FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cal Poly Biological Sciences Professor To Receive Presidential Award

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly oceanographer and Biological Sciences Associate Professor Mark Moline is among 60 young scientists and engineers from across the nation who will be recognized in a White House ceremony Friday (July 12) for their outstanding work.

Moline, recommended for the honor by NASA, is to receive the 2001 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the nation's highest honor for professionals at the outset of their research careers.

Because of a family medical emergency, Moline will not be able to attend the Washington, D.C., ceremony, where President George W. Bush is scheduled to present the awards.

The Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, established in 1996, honor the most promising young researchers in the nation within their fields, according to a White House news release. "Eight federal departments and agencies, which join together annually to nominate young scientists and engineers whose work is of greatest benefit to the nominating agency's mission, administer the awards. Participating agencies award these young scientists and engineers up to five years of funding to further their research in support of critical government missions."

"You are a shining example to future generations of researchers," said John H. Marburger III, director of the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy, in notifying Moline of his selection. "You represent the best of the group of scientists and engineers who will be responsible for America's 21st century greatness."

"This is a rare honor for Mark and for Cal Poly," said Dean of Science and Mathematics Phil Bailey. "He is an excellent teacher and is
especially talented in directing student research. Our students are so fortunate to have access to Mark; he exemplifies Cal Poly values and traditions."

Moline, a specialist in microscopic marine plants called phytoplankton, earned his doctorate in 1996 from UCSB and joined the Cal Poly faculty in 1998. He has conducted numerous research projects in the Atlantic, in the Pacific, in waters surrounding Antarctica and at Rutgers University's LEO-15 observatory on the coast of New Jersey. Thanks to Moline, Cal Poly students participated in the development of LEO-15, considered the most technologically advanced coastal research site in the world.

"Mark's a ground-breaking and selfless scientist whose work is forever changing oceanography," said Rutgers' Oscar Schofield, one of the LEO-15 facility's founders.

NASA recommended Moline for the presidential award to study "upwelling events" -- upward currents of water in the ocean -- and their impact on phytoplankton.

"Phytoplankton, the 'forests' of the ocean, fuel the marine food web," Moline said. "Changes in phytoplankton community structure and abundance can have far-reaching effects on fisheries and ecosystem health. Additionally, as primary producers, phytoplankton play a major role in the cycling of global carbon and thus are central to understanding the greenhouse effect."

Moline is one of two recently named Unocal Professors of Marine Science who will guide a variety of projects at Cal Poly's new Marine Science and Education Research Center, which is being established at the Avila Beach pier recently donated to the university by Unocal. Much of the work Moline conducts under the presidential award, which includes funding for five years of research, will be done at the new Cal Poly facility.

"The timing and prestige of this award are especially important as Cal Poly seeks support for developing the Marine Science Education and Research Center," Bailey said.

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MEMO TO EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: Because of the family medical emergency that is keeping Mark Moline from attending the White House ceremony honoring him and other recipients of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, Moline is currently unavailable for interviews. Reporters who would like more information on the award and Moline's research and teaching -- or learn when Moline might become available -- are welcome to contact Biological Sciences Department Chair V.L. Holland at 756-2788.