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Six Cal Poly 'Great Grads' Headed for Great Futures

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Of the more than 3,800 students eligible to graduate at Cal Poly's Spring Commencement ceremonies on Saturday and Sunday, June 9 and10, six have been singled out for their hard work, diligence and dedication. Some are continuing their education; others have landed dream jobs. They are:

English major Stacy Neely

A car accident put Neely in a wheelchair when she was 19 – and put her dreams of a college education on hold. Determined to earn a degree, Neely enrolled in Cuesta College after her marriage ended along with her job at a local nonprofit agency. Spending four years at Cuesta and seven at Cal Poly, she juggled school, parenting and health issues and earned four associate degrees and a bachelor's in English with a minor in women's and gender studies. With a consistent GPA above 3.0, including making the Dean's List twice, Neely sets high standards for herself and others. She plans to continue with post-graduate study and is proud of the scholarly example she has set for her 12-year-old son, Colin.

Industrial technology major Paul Marchetti

Marchetti calls Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy crucial to his landing a job that pays six figures with Lab 126, which designs and engineers the Kindle for Amazon. Marchetti was attracted to Cal Poly because of its industrial technology program, which includes a mix of technology and business courses. Once in the program, he discovered that the packaging program within the industrial technology major. "The packaging aspect of my education interested me the most because of the multidisciplinary nature of the program," Marchetti said. "I was able to include everything from the business side, such as marketing and logistics, and then include the applied engineering side like dynamics testing and material specifications." Marchetti found his Cal Poly education especially applicable as an intern with Lab 126.

Recreation, parks and tourism administration major Alexis Bradfield

Following graduation, Bradfield will assume a job far from her hometown of Santa Maria. The daughter of two Cal Poly alumni, Bradfield will join the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmish-Partenkirchen, Germany, where she'll have duties in customer relations and conference support. As an Armed Forces Recreation Center Resort, the Edelweiss serves U.S. servicemen and women. "Growing up in a military family, it has always been my dream to put my education to use helping the men and women of the U.S. military," Bradfield said. "In Cal Poly's Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration Department, as well as during my time as a Poly Rep, I learned a great deal about customer service, public speaking, hospitality and adventure travel, which helped me attain this dream job."

Architectural Engineering major Zhi Liu

Although he spoke no English at 18 when he arrived in the U.S. from China, Liu worked his way through community college. Along with his parents and twin brother, Liu came to the U.S. to seek opportunity and a better life. A community college professor recommended Liu attend Cal Poly and study architectural engineering, one of the university's most challenging majors. A recipient of the competitive $3,000 Structural Engineers Association of Southern California (SEAOSC) Scholarship, Liu will graduate with a 3.99 grade point average. After a summer internship at a structural engineering firm in Oakland, he will enroll in a master's program at UC Berkeley. "I've

had good professors in community college and at Cal Poly," Liu said. "I'm grateful they are so available to their students."

Mechanical Engineering major Arturo Ayala-Navarro

Growing up, Ayala-Navarro's professional and academic success was never assured. Born in Michoacan, Mexico, he grew up in Napa, Calif., where his non-English-speaking father started as a field worker. His mother worked seasonally on bottling lines. Although high school friends aimed for GED degrees, Ayala-Navarro's father continually pushed him. "He was never happy with an A- if he thought I could have gotten an A," Ayala-Navarro said. When he connected with a mentor in the Math, Engineering, Science Achievement program for underserved students in community college, Ayala-Navarro discovered his excitement for learning. Participation in the MIT Summer Research Program and UC Riverside's Center for Environmental Research and Technology sparked his interest in computational modeling. He also benefited from an internship at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Last year Ayala-Navarro took part in a design team that won a national championship. He served as president of the award-winning Cal Poly Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE).

Construction Management major Erich Klemme

Former Mustang defensive lineman Klemme said, "Coming to Cal Poly was absolutely the best decision I've made in my life." He was steered into construction management by his football coaches. "I will miss the camaraderie at Cal Poly, both on and off the field," he said. "Coaches, too, became friends and mentors -- especially Jamar Cain, our defensive line coach." Klemme's college highlight was winning the Great West Championship. "My teammates have grown together since we were 18. It was great to excel with these friends one more time." Following graduation, Klemme will join Clark Construction in Los Angeles as a field manager. "It was through the effort of a professor that I first got an internship with Clark," Klemme said. "I'm grateful because my job offer verifies that I'm of value to the company."

For more information on any of these "great grads," contact Stacia Momburg in Cal Poly's Public Affairs office at 805-756-6260.

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