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Cal Poly Student Skips Graduation, Snags National Rodeo Championship Title

SAN LUIS OBISPO - While his classmates were climbing into caps and gowns June 14, Cal Poly's Jesse Segura was climbing into the saddle in Wyoming - where he earned the 2003 National All-Around Cowboy title, becoming the top collegiate rodeo competitor in the U.S.

Segura, who technically graduated with a bachelor's degree in earth science June 14, took home a $6,500 scholarship and a $35,000 sponsorship for competition next year on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association circuit.

"He was winning all that at the same time he was supposed to be walking down the aisle in a cap and gown at graduation," said Cal Poly Rodeo Coach Bret Black.

Winning the National All-Around title awarded by the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) is "a huge honor," Black said, both for Segura and the Cal Poly Rodeo Team. It's the first time in roughly 30 years a Cal Poly Rodeo Team member has earned the NIRA National All-Around Cowboy title.

Segura, of Winnemucca, Nev., is weighing whether to compete on the PRCA rodeo circuit next year or go to graduate school at Cal Poly.

He was one of 12 Cal Poly Rodeo Team members to make the NIRA final competition in Casper, Wyo., June 8-14.

Those competing for Cal Poly on the Men's Team at the finals included Segura, Billy Bugenig of Ferndale, Clint Cooper of Atascadero, John Wiersma of Hollister, Josh Mack of Millville, Luke Lancaster of Austin, Nev. and Scott McCulloch of Galt.

Competing for Cal Poly on the Women's Team were Fallon Avery of Aromas, Linsay Rosser of Wheatland, Sadie Myers of Winnemucca, Nev., and
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Tiffany Curtis of Cody, Wyo.

In the men's competition, Segura placed fourth in the first round of Saddle Bronc Riding and sixth in the third round of Steer Wrestling, and seventh in the average and first in the National All-Around standings with a five-point lead. Cooper placed fifth in the second round of Calf Roping. Lancaster placed first in the third round of Steer Wrestling.

In the women's competition, Rosser and Curtis tied for fourth in the second round of Breakaway Roping.

For more information on the national NIRA finals, visit the association web site at: http://www.collegerodeo.com/

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