

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
Fall Conference 2004

**FALL CONFERENCE ADDRESS**  
**by**  
**President J. Michael Ortiz**

As I begin today, I want to thank Glenda for her introduction and the work that she has done as chair of the Academic Senate. I want you to know that I truly value your commitment to the faculty and I appreciate the ongoing dialogue with you and Vice Chair Francis Flores over the past year. Likewise, I want to express my gratitude and acknowledge the work of the Academic Senate, especially the Executive Committee, for the leadership that you have provided Cal Poly Pomona. I also want to acknowledge someone who has demonstrated her commitment to Cal Poly Pomona and has been a great supporter, my wife, Betty.

As I'm sure you've noticed we have returned to a hot breakfast. This is, by no means, an indication that we have moved out of the budgetary woods. The team at Kellogg West felt that we could come close to matching last year's continental breakfast with little increase in cost. Let's recognize their efforts (begin applause).

Speaking of breakfast, I know that many of us are concerned about how what we eat influences our health. This summer while Betty and I were visiting her family in South Carolina I came upon this bit of analysis and I'm going to share it with you. It stated that:

- The Japanese eat little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.
- The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.
- The Italians eat a lot of fat, carbohydrates and drink a lot of wine and they too, suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

The Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you. Enjoy breakfast!

During my first year at Cal Poly Pomona, I have met some terrific people. Faculty, staff and students who are doing wonderful work representing the university. But this summer, one student truly set herself apart. At 25, she is a three-time Olympian. In August, she represented the United States in Athens, earning her second overall gold medal in double trap shooting. Last month, she became the first Cal Poly Pomona student to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated. An animal and veterinary science major, she is, without a doubt, the best trap shooter in the world. Please join me in acknowledging our very own Olympic champion – Kim Rhode.

Kim will join Betty and me at the Manor House tonight for our annual reception, where you will have an opportunity to meet her-- as they say-- "up close and personal." I want to invite all of you to attend the reception which will begin at 4 p.m.

Last spring, Cal Poly Pomona and the entire CSU system planned for a third straight year of state budget cuts. And while the end result was somewhat better than we anticipated, the fact is that we absorbed a 15 percent cut in our operating budget. In an unprecedented planning process, the campus community came together and agreed upon two main principles:

- To protect instruction for our current students
- To save jobs

The end result was certainly positive. We have put into place a budget that will allow us to meet our immediate needs and identify opportunities to be more efficient and innovative. We also asked you to shoulder a heavier load and, as usual, you responded positively.

The CSU has received some welcomed relief from Sacramento in the 2004-05 budget. It provided additional funding to support enrollment. And, while the freshman enrollment was still reduced, it is better than we anticipated. In the end, our budget will not affect our students' ability to complete their academic requirements.

One way that we have facilitated our students' needs is the newly implemented PeopleSoft system, via Bronco Direct. But when a campus is attempting something new, there will always be challenges. I have developed a great deal of respect for the individuals involved in the implementation of our PeopleSoft project. Because of their hard work and dedication, we now have better resources available for our students.

To all of those involved in the PeopleSoft project who have risen to the challenge, I am proud of your accomplishments, and I thank you. Let me ask you all to please stand and accept some much deserved recognition.

Last month, I sent a letter to all returning students. It might be the last piece of print material they receive from Cal Poly Pomona, until I hand them their diplomas. The letter detailed our new policy relating to the use of e-mail as the primary communication vehicle for all students. (I would appreciate it if you would reinforce this with your students).

Being able to effectively communicate with our student body is essential. Being able to do this more efficiently while reducing our budget is an added bonus. It is also important to maintain contact with them when they become alumni. This year, we will identify ways to provide our alumni with lifetime e-mail addresses. They are, after all, members of our Cal Poly Pomona family for life!

For many years, the campus has been involved in construction projects. This is not going to change, thank goodness. While the escalation of costs will delay some projects, we will be building a library expansion and a 2,400-space parking structure. Bond funding will also support the seismic retrofit of Building 3 after consultation with faculty and staff on the design. We are continuing the transformation of Olive Lane into a pedestrian mall, and we will soon be celebrating the grand opening of the Southern California headquarters of the American Red Cross at Innovation Village. As you know, we have a number of interim administrative positions. Some searches are already moving forward, including those for a permanent provost and vice

president for Academic Affairs, as well as a vice president for University Advancement. It is my intention to have those individuals in place by July 1, 2005.

While reflecting on my first year, I realized that there is no perfect formula for the exact steps a president should take. There were several things that I attempted to focus on:

- I made a concerted effort to be as active as possible, participating in college and school meetings, student and faculty social and recognition receptions... and many others. As I promised you last year, I wanted to talk to enough people to get a true gauge of the culture of Cal Poly Pomona.
- I spent a great deal of time reaching out to faculty. I needed to understand what the issues were for many faculty members, including those who don't often speak out in public forums. It is clear that you are deeply passionate about our students, your discipline and the university. Many of you offered great advice to me during our meetings, and I am extremely proud to be associated with such a distinguished group of faculty colleagues. This year, I hope to meet and become better acquainted with more of you.
- It was no secret that our Academic Senate and the university administration were not always on the same page. WASC identified this as an area requiring serious attention. While this state is not unique to higher education, I came from a background of having a very positive relationship with the Academic Senate and I knew we could do better. We have come a long way over this past year and I truly value the senators' commitment to this institution and their role in shared governance. I am going to stress communication and collaboration as the two keys that will describe our working relationship.
- One of my first observations after arriving on campus was how disjointed we are on technology related issues. Colleges and departments are running their own mail and calendar servers. There are no common standards, from large scale servers to desktop support. We needed to address these issues with a university-wide approach, with an eye toward enhancing our instructional opportunities. The result is a broad-based IT Governance Committee, which I will chair. This committee will have a very high profile on campus, making decisions that will affect the way we operate. If you are interested in serving on one of the subcommittees, I encourage you to become involved. You will be informed of our progress in the coming months.
- One of the great perks of my job is meeting students and hearing what they have to say about the university. There is certainly consistency in these discussions, including the high cost of parking, fees and books -- broken elevators -- why are we building if we don't have any money --etc... One of the best events we have every quarter is the *Pizza with the Presidents*. If you have not attended, I would strongly encourage you to do so. These young people cut right to the heart of the matter when it comes to their campus experiences. I

remember one comment from a young man who was concerned about having his car broken into... He said,

*"You know, it's not cool when your stuff gets jacked."*

He's right. It's ALSO not cool when no one is listening. But we ARE listening. Many students have told me about people who have bent over backwards for them. I thank you for this, and keep up your wonderful work.

I, in turn, will continue to identify solutions to keep students from having their stuff jacked.

- During the past year, our state's fiscal experts predicted an unprecedented doom and gloom scenario. To prepare for the budget challenges that lay ahead, I felt that it was critical to engage faculty, staff and students in budget cafes, designed to get feedback on ways we could mitigate the crisis. Hundreds of people participated and we heard some great ideas. The result was that our campus was far better positioned for the cuts than many other CSUs. For this, I owe you a debt of gratitude.
- Members of the campus community have frequently queried me about my vision for Cal Poly Pomona. A vision should not be central to one individual. And it can't be identified in a vacuum.

In the end, it's not MY vision, it's OURS.  
My job is to lead us in this process.  
But to accomplish this, I had to first listen.

One thing I learned is that almost all of us have similar values about higher education. Let me share with you what I heard over and over again on what makes a great university.

- A great university demonstrates its commitment to access. A key reason why I joined the CSU eight years ago was its commitment to providing an educational opportunity to any qualified Californian. A great university embraces diversity as part of its core mission, reflecting the community, state and nation.
- A great university is cutting edge. It looks for new and innovative ways to deliver instruction, recognizing that education is a life long journey. A great university uses technology to enhance learning and communication, constantly reviewing its practice and changing for the times. As they say "you may be on the right track, but if you're not moving forward you will be run over.
- A great university is part of the community tapestry. It facilitates opportunities for students to extend their education in the community, through service learning. It is recognized as the university of choice by civic and business leaders, by district superintendents and by parents. As Bob Maxson, the president

at Long Beach State says: “If we’re doing our job right, you won’t know where the university ends and the community begins.”

- A great university makes decisions that are student-centered. It recognizes that they are the reason we are here. While not ignoring student responsibilities, a great university is accountable to enrolled students, ensuring their success. That includes scheduling courses so that they can earn their degrees in a timely manner, providing a quality preparation for life after Cal Poly Pomona.

- A great university supports faculty. A great university recognizes that faculty are at the core of the academic enterprise. It creates resources to support faculty excellence in teaching. It provides opportunities for faculty to participate in the scholarship and professional development activities where they serve as teachers as well as learners. It encourages community partnerships. A great university empowers faculty to think outside of the box, to approach instruction with an emphasis on the application of learning.

- A great university supports staff. It finds their talents, and positions them to be successful. A great university promotes from within, encouraging educational growth while building the foundation of careers. Staffs’ 20, 30 and 40 year careers are the norm at a great university. Speaking of this, I hope that you will join me at the Bronco Student Center this morning at 10:30 for the annual Service Awards. That’s assuming, of course, that I will have finished with my presentation by then.

- A great university is a catalyst for economic development. It identifies public/private partnerships, ensuring that they serve a unique role in the learning community. A great university realizes that education does not begin and end in the classroom, but facilitates a means that positions our students to acquire skills in any number of venues.

Now the question!

Is Cal Poly Pomona a great university?

From where I sit, we are pretty darn close.

There are just a few things standing in our way:

- Overcoming our first hurdle may be the most difficult, because it is so deeply rooted. It centers on the feeling that we are not quite up to the level of other universities. What you have accomplished with students is nothing short of remarkable, and Cal Poly Pomona doesn’t have to take a back seat to anyone.

What I want to do is develop more opportunities to celebrate our success, from recognizing faculty achievement to casual events that build spirit and community. You are a part of a most prestigious university – be proud of it! I have

yet to meet any Cal Poly Pomona alumni who are not proud of their alma mater. The pride that you exhibit -- in all that you do – is reflected in them. We just have to celebrate that more often.

- The second obstacle is also inherent in the culture. Not everyone embraces a common mission. Even *learn by doing* does not have a universal interpretation. There are times when I have seen colleges, schools and divisions all acting as if they were independent organizations. The reason is that the mission has not been evenly embraced and applied.

During this past spring, the campus experienced a renewal. Members of the learning community attended a unique conference and made campus-wide presentations about transforming Cal Poly Pomona into a learning-centered university. A Learning-Centered University is defined as one that places learning at the center of every program, course, function, office, and activity on campus.” I want to thank the faculty learning community for their hard work. This effort put into words what many were feeling, and now it is our chance to put these words into action.

Think about a university where campus-wide decisions are based on learning outcomes. As a university, shouldn't we ultimately be held accountable for what our students learn – not what we teach?

We have to get everyone on the same page.

We will move forward and bridge a learning-centered philosophy into our day-to-day operations, from budget to instruction. We will quantify learning outcomes to determine our strengths and weaknesses, and adjust accordingly. The results will be remarkable.

- The third obstacle relates to prioritization and recovery. You heard me mention earlier the severity of cuts we have faced over the past three years. Thanks to your work, we withstood this challenge without the loss of permanent faculty or staff. But it was quite apparent that we had no institutional priorities - programs that cost more to maintain were affected with the same brush stroke as those that required less funding. We have attempted to be all things to all people – but given the funding trend that we have experienced over the last 5 years, and what is predicted in the future, we just cannot continue to do this! The new *Higher Education Compact* will provide a stable resource for budget planning, but will not address the inherent funding problems we face.

*When I was growing up in New Mexico, two of my brothers and I were attending the University at the same time. My parents had determined that we were not going to assume loan debt to complete our degrees. In that environment we as a family had to set priorities and determine how we would allocate our resources to accomplish this goal. Going through this process, I came to believe that IRREGULAR was a name*

*brand of clothing. In other words we sacrificed where we needed to in order to meet our goal. This is the same thing that each of us does in our own household. How can we expect the university to be any different?*

Throughout the budgeting process, I have stressed that we needed to develop a recovery plan but, as I said, it became very clear to me that we could not have a meaningful recovery unless we examined ourselves and determined what kind of institution we wanted to be.

What would be the outcome of such an exercise?

We could focus on reducing class size, identify funds to address faculty salary compression, reduce teaching loads for all faculty, support enhanced professional development opportunities, institute program enhancements all the while creating the foundation for a comprehensive capital campaign.

You will determine what outcomes we pursue!

Keeping you informed and engaged in this process will be one of my highest priorities, so I encourage you stay current with information on PolyCentric, your academic senators and other sources. In the end through the work of the faculty and support of the staff, Cal Poly Pomona will be empowered to take our students' educational experience to a new level, one that will be the envy of our peers.

- The final obstacle that we face is a big surprise – money! Some of that will be addressed within the prioritization and recovery process, but that is not nearly enough. Chancellor Reed has said that the difference between a good university and a great university is the private support that an institution receives. Without those types of funds, we would never have been able to build the *(point)* engineering laboratory, the Collins School, the *(point)* Aratani Japanese Garden, the Bronco Student Center, BioTrek, Agriscapes and others... Our development team in the Division of University Advancement has done significant work over the past few years, but it's not enough. I have heard many long-time public educators and foundation representatives say that the state should give us all the money we need. For those people, it's time to take a reality pill. If we want a state-of-the-art library, a new home for the College of Business Administration and a new facility for Environmental Design, it's going to take outside money and lots of it.

For us to move forward as a university, we have to collectively embrace a culture of development. Raising money and resources is not just the job of Advancement and the fund-raising team – it's EVERYONE'S job. No where is that truer than during a comprehensive capital campaign. It will be a central focus for the entire university. The prioritization process will identify the things we need and what they cost. Later this year, we will initiate a feasibility study for a comprehensive capital campaign. I know that we will be successful.

Together we are going to take the solid reputation that you and your predecessors have established and build on it.

Neighboring communities will be better because our students and alumni will make them better. Our efforts will spawn economic development, which benefits our students.

And you will be the catalyst that makes all of this happen.

This will be a pivotal year in university history, as we collectively refine our mission, begin the recovery process and prepare for a comprehensive capital campaign.

I am ready to move forward and I am asking you to join me!

Thank you for coming together today. Let's go out and make it a great year...