

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
Fall Conference 2003

**FALL CONFERENCE ADDRESS**

by  
**President J. Michael Ortiz**

**Introductory Remarks**

Thank you, Ed, and good morning everybody.

Before I start, I, too, would like to extend my congratulations to Professor Cretser for being honored with the 2003 Hart Award. Thank you for all that you have done for the students of Cal Poly Pomona.

It is very exciting to be with all of you this morning. I would like to thank you for welcoming Betty and me to the Cal Poly Pomona family. Everyone has been so supportive during this transition. It has truly been heartwarming. Since many of you have not had the opportunity to meet my partner, my love and my best friend, let me introduce her to you - Betty. You know, every time we have made a major move in our lives together, we have faced some interesting challenges. When we first moved to Boone, North Carolina, we were snowed into our home for several days without power. On our move to Colorado, our brand new car was destroyed by hail in Denver just three days after our arrival. As we moved into our home in Fresno, the moving van broke down on the way there and the local moving crew left since there was no truck to unload. The move was scheduled for a Saturday so when it finally did arrive the local office was closed. We were left with two drivers to unload a truck holding all of our belongings. The real kicker, however, was that this occurred in 1996 on the day of west coast blackout and the temperature in Fresno was 109. We finally completed the move by flashlight at 10:30 that evening. Our arrival in Pomona has been less dramatic but for me just as challenging. Betty and I are currently living in the guesthouse above Kellogg House and being in the forest. Apparently, a few thousand chiggers had taken up residence before we arrived. Once they started feeding on me, it was only natural that I include them on our vacation. To relieve the itching and to counter an allergic reaction, the doctor put me on steroids. This, of course, led to the accompanying weight gain, which I am now attempting to get rid of. While I'll admit that our move to this beautiful campus was less dramatic than the others, it did raise a few welts.

Today marks my 53rd day of service to Cal Poly Pomona. Later this morning, I will be attending the University Service Awards, recognizing many faculty and staff who have spent most of their professional lives in support of our students. With such a short tenure, I am humbled and honored to participate in this wonderful event.

I cannot recall a time in my life when I have had to process as much information in such a short window of time. Everyday has been a learning experience. The California State University Board of Trustees has charged me with moving Cal Poly Pomona forward, by working with the faculty, staff and students to identify a plan for the future of this university. But to get that done, I needed an education on the culture of the campus community. I needed to learn about our infrastructure. I needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of our fiscal challenges. And I also needed to unpack.

Many people have asked me about my vision for Cal Poly Pomona. In my view, it would be inappropriate for me to develop this vision devoid of your perspective. We have to chart this course together. What I can say is that in working with you to create this vision I will adhere to the values that have guided me throughout my life. I will be honest and open with you. I will seek and respect your opinion. I will be fair in my actions and will demonstrate a concern for your well being. I will value the work that you perform on behalf of the university and support it to the best of my abilities. I will never ask you to do more than I am willing to do myself and I will work tirelessly to create a community of trust based on these values.

### **Key Issues, Project Updates and University Impact**

To say that the current state of the California economy is a concern would be preaching to the choir. I know that you are aware that The California State University system took the largest budget cut in its history – 11%. That has had an immediate impact on Cal Poly Pomona and how we do business. On my first day on the job, I had to close enrollment for the spring quarter of 2004. This was not an easy decision, but I felt it was essential that we provide our enrolled students with the best possible education, so I elected to relieve some of the pressure that additional unfunded students would bring this academic year. We had to move forward with an authentic admission procedure. Let me explain what I mean by this. In the early nineties, students were admitted without the university having the financial resources to provide the courses necessary for them to progress in their studies. As a result they left the campus in large numbers. Many campuses are just now recovering from that. We have learned from this and will do everything we can to prevent it from recurring.

The 20,000 students who will begin the new academic term this week are facing greater challenges. They will begin the fall quarter on Thursday, having paid 30% percent more in state fees than they did last spring quarter. We have fewer state resources to support our academic mission, but have not lowered our standards or our expectations. We have successfully honored two guiding principles of our budget planning process – to protect our ability to meet our instructional responsibilities to the students and avoid layoffs. It is environments like this one where great universities prove themselves. A truly noteworthy characteristic of you, the faculty and staff of Cal Poly Pomona, is the way they you have embraced the “student centered” philosophy. From the dedicated support of our faculty, who nurture and mentor students, advise them on their academic programs and prepare them for a professional career. To the staff, who are the glue that support and hold the institution together and make this a wonderful place to work you have truly shone. All of us can recognize that it is the simple acts of kindness and support that make a difference in the lives of our students. As a university community, you are recognized throughout the state for your efforts and I am proud to be associated with all of you. Barring unforeseen events, the state budget will not be any better next year. Based on a legislative mandate, we have been directed to plan for zero enrollment growth for 2004-2005. That means that the number of students we admit for next year cannot exceed the number of students who have graduated or left the university. For a university system that has been in a growth mode for ten years, this is a new world order.

As a team, we must identify ways to do things more efficiently in support of our students. We will need to explore creative ways to enhance student success; integrate

research, scholarship and teaching; be committed to faculty ownership of assessment; support our neighbors; and cultivate friends while raising private dollars to support our teaching mission. If I were going to identify a phrase to take out of our vernacular, it would be “*well, that’s the way we’ve always done it.*” We are going to be innovative and creative. We are going to welcome new ideas from every level. We will focus our attention on issues of substance. We are going to make much better use of information technology. We are going to look at the resources we have on this campus, bringing together some of the best minds in higher education, and define this university.

You have probably noticed a significant difference in today’s conference from previous years. There are fewer speakers, less protocol and (regretfully) less food. You could say “*we had to put our money where our mouth is,*” and that is not far from the truth. Today’s event is an example of a way we could save some money, and still meet some of our needs. Now if you want to go back to the three-hour convocation, let me know.

In looking at our campus, there are some key projects that I would like to address:

This university has certainly seen a great deal of construction over the past 5-7 years, and there are still a number of projects in the works. One of the most important is the addition to the University Library, which is now in the planning stages. The project was only made possible through the passage of Proposition 47 last year. The planning and development of the library addition will require significant input from all segments of the campus community. Let me make this perfectly clear – we need your input and contributions. As meetings are scheduled, we will communicate that information to all of you. Thanks to resources from the bond measure and the input from our campus community, we are going to be the home for one of the great libraries in the CSU. If you will allow me to take a couple of minutes of my vacation time, I’d like to alert you to the fact that there will be another bond issue on the ballot in March which would provide additional funding to the campus. I hope that you will support it. Okay, now I’m back to work.

Another project that is moving rapidly will be the new multilevel parking structure, located in parking lot F-4 and F-5. This will create a net effect of 2100 additional parking spaces for the campus and will begin this year. I know that this project can’t be completed soon enough.

Our beautiful campus has elevated itself with two other unique projects. The first stage of the pedestrian mall is virtually complete, creating a spectacular entry to the university. It is tied to another wonderful addition, the George and Sakaye Aratani Japanese Garden, located just behind us. The new garden is a terrific oasis for the campus community, and we are grateful to our private benefactors for providing all of the funds to complete the project.

This is the year that PeopleSoft will transform the way we work with our students. Before the school year is over, students will be registering for courses and paying their bills using the new PeopleSoft self-service module, which we are calling Bronco Direct. Faculty will see big changes too, including on-line grade submittal. By next fall, expanded advising and degree progress information will be available to students and faculty. The continued development of the PeopleSoft project depends upon the hard work of literally hundreds of staff, and faculty, from across the campus, and I salute them for their efforts.

For the past eight months, a team of university professionals has come together to create a new web presence for Cal Poly Pomona. The process involved contributions from every division and the Academic Senate, and solicited feedback from faculty, staff and students to ensure that this important resource would meet the needs of our ever-growing global community. We don't have a champagne bottle to crack over the computers but I would like to direct your attention to the monitors so as to formally "go live" with the new Cal Poly Pomona home page. Let me thank everyone who participated in this important project.

### **Commitment to Community**

It is fitting that I take some time to share with you a specific passion I have for Cal Poly Pomona, and the impact we can make. What are the responsibilities of a large regional university like Cal Poly Pomona?

Is it a means to a baccalaureate or master's degree? Most assuredly! We know that a person with a bachelor's degree will earn nearly twice as much over a lifetime as a high school graduate. According to the census bureau, that amounts to more than a million dollars in earnings. More educated workers mean higher tax revenues, greater productivity, a stronger high-tech work force, and a decreased reliance on government financial support. The CSU graduates 77,000 students each year into California's workforce and prepares the most professionals in the fields that make California work: engineering, information technology, business, agriculture, architecture and education. Another way of looking at it is that last year's CSU graduates will earn over \$77 billion in taxable income. That's not a bad return on investment for the state.

But I believe we have another large responsibility. Over the past few years, we have made some great strides in supporting our neighboring communities – I would like to take this to higher level. Ask yourself this question: If you lived in a nearby city and you did not have a member of your household preparing to attend, or currently enrolled, what would be your interest in Cal Poly Pomona? Literally tens of thousands of people drive by our university every day without much awareness about us because we are not in their world.

Cal Poly Pomona needs to be in their world. Cal Poly Pomona should be a resource for the community that goes beyond our basic academic mission. And we can serve them on a number of fronts that work hand-in-hand with our polytechnic philosophy. Many of you are familiar with the concept of "service learning," which places students in real-world situations and makes the connection between theory and practice in the larger community. Research has shown that service learning is the most significant curricular approach studied in the last decade. We are going to commit ourselves to expanding those opportunities in our neighboring cities, by dedicating faculty and staff support to ensure our students are benefiting from the "real life" education that is embedded in the polytechnic philosophy.

Think about the possibilities. We have superb intellectual resources, blessed with the potential to solve economic and social problems, creating solutions that impact the masses. Picture all of our faculty, staff and students working with small and large businesses, school districts, service groups, local governments and others, all bringing expertise and abilities to strengthen their organizations. This will, in turn, support the local and state economy, better prepare our students and, ultimately, make a difference in the lives of others. In support of this effort, I have directed vice president Farris to develop a plan, which will provide the

opportunity for staff to devote up to four hours per month to community service. You should expect to see further details very soon. The Southern California community has literally dozens of four-year universities to hold their affinity. The people of the San Gabriel and Inland Valleys should recognize Cal Poly Pomona as *their* university. And that is within our reach! Let us be known as the institution whose students learn by doing and do what they learn!

### **Concluding Remarks**

Before I conclude my remarks, I want to remind everyone of that the Service Awards will begin at 10:30 in the Bronco Student Center. At 12:30 pm, the University Library will be hosting an important workshop on the library addition. We strongly encourage the faculty and staff to participate in this dialogue on the future of this vital university resource. On Wednesday of this week, we will inaugurate a wonderful new event to support our students – Bronco Fusion. The event features workshops, tours, and a BBQ dinner. But most importantly, it is an opportunity for the campus community to roll out the red carpet, creating a venue to build a sense of community for our students. I hope that all of you can spend some time at Bronco Fusion. Finally, Betty and I look forward to meeting you personally tonight at the reception at the Manor House. It begins at 4 pm.

Let me say how honored I am to have been chosen as the fifth President of Cal Poly Pomona. There is a wonderful legacy of success and achievement here, primarily due to your efforts. We are positioned to create the best educational opportunity for our students, and that will always be my focus. Are these challenging times? Certainly. But I want you to know that we are going to address those challenges in an environment of shared governance: together – as a team.

Thank you for all that you do for the students of Cal Poly Pomona and best wishes on a new academic year.