



Jan. 11, 2011

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Cal Poly to Help Build New Haiti Built Environment Resource Center

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design will join several national organizations to help the State University of Haiti construct a new Haiti Built Environment Resource Center.

The center will provide educational courses related to constructing safer buildings (particularly schools), and disaster resilient communities for Haitian architects, engineers, contractors, building officials, city planners and local public officials.

The US National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) will lead a team in charge of creating the center. The team consists of Cal Poly’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Virginia Tech’s Advanced Research Institute, Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, Ayers Saint Gross Architects + Planners, the National Organization for the Advancement of Haitians, the Institute for Building Technology and Safety, the Haitian American Engineers Organization, Witt Associates, and the State University of Haiti.

NIBS and the Advanced Research Institute of Virginia Tech invited Cal Poly to join the group because of the university’s hands-on learning approach to the built environment, as well as faculty expertise in seismic safety and planning for disaster-resilient communities.

William Siembieda, a professor in Cal Poly’s City and Regional Planning Department, will coordinate the college’s effort during the current academic year. Faculty member James Mwangi, a certified disaster safety worker, is also part of the team.

Siembieda expects student to be involved in the project following the construction of the Haiti Built Environment Resource Center. “Our students will get hands-on experience with the project through coursework and field trips,” he said. “We expect that special projects such as materials testing, design alternatives, and land planning to be done on campus and sent to Haiti will be used at the center.”

R. Thomas Jones, dean of Cal Poly’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design, was selected as one of nine members of the board of directors for the Washington based non-profit organization that will help build the center.

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