

## **Anonymous Donation**

# **\$60 million legacy left to Cal Poly is a record**

## **The bequest by a former student who couldn't afford to get his degree benefits the architecture department**

**By Nick Wilson**

### **LARGEST PREVIOUS CSU DONATION**

In 2003, entrepreneur Roland Tseng donated a collection of Chinese antiquities valued at up to \$38 million to Cal State Northridge.

### **CAL POLY'S PREVIOUS LARGEST DONATIONS**

- **In 2001**, Unocal Corp. donated its pier in Avila Beach, which included an endowment. The total value was \$28.1 million.
- **In 1993**, Albert B. Smith donated his estate valued at \$21 million, which included his Swanton Pacific Ranch in Santa Cruz County and a supporting endowment.
- **In 2000**, Paul and Natalie Orfalea gave \$15 million to the College of Business and \$1 million to the university's ASI Children's Center.
- **In 2002**, Lorenzo M. McOmie and Judith B. McOmie donated \$15.4 million for scholarships and a research endowment.
- **In 2001**, Paul R. Bonderson Jr. and Sandra K. Bonderson gave \$9.3 million for the Bonderson Projects Center and a computer science lab.

Cal Poly announced the largest donation in California State University history Wednesday—a \$60 million pledged bequest by an anonymous donor.

Cal Poly officials said the donor promised his bequest to the university's architecture department for unrestricted use.

The funding won't be released to the department until after the donor's death as part of his estate plan. That plan may be revoked, university officials acknowledged.

Before this, the largest donation to Cal Poly was the former Unocal Corp.'s pier in Avila Beach in 2001 and an associated endowment—together valued at about \$28 million.

Cal Poly's Centennial Campaign announced in 2005 that it raised \$264.4 million after a seven-year drive. The university is eyeing a \$1 billion fundraising campaign.

University officials wouldn't reveal much Wednesday about the donor, not even his age.

But they said he was a former Cal Poly student who never completed his architecture degree because of financial hardship. The donor went on to have a successful career as an entrepreneur, according to the university.

While attending Cal Poly, the donor said he learned "a fundamental approach to seeing the world differently," according to a statement from the university.

"Although he was unable to complete his degree due to financial hardship, it is especially inspiring to know that the architecture program resonated with a student and inspired him," Cal Poly President Warren Baker said.

Architecture department officials will have broad discretion to decide how the money is used. But the donor emphasized that "lack of funds should not cause any student to forgo cherished dreams of becoming an architect," said Henri de Hahn, the department's head.

Cal Poly officials said that one of the reasons they honored the donor's anonymity was to protect him from solicitors.

"We're respecting his privacy so that people won't try to track him down for all the wrong reasons," said R. Thomas Jones, dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

The donor began discussing the donation with Cal Poly after de Hahn sent a letter last year to more than 10,000 former students announcing his new position as the architecture department's head, according to de Hahn and university officials.

De Hahn encouraged alumni to stay involved with Cal Poly's program. The donor responded to the letter and met with de Hahn several times before finalizing his pledge, according to campus officials.

Cal Poly's architecture program is ranked highly in many national assessments, including a "Best in the Nation" rating in this year's DesignIntelligence survey of industry practitioners.

About 850 architecture students make up half of the students in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Jones said.

The university typically keeps about 350 donors who have pledged large amounts informed and up to date with progress and developments, said Mike McCall, Cal Poly's associate vice president of university advancement.

“They don’t tend to change their plans very often,” McCall said.