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Cal Poly and UCSB Begin New Center for Collaborative Engineering Research and Education

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly and UC Santa Barbara are joining forces with their respective engineering programs, linking together a prominent undergraduate curriculum with a highly-ranked graduate research institution to expand opportunities for students and faculty.

Cal Poly and UCSB have founded the Center for Collaborative Engineering Research and Education, allowing Cal Poly engineering students access to greater research opportunities according to Cal Poly Engineering Dean Mohammad Noori.

“This center extends the partnership between Cal Poly and UCSB to a new level of national eminence, the first research center of its type between a UC and CSU campus that brings together the unique strengths of both institutions,” said Noori. “Instead of duplicating programs, it complements strengths, providing our students access to UCSB’s labs and research infrastructure and allowing our faculty to work with doctoral students.”

Matt Tirrell, dean of UCSB’s College of Engineering, said Cal Poly’s stream of undergraduates is attractive to UCSB. “For us, it’s access to their students, but particularly the solidly educated brand of students that Cal Poly produces at the undergraduate level with an emphasis on project-based learning,” said Tirrell.

The center is envisioned as a vehicle for cooperative educational and research initiatives at both institutions. One example is creating a stream of highly qualified graduate students from the Cal Poly masters programs to the UCSB doctoral program, a formalized undergraduate research program that prepares undergrads for careers in research and development.

Cal Poly alumnus Paul Bonderson recently funded a joint M.S./Ph.D. in biomedical and materials engineering, providing fellowship and research support for students to complete their masters at Cal Poly and subsequently transfer into the materials Ph.D. program at UCSB. Students will be advised by joint Cal Poly/UCSB faculty committees throughout the five year fellowship period.

Cal Poly has incredible capability for design, fabrication, testing and implementation of devices and systems according to Cal Poly Mechanical Engineering Professor Thomas Mackin. The complementary capabilities at UCSB are simulation, device design and process science. “The synergy from the center will greatly enhance the scope of projects available through government funding agencies and from industry,” said Mackin.

The center will have components on both campuses and will focus, initially, on aerospace themes that include electronics, polymer science, morphing structures, high heat flux systems and control algorithms.

Center research projects would be granted to either UCSB or Cal Poly and administered by their respective research offices, with sub-contracts to the secondary institution. “The center is intended as a framework for cooperation across campus and is not limited to an aerospace focus,” said Mackin.

The center will be largely self-supporting through external contracts and grants. It is expected to operate with an annual budget in the range of \$3 to 4 million.

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