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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Flower Judging Team Again Best in Nation

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- The Cal Poly Flower Judging Team has again been crowned national champions.

The 2008 team earned the honors at the 67th National Intercollegiate Floral Crop Quality Evaluation Contest, held at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in early April.

Competing student teams are judged on their ability to discern differences in perfection of various floriculture crops. Students had to rank specimens in 32 different classes, including 15 different potted flowering and foliage plants and 17 types of fresh flowers -- ranging from potted callas to stems of snapdragons.

The Cal Poly team scored a total of 8,630 points out of a possible 9,600 points. The second place team, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls had a total of 8199 points.

“That is one of the biggest first-place point spreads in the competition’s recent history,” said team coach and Cal Poly Horticulture Professor Virginia Walter.

Cal Poly team members David Gavar, of Tustin, Joel Kaupert, of Santa Cruz, and Kim Wakatsuki, of San Martin, also placed first, second, and third, respectively, in individual awards.

Kaupert was named the top judge in the cut flowers division, followed by Wakatsuki and Gavar. Gavar placed second overall all in potted plants.

In the competition’s floral design competition, Gavar took first place in round centerpiece design and Wakatsuki took first place in designer’s choice. Teammate Natalia Bahena of Greenfield, placed third in the hand-tied bouquet contest and Kaupert placed third in asymmetrical triangle arrangement. Horticulture and crop science instructor Melinda Lynch helped the students prepare for the floral design events.

The contest, jointly sponsored by Pi Alpha Xi, the national horticulture scholastic honor society, and the American Floral Endowment, is held annually at various universities. Cal Poly is scheduled to host the contest in 2011.

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