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Cal Poly Mustang Mascot Name Honors Past President Margaret Chase

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly has chosen a name for its live mustang mascot: Chase. This name will be the ceremonial title under which all current and future members of the Cal Poly Mustang Herd will serve the university.

The name honors a pivotal figure in Cal Poly history: Margaret Chase, the university's second president and the only woman so far to hold the post. Chase served on an interim basis for one year, 1924, between the resignation of Nicholas Riccardi and the appointment of Benjamin Crandall. Her impact on the university, though, lasted much longer.

Chase came to Cal Poly in 1908 as a member of the English faculty. Under Riccardi, she served as vice president and head of the Academic Department — a position similar to today's provost, the university's No. 2 job. In that role, she was instrumental in securing Cal Poly's accreditation from the University of California.

As interim president, she led the university through a time of fiscal austerity and intense scrutiny of the school's educational mission. She provided a sense of continuity and optimism that buoyed the faculty and students through a difficult transition.

With Crandall's appointment, Chase resumed her post as vice president and head of the Academic Department, becoming dean of Cal Poly's new Junior College Division in 1928. She retired in 1945.

The name was submitted in a public naming contest and chosen by President Jeffrey D. Armstrong and a committee selected from across campus, including ASI, Athletics and the Animal Science Department.

Catherine Trujillo, a curator at Cal Poly's Robert E. Kennedy Library and the mother of a Cal Poly freshman, submitted the winning entry. She was inspired by two connotations of the word.

"It is a metaphor to encourage our community of scholars to always pursue and chase after their dreams," she said in her submission. "It is also a throwback to our campus history and the powerful women who helped Cal Poly become what it is today."

"This name," Armstrong said, "represents both our university's distinguished past and the ambition that guides our students into a bright future. I hope that Chase will become a watchword for future generations of Mustangs as they pursue excellence on the field, in the classroom, and throughout their lives."

Cal Poly's first live mustang mascot was a gift from alumnus Robin Baggett, a 1973 graduate, and his wife, Michelle. Musty, the costumed character that has served Cal Poly for years, will continue to perform at athletic and university events.

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