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## Cal Poly Hosts Swiss Education Minister on July 15-17 as Wine and Viticulture Exchange Program Concludes

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly is hosting the minister of education from Vaud, Switzerland, and a delegation of Swiss VIPs through the end of the week as the university concludes a month-long exchange program for wine and viticulture students from California, Switzerland, Russia and Italy.

The exchange program began June 23 with eight students from Cal Poly; two from Fresno State University; 13 from the Engineering School of Enology Changins, Switzerland; one from the University of Moscow, Russia; and two from the University of the Sacred Heart in Piacenza, Italy.

With the theme of “Wine and Moving Beyond Sustainability,” the program includes lectures, activities and field trips. Participants spent the first week at Cal Poly taking classes and visiting various wine regions and other areas of interest on the Central Coast. Week 2 was spent in the Napa-Sonoma region. For Week 3, participants visited the Lodi and Fresno areas, and Week 4 is being spent back at Cal Poly.

“We’re extremely fortunate to be involved, and it’s a wonderful opportunity. One of our goals is to expose our students to a global society and teach them how to think globally,” said Mary Pedersen, associate dean of Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. “This is true for all of our programs, not just Wine and Viticulture. We want all students to understand their fields from a global perspective.”

This is the second year of a four-year exchange program. Last year, 16 Cal Poly students and three faculty members studied winemaking in Switzerland, Italy and France. California students will travel to Europe again next summer, and Fresno State will coordinate the 2011 exchange in California, with Cal Poly hosting a week.

Pedersen pointed out that the financial support of the Swiss is playing a significant role in making the program happen. In addition to funding the visiting students and faculty at Cal Poly this year, the Swiss also paid a large portion of the costs for the California students who visited Europe in 2008.

The exchange program is spelled out in a collaboration agreement involving Cal Poly, Fresno State and the Engineering School of Enology Changins. And it is part of a larger Swiss program called Summer University, in which state universities in Vaud partner with campuses in the U.S. and other countries for exchange programs on academic topics including nursing, business and computer science. Other participating universities in California include Humboldt State, San Jose State and San Diego State.

Anne-Catherine Lyon, the Vaud education minister who is visiting Cal Poly this week, said it’s a natural fit for the public universities in her state to partner with campuses in the California State University, also a public system. The Swiss campuses were able to match up with California campuses and programs of similar size, she added, so faculty and administrators could more easily relate to each others’ experiences.

Cal Poly in particular proved a good partner because of its growing wine program, Lyon said.

“Changins is the only school of enology in the whole of Switzerland,” Lyon said. “The exchange is a tremendous program that has worked so well. What we can give to American students is a sense of history, with the ancient vineyards and traditions of Switzerland and Europe. And our students experience another dimension of enology in California, with the size of the vineyards and the differences in climates.”

Lyon and her delegation will attend a day-long program Friday that will include a roundtable discussion of Cal Poly’s learn by doing approach to education with faculty and staff from a variety of colleges and departments around campus. Lyon said she wants the discussion to help strengthen ties between Cal Poly and Vaud, with possible next steps being joint master’s degree programs or an expansion of the wine exchange program to include a university in a third country or even on a third continent.

John Peterson, head of Cal Poly’s Horticulture and Crop Science Department, said Lyon also will sign the existing collaboration agreement.

“We are very enthused to have the Swiss delegation visiting Cal Poly and to have Madame Lyon signing our agreement,” said Peterson, who is director of Cal Poly’s wine program. “The document has been in place and was signed by President Baker. Having Madame Lyon’s signature adds a measure of leverage and support.”

The agreement also calls for the universities to develop joint programs, take part in additional student and faculty exchanges and work together on research projects.

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