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MEDIA ADVISORY

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## Cal Poly's Third Annual Summer Laboratory Chemistry Workshop for Blind and Sighted High School Students Is Underway

TO: News Editors, Photo Editors, Assignment Editors and Reporters

WHAT: Cal Poly is hosting "Access Chemistry 2009," the third annual hands-on summer laboratory chemistry workshop for blind and sighted high school students. Twelve students – ranging in age from 14 to 18 – are attending from throughout California. Several students are from the Central Coast area.

WHEN: Now through Saturday, June 27.

WHERE: Lab activities are taking place in the Mathematics and Science Building, Room 123 at Cal Poly. Recreational activities are taking place throughout the Central Coast.

### BACKGROUND:

The workshop is being led by Dennis Fantin, a biophysicist, and professor in Cal Poly's College of Science and Mathematics. Fantin, himself blind, has developed teaching methods and new technology that make the chemistry laboratory a rich environment for visually impaired students.

The workshop employs a discovery-based teaching approach, encouraging participants to learn about chemical phenomena and adaptive laboratory techniques by doing their own experimental work and making their own observations and measurements. The workshop environment is supportive, and the scientific subject matter presented is stimulating and challenging for both sighted and blind participants. In the laboratory, the students work in teams, assisted by Fantin, other professional chemists and Cal Poly chemistry majors.

"The project's philosophy places the direct apprehension of physical reality by the blind student at the core of the laboratory experience," said Fantin. "In keeping with this philosophy, the blind student takes the lead in carrying out laboratory operations wherever possible."

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