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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Professor Receives Award for Special Education Achievements

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly School of Education Professor Michael Ruef has received the 2011 Thomas Haring Award in recognition of his efforts on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The award is given annually by the UC Santa Barbara Gervitz School of Education.

In selecting Ruef for the award, The Gervitz School noted that his work “represents the best in leadership, citizen activism and advocacy.” He received the award at a ceremony in early June, along with four other recipients.

Ruef is a professor and co-coordinator of Special Education Programs in Cal Poly’s School of Education. He is a founding member of the board of directors for the Central Coast Autism Spectrum Center.

“I’m honored to receive the award and hope that it will raise awareness of the issues dealt with by families touched by autism or other disabilities,” Ruef said.

Ruef became involved in special education issues and research because of his younger sister, Kathy, born with Down syndrome in 1960. “At that time,” Ruef said, “there were no legally mandated educational services for persons with disabilities, and the pediatrician told my mom to institutionalize my sister – not to even bring her home from the hospital.”

So began Ruef’s 50-year journey into special education advocacy. “The most ironic thing is that I have received infinitely more from Kathy and the other persons with disabilities I have worked with than I have given,” he said.

Ruef earned a doctorate in special education from the University of Kansas, a master of arts in education from San Diego State University, and a bachelor’s in English/philosophy from the University of San Francisco.

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About the Thomas Haring Award

The Thomas Haring Memorial Awards were established by the Haring family as a memorial to their son, a UC Santa Barbara professor, creative researcher and advocate for people with disabilities, as well as a mentor to many.

For more information about Ruef or Cal Poly's credential and graduate programs in special education, visit the School of Education Web site at: <http://www.soe.calpoly.edu/>.

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