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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **July 1 Symposium at Cal Poly Focused on Preparing Education Leaders to Improve Nation's STEM Instruction**

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SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly will host a symposium July 1 aimed at helping school administrators lead the effort to improve California's education of students in the STEM disciplines – science, technology, engineering and math.

The second annual STEM Leadership Symposium, sponsored by Cal Poly's Educational Leadership and Administration Program, is planned for 5-7:30 p.m. in the Business Rotunda (Room 213). There is no cost to attend, and the public is welcome.

Organizers hope it fosters greater discussion in the education field not only on how to prepare more educators who are ready to teach the STEM disciplines but also how to train administrators to lead the STEM effort and support excellence in teaching and learning.

"There is plethora of information on developing science teachers," said Associate Professor James Gentilucci, who coordinates Cal Poly's Education Leadership and Administration program. "But most research ignores the critical nature of leadership, a key element in STEM education. Leadership is necessary to support teachers and help them thrive. On average, 10 percent of new teachers leave the field each year within their first five years in the classroom. Half of new teachers from any given year are gone in five years. And that figure is worse in the STEM disciplines, where teachers are more likely to be recruited by industry."

Leaders in education do not have a firm grasp on issues specific to STEM teaching, Gentilucci said. Such issues include the need for block scheduling to allow more lab time in science classes, or the fact that resource distribution may need to be higher in STEM disciplines, which require expenditures on items such as lab assistants and costlier equipment.

The STEM symposium will feature five panelists: Sarah Cameron, a science teacher with the Santa Maria-Bonita Unified School District; Susan Elrod, director of Cal Poly's Center for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education; Arroyo Grande High School Principal Ryan Pinkerton;

Shirley Magnusson, a Cal Poly Science and Mathematics Education professor, and Edward Valentine, superintendent of the San Luis Coastal Unified School District.

Cal Poly hopes the STEM Leadership Symposium is a step toward establishing the university as a center in the U.S. where educators go for STEM leadership development.

The symposium is part of a broader effort at Cal Poly to address the developing shortage of STEM teachers in California and the nation. It comes on the heels of Cal Poly's spring announcement that the College of Education and the Liberal Studies Department will merge with the College of Science and Mathematics, with the aim of better preparing math and science teachers as well as STEM-focused leaders for the state's schools.

For more details on the July 1 symposium, contact James Gentilucci in the College of Education at 805-756-5373 or [jgentilu@calpoly.edu](mailto:jgentilu@calpoly.edu).

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