Cal Poly Wins National Flower Judging Championship

The 2002 Cal Poly flower judging team has won the 61st National Intercollegiate Floral Crop Quality Evaluation Contest, defeating teams from Penn State University, the University of Illinois, Texas A&M, the University of Minnesota and other schools.

It was the seventh time since 1990 that the team has won the competition.

Cal Poly's three-student team competed with others to judge the overall commercial quality of 30 separate classes of flowers, ranging from fresh flower snapdragons to potted hydrangeas. Student Stacey Medema of Paso Robles finished second overall in the contest.

Medema and teammate Ann Marie Plastino of Nipomo earned first and second place in cut flower judging. The third judging team member, Sara Castro of Santa Margarita was named fifth-best judge overall, and Plastino was named seventh-best judge overall. The judging team alternate, Christine Lancaster of Tulare, placed first in the designer's choice category of the optional flower design competition associated with the contest.

Judging the quality of cut flowers and potted flowering and foliage plants is an academic contest with practical applications, said Professor Virginia Walter of the Cal Poly Horticulture and Crop Science Department, the team's coach. Professional floriculturists must evaluate the quality of the products they grow, buy and sell. The training these students receive at Cal Poly prepares them to step readily into these demanding professions, said Walter, who has coached the flower judging team for 25 years.

"The university is very proud of the success of the flower judging team," said University President Warren J. Baker. "The students and
their coach, Professor Virginia Walter, are to be congratulated for a job well done."

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