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Cal Poly Dedicates New Center for Hands-On Learning

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly’s famed “hands-on” learning got a huge boost yesterday with the opening of the Bonderson Projects Center in the College of Engineering.

The university dedicated the facility before hundreds of university officials, engineering educators and industry representatives on Nov. 2. Made possible by gifts totaling $8.2 million from Paul R. Bonderson, Jr., and his wife, Sandra, the 19,000-square-foot building is the first on the university campus funded entirely by a private, individual donor.

Surrounded by displays of student team projects, President Warren J. Baker said, “Some of these award-winning projects get put together in a garage somewhere. Well, Cal Poly students just got a brand new, cutting-edge garage! We are indebted to Paul and Sandi Bonderson for this gift that will make a huge and tangible contribution to student learning.”

The multi-disciplinary center provides specialized space for individual and collaborative student projects, including group work and assembly areas, a telecommunications laboratory, a networking laboratory, a robotics lab, a mechanical device lab, an environmental lab, computer modeling and systems labs, and supporting shop areas.

The facility is also home to the Project Based Learning Institute, which will foster industry participation and collaboration in student and faculty applied research.

“This marvelous facility stands at the heart of the College of Engineering, literally and metaphorically,” said Dean Mohammad Noori. “It physically anchors the new engineering campus, and it embodies and enables the kind of engineering education that is vital for engineers today by placing project-based learning front-and-center in our curriculum and in our educational paradigm. Truly, the Bonderson Projects Center puts the College of Engineering on the map worldwide as the leader in project-based learning. We are the model.”

About Paul R. Bonderson, Jr.

Paul R. Bonderson, Jr. graduated Cal Poly in 1975 with an electrical engineering degree. Now president of Lone Oak Ventures LLC, Bonderson co-founded Brocade Communications Systems Inc. He has more than 20 years of experience at Sun Microsystems, Data System Design and Intel.

The 2001 Honored Alumnus for the College of Engineering, he serves as chair of the College of Engineering Dean's Advisory Council. He is also a founding member of the board of the Cal Poly Foundation, which leads the university’s philanthropic activity, fund raising and asset management.

About the Bonderson Projects Center

Providing almost 19,000 square feet of specialized space for individual and collaborative student and faculty projects, the Bonderson Projects Center was founded in 2001 by a $5 million gift from Paul and Sandi Bonderson. They made an additional pledge of $3.2 million in 2005. These gifts have resulted in a facility designed to foster the same kind of creative engineering experience that Mr. Bonderson received as a student at Cal Poly. Not only will the Bonderson Projects Center provide students with the opportunity to undertake truly cutting-edge and multi-disciplinary projects, but it will also serve as home to the Project Based Learning Institute, which aims to be an internationally renowned center for educating the next generation of world-class engineers.

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