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Cal Poly Week of Welcome Expands Student Education Program

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly’s Week of Welcome Orientation Program is unveiling changes to the structure of its Awareness Component for WOW 2010. The aim is to stress to incoming students the importance of diversity and respect, health and safety, and positive community relations.

WOW helps students make connections with peers, faculty and staff, student clubs and San Luis Obispo businesses to ease the transition to college life. Additionally, the program informs new students about issues they may face while at college, as well as healthy ways to address those issues.

Some key issues that will be highlighted in this year’s newly restructured Awareness Component include alcohol and drug abuse and addiction; stress, depression and suicide; healthy living; positive body image; and community awareness. The goal is to create a self-reflective, emotional and impactful experience for new students.

“Part of the aim of Week of Welcome has always been to help new students prepare for the pressures of university life and give them the tools to be healthy and make good decisions,” said Ken Barclay, Cal Poly’s director of Student Life and Leadership. “But in light of some things we’ve seen on campus the last couple of years, we felt it was time to refocus this part of WOW.”

The revamped Awareness Component consists of four parts:

- Personal Choices and Struggles
- Campus and Community Panel
- Discovery of Student Life Awareness Gallery
- Respect and Diversity Workshop

Personal Choices and Struggles focuses on presenting consequences that can result from drug and alcohol abuse, as well as the seriousness of depression and suicide. The gravity of the subjects is illustrated using videos, music, images, stories and viewer participation. Large student groups gather for the program then break into small groups to discuss what they’ve experienced.

WOW staff worked closely with San Luis Obispo Police, University Police, County Drug and Alcohol Services and Cal Poly's Counseling Services to develop the program.

Campus and Community Panel introduces new students to the relationship between community members and college students prior to SLO Bound – the event that familiarizes students with downtown San Luis Obispo and local businesses. Students learn their role as responsible community members and will hear from San Luis Obispo police about various city ordinances, the importance of community service and overall respect for our community.

Respect and Diversity is a hands-on workshop emphasizing the importance of the two topics at Cal Poly and throughout San Luis Obispo. Personal stories are shared through video and speaker presentations and remind students of the difficult choices they face. The purpose is to prompt discussion and reflection throughout the WOW experience and encourage students to make the best of their time at Cal Poly.

Discovery of Student Life Awareness Gallery integrates all WOW Awareness topics to encourage self-discovery and knowledge about student life at Cal Poly. Material will be presented in a museum format that students will experience with their WOW groups, visiting various rooms and interacting with multiple forms of media.

Community members are invited to preview these presentations and workshops Sept. 7 through 10 to gain a better understanding of what incoming students will experience this fall. Visitors can provide WOW staff with feedback via e-mail following their experience.

Cal Poly's Week of Welcome takes place Sept. 15 through 19.

For more information on WOW, visit <http://studentlife.calpoly.edu/orientation/wow/home/index.asp>.

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