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California Polytechnic State University

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Influential Attorney, Engineering Education Leader To Speak to Cal Poly Grads

One of the "100 most influential" lawyers in the United States as well as the president of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering will deliver the featured addresses at Cal Poly's two Commencement ceremonies June 15 in Mustang Stadium.

Joseph W. Cotchett, partner in the Burlingame law firm of Cotchett, Pitre, Simon & McCarthy, will speak in the 9 a.m. ceremony for potential graduates in the colleges of Agriculture, Liberal Arts, and Science and Mathematics and the University Center for Teacher Education.

John Brooks Slaughter, named president and CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME) in June 2000, will speak during the 3 p.m. ceremony for candidates in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, the College of Engineering and the Orfalea College of Business.

The university will confer some 3,050 degrees at the two ceremonies, about 210 of them master's degrees.

Both speakers will receive an honorary doctorate -- Cotchett a Doctor of Laws, Slaughter a Doctor of Science -- from Cal Poly and the trustees of The California State University.

Cotchett has distinguished himself over a 35-year career as one of the foremost trial lawyers in the country. He has been named one of the 100 most influential lawyers in the country for the past 10 years.

Widely known as an advocate for the dispossessed, Cotchett has won numerous landmark jury verdicts and settlements while representing consumers, poor and disadvantaged citizens, organizations and businesses. His career has included extensive pro bono work for children, including a successful lawsuit against the U.S. government on behalf of Amerasian children in the Philippines after the closing of the Subic Bay naval base.

A distinguished Cal Poly engineering graduate, Cotchett received his law degree from the University of California's Hastings College of Law. In 2000, the law school opened the Cotchett Center for Advocacy in his honor as one of its outstanding graduates. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and the International Society of Barristers and is an Advocate in the American Board of Trial Advocates. He is a prolific author of legal books and law review articles, and his evidence books are used in many courtrooms across the nation.

In 2000 Gov. Gray Davis appointed Cotchett to the California State Parks Commission, and he is now the commission's chairman. He is also a member of the Board of Public Citizen in Washington, D.C.

NACME's Slaughter, a former director of the National Science Foundation, president of Occidental College in Los Angeles and chancellor at the University of Maryland, heads an organization founded in 1974 to increase workplace diversity in engineering. Under his guidance, the non-profit organization provides the highest number of private scholarships for minorities in engineering, as well as offering corporate intern programs, outreach programs in high schools, and research and policy analysis.

Slaughter has been a leader in the education, engineering and scientific communities. A member of the National Academy of Engineering, where he has served on the Committee for Minorities in Engineering and chaired its Action Forum on Engineering Workforce Diversity, he is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was elected to the Tau Beta Pi Honorary Engineering Society and named an Eminent Member of the Eta Kappa Nu Association, an honorary electrical engineering society. In 1992, he was named to the Hall of Fame of the American Society for Engineering Education.

After earning his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Kansas State University and master's in engineering from UCLA, Slaughter earned a doctorate in engineering science from UC San Diego.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: As usual, special passes are required for admission to the Commencement ceremonies. Please call Public Affairs at 756-1511 to request them.

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