000 is scheduled to be built on the campus's South Perimeter Drive within the next few years. The second-largest portion of the gift would establish a Robin L. Rossi Award Endowment to aid students in all of

the college's five disciplines who show innovation, creative problem-solving, the ability to overcome difficult or unexpected circumstances, entrepreneurship or support for fellow students.

The \$100,000 that will aid student interaction with practicing professionals will establish a Universal Traveler Endowment in honor of retired professors Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall. Rossi said Koberg and Bagnall's book, "The Universal Traveler," profoundly influenced the choices he has made in both his career and personal life, motivating his decision to live life "as an explorer rather than a tourist." The endowment will also support interdisciplinary projects such as the college's annual Design Village competition and professional development for the faculty.

"I'm honored to help fund the George Hasslein Chair for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental Design," Rossi said, "because I was fortunate enough to have enjoyed George's friendship and mentoring and because I credit the college's success to his long-standing leadership."

Establishing the Hasslein Chair is expected to require a total of \$1.5 million.

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