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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Cal Poly Grads Among Volunteers Serving Overseas in Peace Corps

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Twenty-one Cal Poly alumni are now volunteering overseas through the Peace Corps, according to numbers the national organization released recently.

Those graduates are in 17 different countries, helping in areas such as agriculture, environment, business development, education and health. And their degrees span a wide variety of academic studies at the university, including microbiology, architecture, agribusiness, nutrition and psychology.

One-third are serving in environmental capacities, which a Peace Corps official said is significant, since that is the most difficult type of volunteer for the organization to find.

Cal Poly's relationship with the Peace Corps stretches back decades. The Peace Corps' Los Angeles office reports that 730 Cal Poly graduates have gone on to serve as volunteers overseas since the corps was started in 1961.

The Peace Corps established a recruitment center at Cal Poly in 1976 and held trainings on the campus before that.

The recruitment center at Cal Poly is one of five on university campuses in California (the other four are UC San Diego, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, and Humboldt State).

"Recent college graduates have been the backbone of Peace Corps since it was started," said Kate Kuykendall with the organization's recruitment office in Los Angeles. "Our average age is actually 27, because we also have a sizable population of retirees that push that number upwards. But Peace Corps has historically relied on recent college graduates to go overseas."

Joslyn Parizo is preparing to add to Cal Poly's numbers, when she leaves in May to teach English for the Peace Corps in Romania. The 2007 communications graduate said the Peace Corps gives her the opportunity for personal growth, life experience and adventure.

"I'd heard of the Peace Corps when I was younger," she said. "I've always volunteered, and it was in the back of my mind to do this. When I was graduating, it just felt right."

She signed up for recruitment shortly before graduating. After a lengthy nomination process and subsequent medical clearance, the Ventura County resident is now focused on preparing to leave in the spring – including learning Romanian.

Parizo urges anyone who thinks they might be interested in the Peace Corps to talk to their local recruiter or go to the organization's Web site and start applying.

"Every step of the application process is designed to give you as much information as possible and help you decide if this is the right thing for you," she said.

Right now, 7,876 Peace Corps volunteers are serving in 76 countries. More than 195,000 people have volunteered in 139 countries in which they have served. Officials report that applications to serve in the Peace Corps increased 16 percent in the past year, the largest boost in the last five years. And President Barack Obama has announced he plans to expand the Peace Corps.

Volunteers must be U.S. citizens at least 18 years old. Service is a 27-month commitment. Recruitment is ongoing.

Julie Cooper, who coordinates Cal Poly's recruitment center, holds monthly informational meetings on campus for those considering applying. The next meeting is set for Feb. 24 at 3 p.m. in Room 202 of the Kennedy Library.

The Peace Corps Recruiting Center is in Room 113 in the library. For more information, call 805-756-5835, send e-mail to [peacecorps@calpoly.edu](mailto:peacecorps@calpoly.edu) or visit [www.peacecorps.calpoly.edu](http://www.peacecorps.calpoly.edu). For more on the national organization, log on to [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov).

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