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Cal Poly Receives $500,000 from National Science Foundation to Fund Scholarships

SAN LUIS OBISPO – The National Science Foundation recently awarded a $500,000 grant to the Cal Poly Honors Program to fund scholarships for financially disadvantaged honors students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The scholarships will provide financial aid for academically talented but financially needy students and will allow them to participate in a project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum within Honors Program. Students who receive scholarships will be required to participate in projects that have practical value for industry, the local community, or the global community.

The winning grant proposal was written through the collaboration of the Honors Program, the College of Engineering, and the College of Science and Mathematics. Professor Sema Alptekin, director of Cal Poly’s Honors Program, spearheaded the proposal effort with support from Mohammad Noori, dean of the College of Engineering, and Phil Bailey, dean of the College of Science and Mathematics. David Conn, vice provost for academic programs, also contributed to the process.

"I couldn’t ask for better news as I get settled in at Cal Poly," said Cal Poly Provost William Durgin. "This award will provide a tremendous boost to Cal Poly's Honors Program and will foster interdisciplinary collaboration that will help establish a strong position for us as we move forward."

Each year the Honors Program will develop up to three interdisciplinary team projects. The projects will address issues ranging from theoretical research to applied science and engineering projects, all directed toward industry, community service and humanitarian aid. All of the projects will require collaboration among engineering, science and mathematics students in ways that create practical value for the various communities.

Logistical considerations will require that most of the projects be based locally, but Alptekin hopes to eventually initiate international projects as part of the program.

"We are constantly on the alert for funding and project opportunities for all of the disciplines represented in the Honors program and hopefully this NSF award will be the first of many others to come," said Alptekin.

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