May 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Since becoming your Provost in 2012, I’ve had the distinct pleasure to meet most of you, individually or in groups, and I continue my ongoing schedule of meeting with academic departments and hosting faculty for lunch throughout the year. I wish my schedule permitted me to spend more time with each of you, because every time I have that opportunity, I am energized and inspired by your passion, creativity, and commitment. The timing and topics of our meetings and conversations don’t always allow me to express how deeply I appreciate what you do, every day, to make Cal Poly a great university.

I thought it might be beneficial for me to communicate directly with you in this manner to share my thoughts and feelings about some of the ideas, opportunities, and challenges we face. I think we can accomplish more, together, as we get to know each other better, both personally and professionally. During my academic career, I’ve learned that colleagues who know, trust, and respect each other are in the best position to accomplish great things on behalf of their university.
In this first letter, I wanted to talk with you about research, scholarship, and creative activity at Cal Poly. When I first arrived in 2012, I heard from many faculty that they had a passion for these types of activities and a strong track record of accomplishments, but they faced a number of challenges to maintain their momentum, including heavy teaching schedules, a lack of appropriate facilities, and insufficient funding. In the last four years, we’ve implemented several important changes in an effort to overcome these challenges. We separated the important work of graduate education and research to create the Office of Research and Economic Development, and with that leadership structure in place we collectively achieved several notable accomplishments:

- We have invested $250K per year in internal RSCA funding (research, scholarship and creative activity) for the past three years to provide internal grants to support faculty research across the university;
- Last fiscal year, the total quantity of externally-funded research projects reached the highest level in the history of Cal Poly;
- Last fiscal year, external research funds supported undergraduate and graduate education with over $1.7 million in wages for conducting research, $400,000 in tuition fees and scholarships, and wages and benefits for 65 staff members through the Cal Poly Corporation;
- Sixteen new patents have been issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office to Cal Poly inventors since 2012, more than doubling Cal
Poly’s patent portfolio. 62% of our total patent portfolio (26 issued patents) has been added since 2012;

- Last year, Cal Poly was one of only twelve entities to receive a federal grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to engage in planning and programmatic development for a potential phase II development of our Tech Park.

These accomplishments are a direct result of your expertise and dedication as teacher-scholars. I recognize that we haven’t overcome all of the challenges that I mentioned earlier, but I am proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish since 2012.

**EXPANSION OF RESEARCH RESOURCES**

This summer we have plans to carry out basic renovations in Building 52 (the old Spider Building) to provide research space for faculty and students in CSM, CAFES, and CLA. It’s old space, but it will increase our capacity to meet our research needs until such time as new space comes online. Fundraising for new buildings to support faculty and student research across colleges is going very well, and we are excited about these new projects and grateful to our generous donors.

Research, scholarship and creative activity are vital to our faculty and this university for several reasons. These activities help faculty members to stay current in their respective fields of expertise and maintain their vibrant passion for their discipline;
they provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to engage with faculty in application and discovery; and these activities provide the context for faculty and our students to explore and tackle critical global challenges in our society, economy, and environment.

I want you to know that I remain committed to further enhancing the environment we provide at Cal Poly to support faculty research, scholarship and creative activity by providing more time, facilities, infrastructure, and support to help faculty, staff, and students succeed.

Thank you for everything you have done, and continue to do, to make Cal Poly an outstanding university.

Kathleen Enz Finken
Office of the Provost