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Cal Poly Breaks Ground for New Engineering Complex

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly officials and a major donor to the university put on hard hats and wielded shovels Thursday, March 17, to mark the start of construction for two new engineering buildings on campus.

President Warren J. Baker, College of Engineering Dean Peter Y. Lee, and alumnus donor Paul Bonderson symbolically broke ground on the Bonderson Engineering Projects Center and the Engineering IV building — new state-of-the-art facilities that will change the face of engineering at Cal Poly.

The Bonderson Engineering Projects Center will provide almost 19,000 square feet of 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. Cal Poly alumnus Paul Bonderson (EE ’75) and his wife Sandy funded the facility with a $5 million gift in 2001, and they recently announced a pledge of an additional $3.2 million to secure their vision for the center.

"Paul has imagined and helped design a facility that will carry our 'hands-on,' project-based learning into the 21st century, and he's been personally involved from concept development to choosing colors for the building," said College of Engineering Associate Dean Dan Walsh.

In announcing his additional gift, Bonderson explained that he didn't want to compromise on a building that will enable the kind of education that he received at Cal Poly: "I got my first job as a result of my senior project, an electronic clipboard to record traffic information-the company even paid me $1,500 for it, a fortune!" he said. "I want to make sure that all Cal Poly engineering students have that same opportunity, to design and create projects, especially multidisciplinary, group projects, which prepare them for today's 'systems engineering' industry environment."
Also breaking ground was the Engineering IV building, a 104,000-square-foot facility with a construction budget of $28 million.

Rising northwest of Kennedy Library near Engineering III and the Advanced Technology Laboratories, and opposite the Bonderson Engineering Projects Center, Engineering IV will concentrate much of the university's engineering programs in one area. It will include modern classroom space for the aeronautical, mechanical, civil, environmental, industrial and manufacturing engineering programs.

Engineering IV was made possible by passage of Proposition 47, which included funds to purchase the latest high-tech equipment, including lasers for mapping, visualization, and velocity measurement in the wind and water tunnel laboratories; scanning electron and optical microscopes; and helicopter controls and gyroscope controls test systems.

"Together, Engineering IV and the Bonderson Projects Center will create a lab-centered, state-of-the-art learning environment for the future," said Engineering Dean Lee.

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