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California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California

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Contact: Stacia Momburg

805-756-6260; smomburg@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Announces Great Grads of 2011

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly's Class of 2011 includes more than 4,000 graduates who will participate in commencement ceremonies in the Spanos Stadium on Saturday, June 11, at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Below are some "great grads" from the Class of 2011:

Already retired, Betty Purify, 52, returned to Cal Poly to complete her degree after a 33 year absence. Purify originally came to Cal

Poly to participate in a program to help her earn a high school equivalency certificate. Although just 13 at the time, her paperwork said she was 17 and she didn't correct the error. She went on to earn an associate's degree from Cuesta College while raising her three siblings. She then enrolled at Cal Poly but left when she got pregnant. She retired from a position as a teaching assistant with the California Youth Authority and currently serves with her husband as co-pastor of Breakthrough Ministry. Over the years, she has been a mother to many. In addition to her siblings, she raised four children and many nieces and nephews – there are still seven at home. She said coming back to school was one of the hardest things she's ever done. "It was hard to juggle school and family, and my study skills were a bit rusty," she said. She did it, though, with family tutors and encouragement from her son



Markel, who earned a doctorate and is a mentor and adviser in Cal Poly's Career Services. A resident of San Luis Obispo since she moved here from Bakersfield at the age of 13, Purify is now considering going on to earn an advanced degree.

The "big leagues" lured Anthony Pannone away from college when he was drafted by the San Francisco Giants in 2000. After several



years with the organization, he returned to school at age 27 on a Major League Baseball scholarship. Coming back to school was tough, and he acknowledged that he was operating under the emotional burden of letting go of his dream of a career in baseball. "It was like battling a death," he said. He first enrolled as a biology student, then transferred to animal science before taking a composition class that he says changed him and his major. He will graduate with a degree in agricultural science with an emphasis in communication. Although he has a different perspective than most of his fellow students who were raised on a farm, Pannone, thinks he is an ideal messenger because he studied nutrition to fuel his body as an athlete. He intends to bring transparency to agricultural communication and has written for *Certified Angus Beef*,



among other publications. First, though, he will pursue a master's degree in agricultural leadership and communication at Texas A&M. Pannone spent much of his childhood in Anchorage, Ala., before attending high school in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The first person in his family to attend college, **Victor Escalera** will graduate with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in civil engineering in a five-year program in the College of Engineering called 4+1. He emigrated from Mexico when he was 13. His parents have minimal literacy in Spanish and English, and none of his seven siblings, dozens of cousins or extended family have gone to college. Recognizing his aptitude, a high school teacher connected Escalera with AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a program that provides motivation for educational and professional development for the least-served students. Although he was accepted as a freshman at all the UC campuses, Escalera was not eligible for financial aid because he was not then a legal citizen. After attending community college and earning his citizenship, he came to Cal Poly because of its reputation in engineering. He won first place in the Engineering and Computer Science – Graduate Category at the 25th annual California State University Student Research Competition held in May this year. He has accepted an offer as a project manager with Brocade Communications System, an industry leader in networking hardware and software located in Silicon Valley. Escalera's hometown is Visalia.





Tamara Wells will leave Cal Poly with a degree and a basketball championship. Wells is a point guard on the women's basketball team, which went undefeated in regular season play and clinched the Big West Conference title for the first time. As an athlete, she learned vital skills she can apply in her career as a management trainee for Enterprise Rent-A-Car. These skills include working as part of a team, showing initiative, and inspiring and motivating others to be their best. She said the fast-paced game also helped her learn to adapt well to changing situations. She will graduate with a degree in business administration with an emphasis in information systems and a minor in ethnic studies. She said especially enjoyed the Ethnic Studies program because it helped her understand different ethnicities and nationalities, and embrace their practices and customs. She hopes to own her own business one day, where she can work with people and use the leadership skills she learned on the court. "I have it inside of me to help others," said Wells, who was born in Compton and attended high school in Riverside.

Already president of his own technology company, entrepreneur Adam ("AJ") Forsythe has

big plans for the future. He created iCracked out of the confluence of opportunity and ingenuity ... and frustration, after breaking the screen on his iPhone one too many times. After calculating the cost of repairs and the inconvenience of down-time, Forsythe, a psychology major with an emphasis in biology, did the research and repaired the screen himself. After fixing his and his roommates' screens, an idea was born. iCracked licenses the business concept to student entrepreneurs. The company supplies the marketing, parts, manuals and training, and students on campuses internationally provide the labor. The company is already operating on 20 campuses in the United States and has one I location in Johannesburg, South Africa. iCracked took third place at Cal Poly's Innovation Quest competition and was one of 20 university teams from across the country invited to compete in UniversityEXPO, an event that enables student entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas to Silicon Valley venture capitalists. After graduating, Forsythe plans to move the company to Silicon Valley. He considers Dallas, Texas, his home.



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