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Cal Poly to Award Two Honorary Doctorates at Commencement Ceremonies June 14 & 15

SAN LUIS OBISPO – An entrepreneur known for revolutionizing the produce industry and a former Cal Poly baseball standout and ASI president will be awarded honorary doctorate degrees during Cal Poly's two commencement ceremonies Saturday and Sunday, June 14-15.

Anyone who's ever enjoyed a kiwi should thank Frieda Rapoport Caplan, who in 1962 founded Produce Specialties Inc. (now Frieda's Inc.), the country's first female-owned and -operated wholesale produce company. Considered one of the nation's most successful female entrepreneurs, Caplan introduced unusual, exotic produce to supermarkets, revolutionizing the produce industry and changing the way Americans eat fruits and vegetables.

The Los Angeles native and UCLA graduate, now 90, continues to work Monday through Friday at the company's Los Alamitos, Calif., headquarters, while her daughters own the business and run its daily operations. Today, Frieda's Inc. employs more than 100 people and distributes more than 600 unusual produce and specialty gourmet items to grocery stores and foodservice distributors throughout North America.

Caplan was the first woman to receive The Packer newspaper's "Produce Man of the Year" award, which soon was renamed "The Produce Marketer of the Year." She was the first recipient of the Harriet Alger Award from Working Woman magazine. And she won the Gold Stevie Award for Lifetime Achievement in Business at the 2013 Stevie Awards for Women in Business.

Caplan will be awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters at the June 14 ceremony.

Robin Baggett, Cal Poly 1973 business alumnus, ASI president, and former Mustang baseball standout, is now a successful lawyer, vintner and community activist. A graduate of UC Hastings College of the Law, where he served as editor of the Law Review and graduated in the top 2 percent of his class, Baggett clerked for Justice William Clark of the California Supreme Court and Judge Samuel Conti of the U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

Baggett was partner in the San Luis Obispo law firm Sinsheimer, Schiebelhut & Baggett (now Sinsheimer Juhnke McIvor & Stroh, LLP) for 25 years and remains a consultant to the firm.

Baggett developed more than 800 vineyard acres in Edna Valley. He is an owner of Alpha Omega in Napa Valley and Tolosa Winery and Phase 2 Cellars custom crush facility in San Luis Obispo. He is a past president of the San Luis Obispo Vintners and Growers Association and has served on the boards of Friends of Hearst Castle, the Wine Institute, Napa's Festival del Sole, and The First Tee of Monterey County, a youth development organization.

A loyal donor to the university, he is a longstanding member of the Cal Poly Athletics Director's Council and a past board member of the Cal Poly Alumni Association. In 1998, Baggett was inducted into Cal Poly's Athletic Hall of Fame. Cal Poly's Baggett Stadium is named in honor of his service to the university and in recognition of his university baseball career as one of the best catchers in the program's history.

Baggett will be awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws during the June 15 commencement ceremony.

Cal Poly's spring 2014 commencement ceremonies are slated to begin at 9 a.m. both days in Spanos Stadium. For more information on commencement, visit commencement.calpoly.edu.

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