California Polytechnic State University

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Cal Poly Alumnus Pledges $4 Million to Help Renovate Mustang Stadium – Gift from Alex and Faye Spanos Makes Stadium Project a Reality

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. -- Cal Poly alumnus, entrepreneur and San Diego Chargers owner Alex Spanos, and his wife, Faye, have pledged $4 million to help fund the renovation of Phase I of Mustang Stadium, the university’s facility for football, men’s and women’s soccer and university events such as commencement.

It is the largest single gift in the history of Cal Poly Athletics.

“It’s the stadium where my brother, Danny, and I performed as drum majors for Harold Davidson’s marching band in 1941,” Spanos said of his decision to underwrite the improvements. The project will increase the permanent seating capacity to 10,000 and also will include a press box featuring special box seating, a press area, and television and radio booths. Designs also call for two coaching booths, new stadium lighting and an upgrade of the playing surface.

“An important part of the renovation of our stadium is our goal to recognize and honor all of the members of the 1960 football team who perished in a tragic plane crash in Ohio,” said Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker.

Designs for the stadium renovation include the creation of a Memorial Plaza at the stadium entrance as a permanent remembrance of the 1960 Mustang football team members who lost their lives that evening. The Memorial Plaza designs include 16 copper pillars representing each of the team members who died. Each copper pillar will stand the height of the player honored, and will be topped with a biographical plaque.

“This plaza will be a constant reminder to students, alumni, and visitors as it will be the focal point of the stadium entrance,” said President Baker. We feel that permanent recognition on the Cal Poly campus of the young men who lost their lives and lost their friends and teammates is long overdue.”

The Spanos’ gift brings the total raised for the Mustang Stadium project to $9.4 million. The entire project is estimated to cost $13 million and groundbreaking is expected in late spring 2005.

“We greatly appreciate this further act of generosity to Cal Poly by Alex and Faye Spanos, by their support for enhancement of this critical facility for Cal Poly athletic and university events and by their commitment to establishing a permanent memorial to the 1960 team members whose lives were so tragically cut short,” Baker added.
We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Spanos for their generosity and enthusiasm for this project and we feel this major gift gives us tremendous momentum to complete the fund-raising efforts for Phase I of the stadium,” said Alison Cone, Cal Poly interim athletics director.

“The stadium project marks the culmination of years of hard work on the part of people at Cal Poly as well as in the community,” said Chris Baker, Cal Poly interim associate athletics director for advancement.

“There has been a lot of anticipation for many years and it's going to be great to see this project in motion. It represents so much resolve over the years and ratifies what we believe is the direction of athletics at Cal Poly and, in particular, football,” said Rich Ellerson, Cal Poly head football coach.

This is not the couple's first gift to Cal Poly. A year ago Alex and Faye Spanos donated $1.5 million to fund the renovation of the university’s H.P. Davidson Music Center and the Cal Poly Theatre. The gift was the couple’s second major gift to the Music Department last year. They also gave $100,000 to establish the Harold P. and Rosalie Davidson scholarship endowment in memory of the former music professor and his wife.

While a student in aeronautical engineering in the early 1940s, Spanos was the drum major for the Cal Poly marching band, led by Music Professor H.P.Davidson.

In May, the Cal Poly Theatre was dedicated and renamed the Alex and Faye Spanos Theatre in honor of the couple. (Click Here to read the news release.)

About Alex Spanos
Spanos has led a colorful and productive life. He is owner of A.G. Spanos Companies, one of the nation’s leading builders of apartment communities. His dream to own a National Football League team was realized in 1984, when he assumed ownership of the San Diego Chargers.

“From the time I was 8 years old, all through high school, we worked. We weren’t allowed to play sports. I always loved sports and wanted to play football. When I had the opportunity to buy the Chargers, I didn’t hesitate,” Spanos said.

The Spanos’ gifts to Cal Poly typify the couple’s commitment to philanthropy. His company provided a major gift in 1998 to support the Cal Poly Athletics Capital Campaign. He received the Statue of Liberty Award in 1986, “for good things I had done, gifts that I had made to deserving causes,” Spanos said. “I’ve always helped any way that I can. I feel fortunate I’m able to do the things I do.”

Spanos and his wife live in Stockton.

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Editors please note: New renderings of the stadium project and Memorial Plaza are available by contacting Eric Burdick in the Athletics Media Relations Office at (805) 756-6550 or eburdick@calpoly.edu.