**Kathleen Enz Finken Remarks Submitted to Good Morning SLO**

January 22, 2015

*This is the 25th Anniversary of Good Morning SLO.*

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Ermina. Good morning, and Happy Anniversary! President Jeffrey Armstrong is sorry he's not able to be here with you this morning, and sends his greetings.

Twenty-five years ago Good Morning SLO heard from President Baker. Over his distinguished career, Warren Baker transformed Cal Poly from a polytechnic university to a truly comprehensive polytechnic university. And he did it with a commitment to never compromise on quality. We share his commitment.

For those of you who don’t know me, I’ve been at Cal Poly for three years as of this week. I worked in the great university systems of Minnesota and Wisconsin for 18 years before coming to Cal Poly, the CSU system, and this wonderful community.

As a partner with the City, I know we have some work to do. There is a significant impact, and some challenges created, when 20,000 young people come to live amongst us. President Armstrong and the leadership team are committed to collaborating with our neighbors and City partners to address those challenges.

Some behavioral issues aside, I hope we can all agree that Cal Poly is a very important partner in making San Luis Obispo and the Central Coast special.

The annual economic impact alone -- $1.4 billion – means that Cal Poly is a vital economic engine to this region. And the university contributes in inumerable ways to the social, educational and cultural vibrancy of our community.

In the short time I have this morning I will touch briefly on our current work updating our academic plan and our Campus Master Plan. We’re making good progress. On behalf of President Armstrong, I'd like to thank everyone in the community and our industry partners who are participating in the process through the open forums and Master Plan committees. This has been and will continue to be a consultative process.

To understand our planning and our priorities, I think it is important to have a sense of the landscape in which Cal Poly operates. Consider these five things:

One: Demand for Cal Poly graduates in California is exceedingly strong, especially in STEM fields.

Two: The application pool to Cal Poly remains very strong, despite a decline in the number of high school graduates in California and the U.S., generally. Declining enrollment is a serious concern at colleges and universities across the nation, but not at Cal Poly. This is due more than anything else, to Cal Poly's unique niche as a comprehensive polytechnic university. Our students get a hands-on, Learn by Doing education that prepares them to be productive from Day One. Employers recognize that, and prospective students and their families recognize that.

Three: Our state subsidy does not adequately support our Learn By Doing education. State funding is never going to return to the levels of the past when the state bore the majority of the cost to educate Californians. More likely than not, our state support will continue to decrease as a percentage of our overall budget.

Four: We need more housing for first and second year students on our campus. We're a residential campus, and we know that students who live on campus for their first two years are significantly more likely to be successful and continue to graduation. This is even more pronounced for first-generation and low income students, and students in STEM majors."

Five: We must increase diversity at Cal Poly to better reflect the diversity of California, and to better prepare our students for an increasingly diverse and global marketplace. That doesn't mean just students -- we need a more diverse faculty and staff, as well.

Within this landscape, our planning for the future is focused on three primary objectives: to increase diversity and improve our campus climate; to ensure student success; and to establish financial security.

All three are inextricably linked -- the success of each is dependent on the success of all.

President Armstrong made headlines a year and a half ago when he mentioned the possibility of Cal Poly growing. It caused a stir on campus and in the community. But it's a conversation we need to have.

We need to educate more students. But there are ways we can do that without a significant impact on the community. Some examples:

First: We continue to work to increase our graduation rates. As students graduate in a more timely manner, that makes room for additional students. Our work on this issue is paying off, leading to higher graduation rates year after year.

Second: We will work to use our existing facilities more efficiently during non-peak times, and most importantly, during the summer months.

Third: We want more of our students to add off-campus educational activities, including Learn by Doing internships, co-ops, and study abroad experiences. These are high-impact practices which demonstrably enhance student success.

These are just a few examples of how we can educate more students in healthy and manageable ways.

I know I'm out of time so let me end with this. The conversation we need to have, with you, our community partners at the table, is about how we grow. I can tell you that President Armstrong will be direct -- he doesn't like to waste people's time talking around the edges of important issues. I can also tell you that he will always err on the side of being positive and optimistic.

On behalf of President Armstrong and Cal Poly, thank you for your community leadership, and for talking with us, and working with us. Together we can realize an even brighter future for Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo.

Thank you.