Jan. 18, 2006

Contact: Carol Pendergast
Cal Poly College of Education
(805) 756-5330

Two Cal Poly Professors Help Produce Book for High School English Teachers

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Two Cal Poly faculty members teamed with a consultant for the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education to produce a book that addresses the varied instructional needs of high school English students.

Jeannine Richison in Cal Poly's College of Liberal Arts and Anita Hernandez in the College of Education, along with consultant Marcia Carter from the county's AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, wrote "Theme-Sets for Secondary Students: How to Scaffold Core Literature," which will be published in February by Heinemann Books.

As former public school teachers, the authors understand that the greatest challenges teachers face are teaching the state-mandated curriculum to students learning English as a second language, students with special needs and those reading below grade level or with little interest in traditional literature. The book is designed to help English teachers diversify lessons to target all their students.

"Structuring lessons to build levels of knowledge of and interest in classical literature is key to student interest and success," Richison said. "Theme-sets combine a variety of books -- sophisticated children's picture books, chapter books and highly acclaimed young-adult literature, as well as selections of poetry and non-fiction -- to prepare students for more difficult reading. Activities are presented that use higher-level thinking skills and many of the best classroom practices supported by decades of educational research."

Teachers will find annotated bibliographies to assist them in helping students examine themes, including migrant families in "Grapes of Wrath," the African-American experience in "Their Eyes Were Watching God," and the literature of war in "Night."

"Theme-Sets for Secondary Students" illustrates how theme-sets can turn traditional high school literature study into a productive interactive experience," Richison said. "It offers ideas for planning and evaluating theme-based instruction, differentiating instruction using theme-sets, and sparking inquiry in students."

###