
Office of the President, Warren J. Baker

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California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo

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Robert E. Kennedy Library, Rm 409

San Luis Obispo, California 93407

805-756-2305

archives@calpoly.edu

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2018

Descriptive Summary

Title: Office of the President, Warren J. Baker

Dates: 1979-2014

Collection Number: UA0011

Creator/Collector: Warren J. BakerOffice of the President, Cal Poly

Extent: 32LF, 48 boxes

Repository: California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo
San Luis Obispo, California 93407

Abstract: Records created by the Office of the President during the 30-year term of President Dr. Warren J. Baker relating to university operations, administration, promotion, international relations, and development, including campus life and commencement. Records include correspondence, meeting minutes, photographs, speeches, publications, and audio/visual materials.

Language of Material: English

Access

Collection is open to researchers by appointment. For more information on visiting, access policies, and reproduction requests, please visit our Reference Services page online at <http://lib.calpoly.edu/search-and-find/collections-and-archives/reference-services/>.

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Preferred Citation

Office of the President, Warren J. Baker. California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo

Acquisition Information

Transferred from the Office of the President

Biography/Administrative History

Dr. Warren J. Baker (b.1938) served as President of Cal Poly from August 1979 through July 2010. Baker was a civil engineer and a recognized leader in higher education. The California State University Board of Trustees named him president on May 22, 1979. The youngest campus president in California State University history, he came to Cal Poly after seven years as a professor and with experience in multiple leadership positions including three years as VP for Academic Affairs at the University of Detroit. He served as Cal Poly president for 31 years. Baker was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts on September 5, 1938. He attended the University of Notre Dame where he received a BS in Civil Engineering in 1960 and an MS in Civil Engineering in 1962. He received his PhD in Civil Engineering at the University of New Mexico in 1966 and later studied at Harvard Business School. He and his wife relocated to San Luis Obispo from the University of Detroit in Michigan. Carly Baker supported the President's Office in various campus activities, including establishing the foundation for the Performing Arts Center and development work with the Centennial Campaign. She received an MA in Education at Cal Poly in 1985 and worked on several boards and commissions relating to social issues, including the Children's Center task force, Children's Protective Services task force, the board of the Women's Shelter, and Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention commissions. Baker was instrumental in developing strong financial, facility, and program growth; fostering relationships with private and governmental funding sources; increasing the breadth of academic programs; and making a name for Cal Poly at the state and national levels. Baker cultivated approximately \$1 billion in new facilities and renovations over three decades including a new Engineering Building (Bldg. 13) in 1985 and Agricultural Sciences Building (Bldg. 11) in 1988. Baker developed a relationship with Al Smith, Cal Poly alum and founder of Orchard Supply Hardware, and shepherded the donation of the 3,200-acre Swanton Pacific Ranch along with an endowment to support education at the ranch. Under his leadership, Cal Poly increased the breadth of academic programs, adding 20 majors, 72 minors, and 15 master's degree programs. Dr. Baker's work impacted all aspects of campus services and student life. He supported athletic funding and led the process to gain membership in the Big West Conference. Using Title IX as a guide, he instituted sports scholarships for women and closed the athletics-only men's residence halls. He faced challenges on campus as well.

In 1990, due to attendee riots, Baker suspended Poly Royal, an exposition held on campus since 1933. The event was suspended for several years and later redesigned as Open House. After six successful Open House events, Baker reinstated Poly Royal for one year in 2001 as part of the university's centennial celebrations. He faced criticism of his administration, as have other presidents, but was largely successful. During his tenure as president, U.S. News & World Report ranked Cal Poly as the best public university in the west for the first time in 1993 and for 17 consecutive years afterwards. The Baker Forum, which focuses on the social and economic roles and responsibilities of polytechnic universities, was established by the Cal Poly President's Council of Advisors to recognize 20 years of service by President Baker and his wife Carly. Off campus, Baker was involved in a number of professional associations and projects reflecting his interest and commitment to promoting education in science and technology. Baker served as a member of the US National Science Board; appointed by President Reagan, he served two terms from 1985 to 1994. He was a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, a Fellow in the Engineering Society of Detroit, former board member of the California Council for Science and Technology, and former member of the US Business-Higher Education Forum. He joined the Board of Directors of WestPort Fuel Systems in 2002 and also served on the Board of the US-Mexico Foundation for Science. On Dec. 7, 2009 Baker announced his intention to retire and served as President through July 2010.

Scope and Content of Collection

Scope and Content: The Office of the President is the highest administrative office for the campus, reporting to the California State University (CSU) Chancellor and Board of Trustees. The Office of the President records document the overall policies, practices, and procedures of the daily operation of campus, as well as interaction with other CSU campuses and with CSU administration. The collection documents Baker's tenure as president. The records consist of ~21LF of records collected and created by Warren J. Baker in his role as President of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo from 1979-2010, including university operations, administration, promotion, international relations, and development, campus life, and commencement. Records include correspondence related to student activities, campus administration, NSB proceedings, curriculum, and campus planning; meeting minutes; campus and community speeches; photographs; and audio/visual materials including speeches, campus events, and lectures. ~11LF of tea sets received by Baker on behalf of the university during his visits abroad working with International Programs and the development of programs abroad, as well as his role on the US National Science Board.

Indexing Terms

Universidad EARTH

Escuela de Agricultura de la Región Tropical Húmeda

Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD)

National Science Board (NSB)

UCSB Economic Forecast Project

California Polytechnic State University

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