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California Polytechnic State University

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MEDIA ADVISORY/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

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Cal Poly's Second Annual Summer Lab Chemistry Workshop for Blind and Sighted Students Is Underway

TO: News Editors, Photo Editors, Assignment Editors and Reporters

WHAT: Cal Poly is hosting "Access Chemistry 2008," the second annual hands-on summer laboratory chemistry workshop for blind and sighted high school students. Ages range from 14 to 18, attending from throughout California.

WHEN: Tomorrow, Friday, June 27

WHERE: Lab activities are taking place in the Mathematics and Science Building, Room 123 at Cal Poly.

BACKGROUND: The workshop is being led by Dennis Fantin, a Cal Poly chemistry instructor and practicing biophysicist. Fantin, himself blind, has developed techniques and procedures which make the chemistry laboratory a rich environment for visually impaired students.

The workshop employs a discovery-based teaching approach, encouraging participants to learn about chemical phenomena and adaptive laboratory techniques by doing their own experimental work and making their own observations and measurements. The workshop environment is supportive, and the scientific subject matter presented is stimulating and challenging for both sighted and blind participants.

In the laboratory, the students work in teams, each assisted by a Cal Poly chemistry major and Fantin. The project's philosophy places the direct apprehension of physical reality by the blind student at the core of the laboratory experience. In keeping with this principle, the blind student takes the lead in carrying out laboratory operations wherever possible.

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