Centennial Campaign On Track
Endowed Professorships, Chairs Funded

By Teresa Hendrix

Not only has Cal Poly raised $156.9 million so far in its $225 million Centennial Campaign – putting the university well within reach of its 2004 goal – but the campaign is already having an impact on the campus in terms of strengthening and expanding the university's educational programs.

Since the groundwork was laid for the Centennial Campaign, five of Cal Poly's six colleges have funded endowed professorships and chairs. The university now has 11 additional faculty positions and two student-serving staff positions otherwise not possible due to limited state funding for higher education.

"The generosity toward the university's programs and students has been extraordinary," says Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker. "I really see this as a vote of confidence in our mission, and recognition of our exemplary students, faculty, and staff."

The College of Science and Mathematics received the university's first endowed chair in 1999, during the planning stages of the campaign. The Arthur C. Edwards Endowed Chair for Coatings Technology and Ecology was established in the Polymers and Coatings program in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department with a total of $1 million in gifts from 21 donors, including $500,000 from Ken Edwards and Dunn-Edwards Corporation. The department expects to have the position filled this fall.

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Already filled in the College of Science and Mathematics is the Unocal Chair for Environmental Studies, established with a $1 million gift from Unocal Corporation in 2000. Professor Raul Cano, a renowned scientist in Cal Poly’s Biological Sciences Department and head of the department’s Environmental Biotechnology Institute, was appointed to the chair.

Unocal gave $1 million to Cal Poly’s Biological Sciences Department this spring for the establishment of two endowed professorships. Biology Professor Emeritus Tom Richards and Biology Professor Mark Moline were chosen as Unocal Professors of Marine Science, working to develop the Cal Poly Marine Science Education and Research Center on the historic Unocal pier in Avila Beach (see cover story, pages 2-5).

The College of Engineering has two endowed professorships to advance engineering excellence in computer engineering, computer science, and electrical engineering, thanks to a $2 million gift in 2001 from Bert and Candace Forbes. The department expects to have both positions filled this fall.

The Orfalea College of Business and the College of Architecture and Environmental Design will collaborate in a unique partnership funded by a $1 million Bank of America gift in 2001 to offer a community development program.
Program with a community development professorship.

The College of Agriculture has seen heavy support for endowed professorships. The Horticulture and Crop Science Department is now home to the J.G. Boswell Professorship, created by a $1.2 million gift from the California farming corporation. Professor Jeffrey Wong, a plant genetics expert with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has accepted the position and will join the department in the fall.

The College of Agriculture has also established three positions funded through “living endowments” (gifts paid over a specified number of years). These are a dairy cattle applied-research and technology program herd manager (established through a five-year $450,000 living endowment by Monsanto); the Foster Farms Poultry Professorship (funded by a $250,000 living endowment from the poultry industry giant), to be filled in December by UC Davis avian immunology expert Elizabeth Koutsos; and a senior coordinator (funded by a three-year living endowment of $100,000 from Dow AgroSciences) for the college’s new Integrated Pest Management program, which offers the latest precision pest-management techniques to Cal Poly students and California’s agricultural industry.

A deferred gift of $1.2 million from Susan and Robert Brown of Northridge will also endow two visiting professorships in the college through the couple’s estate plan: one in crop science and one in agricultural education and communication.

“Especially heartening is that much of this support has come during challenging economic times,” notes Vice President for Advancement William G. Boldt. “This demonstrates a generous investment in our students, who will provide the technical and economic leadership for California and the nation.”

The progress on the campaign, including the major support for endowed professorships, is important, according to President Baker. But just as vital are the great number of university friends and alumni who are supporting the campaign at every level. “Each and every gift from our alumni and friends is important,” stresses Baker. “All support helps us strengthen our advantage and expand our academic programs into a second century of learn-by-doing excellence.”

To keep up with the progress of the Centennial Campaign, or to join in its support, visit the Cal Poly Giving Web site at www.giving.calpoly.edu.