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Contact: Patrick Lin
Ethics + Emerging Technologies Group
805-570-5651 palin@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly to Co-sponsor Conference on Human Enhancement, Nanotechnology

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- The Nanoethics Group, based at Cal Poly, will co-host a conference at Western Michigan University on the ethical and social impacts of human enhancement technologies, especially related to nanotechnology.

The March 28 and 29 ethics meeting will cover issues in sports, military, policy and religion. "Bionic limbs for greater strength or vision and neural chips implanted into one's head for on-demand access to the Internet and software applications could give significant advantages to an individual in many areas, from sports to jobs to academia," explained Patrick Lin, director of The Nanoethics Group and faculty member in Cal Poly's philosophy department.

"But these technologies may hold health risks -- similar to steroid or Ritalin use for enhancement purposes -- and raise ethical concerns related to fairness, access and general societal disruption," he said.

Through exercise, diet, medicine and academics, individuals strive to be stronger, healthier and smarter. "But using new, powerful technologies to achieve the same result seems to push our bodies and minds beyond their natural limits, opening the possibility of unintended or unforeseen results and harm," Lin said.

Leading researchers and rising stars in the field will be presenting at the conference, coming from such top universities and organizations as the Albany School of Medicine, Arizona State, Carnegie Mellon, General Dynamics, IBM, Indiana University, Michigan State University, Northeastern University, Oxford University, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Trinity College, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Yale.

The conference is organized by faculty at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; Dartmouth College, the University of Delaware and Western Michigan University. It is funded by Western Michigan University and a grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation.

For more information, including registration details, directions, and the full line-up of speakers, go on online to www.humanenhance.com.

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About the Nanoethics Group

The Nanoethics Group (www.nanoethics.org) is organized under the umbrella of the Ethics + Emerging Technologies Group (www.emergingethics.com), based at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The Ethics + Emerging Technologies Group is a non-partisan research and educational organization focused on the risk, ethical, and social impacts of emerging technologies, such as robotics and nanotechnology.

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California Polytechnic State University

San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

805.756.7266

polynews@calpoly.edu

