COPY
of letter sent to
College of Science and Mathematics
Fall 2009 new students

August 27, 2009

Dear College of Science and Mathematics New Student:

I am so glad that you will be attending Cal Poly and look forward to welcoming you this fall. You can be proud of yourself. You are entering one of the nation's most selective public universities, one that has been recognized as the best, largely undergraduate, public institution in the west by *US News and World Report* for 17 consecutive years. *Forbes* recently ranked Cal Poly 27th among the 100 best public universities in the nation. We at Cal Poly deeply care about your growth and success, both personal and intellectual. We want you to be a Cal Poly graduate.

There are several important issues I would like to discuss with you in this letter.

First, I hope you will challenge yourself to obtain your Cal Poly degree in four years. Degrees in the College of Science and Mathematics require 180 units of coursework. To do this in four years requires you to take an average of 15 units a quarter of the requirements stated in the catalog. This is a reasonable expectation. Total expenses for attending Cal Poly are estimated at about $6000 per quarter. Earning your degree in four years instead of five saves you or your family as much as $18,000 or more and gets you into professional school or a career more quickly. However, if you are significantly employed to earn school expenses or have a time consuming co-curricular or extra-curricular activity that is important to you, it is reasonable to extend your time so you can be successful and truly achieve your potential.

Second, the State of California is in a horrible fiscal crisis. The dollars we receive from the taxpayers are very precious and not sufficient to meet enrollment demands. We absolutely expect Cal Poly students to respect the investment California citizens are making by working hard and conscientiously and being successful in their classes. With many families suffering furloughs, layoffs, salary cuts, and other hardships, it is especially incumbent on you and all of us to honor the commitment of the California taxpayers and others supporting your college education.

Third, related to the above statement and very important: Attending college is a distinct privilege that you should pursue responsibly and thoughtfully. If you do, you will be successful and can expect the full support of the university community. However, if you are not academically successful, we cannot afford to retain you as a student. You will not be allowed to continue at Cal Poly past your first year (in extreme cases you could be disqualified after your second quarter). Most of you will not be on academic probation (less than a 2.0 GPA) but we cannot predict who will. For example, in a recent freshmen class, 13% of College of Science and Mathematics students had less than a 2.0 grade point average at the end of the first year; more than 10% of these had greater than a 4.0 GPA in high school. It's up to you how you do and how much of your potential is realized. Shoot for the dean's list (term GPA of 3.5 or higher).

Finally, I want to share some thoughts on studying and learning. Your success depends on your immediate academic adjustment to college. In high school, most of your time was spent in class with not so much required for study outside of class. In college, class time is minimized; the majority of your time will be spent studying and learning outside of class. If you are a community college transfer, remember, you will be in a much more competitive environment and taking largely upper division courses.

Nationally, college students are advised to study at least two hours per week per unit of coursework. I know this may seem like a lot to you, but think about it in this way. You will be in class 15-20 hours a week and we recommend that you study 25-35 hours a week; the total of class time and outside study is equivalent to a full time job with a 40-50 hour workweek. If you manage your time well, including weekends, there is plenty of time for other activities. ***There is nothing more important that I can tell you than to study 25-35 hours per week and that you study to truly learn and understand. I urge you to take this advice very seriously.***

Let me give you some of examples of actual courses that many of you will take during your first year and how you might estimate and use your study time. Keep in mind cramming the night before doesn't work, you need to be rested to learn,

and that you need to monitor your learning. If you can talk about something, explain it to someone else, work problems with confidence, you probably know the material. If you can't, you don't.

ENGL 134: This four-unit writing course meets four hours a week; we recommend that you devote approximately eight hours outside of class. Imagine that you have a composition to write every other week. By the time you have chosen a topic, developed and clustered ideas into an outline, written the first draft of the paper, and gone through several revisions over several days, quite a few hours will have been consumed. Whether the hours are 5, 8, or 10 per week isn't as important as it is that you have dedicated the time needed to truly develop and express your ideas and grow intellectually. Writing skills are critical to your future.

CHEM 127: This is a four-unit beginning chemistry course with three hours per week of lecture and one three-hour laboratory session. Generally, we recommend more than 2hrs/unit/week of study for most science and mathematics courses. You will need to read the textbook one paragraph at a time and ask questions of yourself as you read. You should integrate your lecture notes with the text. There are textbook problems in the interior and at the close of each chapter for you to work. Don't work problems just to get the answer; you have to truly understand. By the time you do all of this, complete homework assignments and lab reports, and study for exams, you could easily average ten hours per week.

MATH 141: This four-unit course initiates the calculus series. Generally class meets four times a week. After each class period you should make sure you understand the proofs and sample problems presented by your instructor and review the same material in your textbook. Homework will be assigned and whether it is required to be turned in or not, you should do it. Often textbooks will have alternating problems with answers. It is advisable to work the problems with answers first to check your understanding and then the assigned problems. If you do all of this – reviewing the lecture and textbook and doing problems (both assigned and others that are related) – you could easily consume a couple of hours per class period. Weekly quizzes and hour exams require additional preparation. You should allocate 8-12 hours per week, at least.

You will notice that not everyone will commit to quality studying. Don't be distracted by those who don't. They are not a large group even though sometimes, because of the visibility of their lifestyles and risky behaviors, they may seem to be. Making a commitment to your education now will ensure your graduation and provide you choices in the future, choices that you may not even be able to imagine now.

There are some materials I want you to access on the College of Science and Mathematics website (http://cosam.calpoly.edu/) that will get you started in developing your own personal approach to College. Click on the yellow 25-35 icon and please look at the following:

***Academic Success Booklet**:* Learning is your personal responsibility. Your instructor is your guide but just as your instructor can't breathe, eat, or exercise for you, neither can he or she learn for you.

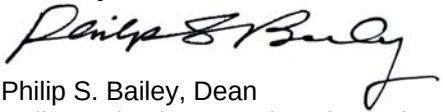
Study Log: Enter the hours you study each day before going to bed at night. If at the end of each week, including the first, you have not studied at least 25 hours, be concerned and re-focus your efforts.

Contact Information: Offices and phone numbers where you can find academic and personal support.

Memo on Alcohol: Please avoid risky behavior. Please be healthy and safe. Being drunk is immature and dangerous and certainly not cool to responsible people. Focus on why you are at one of the nation's most respected universities and what a degree will mean to your future.

Cal Poly is a special university with an excellent reputation, a tradition of academic excellence, and an impressive record of student success. You are now a part of the Cal Poly community and have a responsibility to yourself and the University to contribute to and enhance this tradition. We will support you in any way we can. We want you to be a proud graduate of Cal Poly in just a few short years from now.

Sincerely,



Philip S. Bailey, Dean
College of Science and Mathematics

Enclosures