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New Cal Poly Scholarship Program Welcomes First Recipients

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly President Jeffrey D. Armstrong and his wife, Sharon, welcomed the first recipients of a new scholarship program at a reception at their home Sept. 27.

Initiated by Armstrong to help support a more diverse and culturally competent student body, the Cal Poly Scholars Program is aimed at students whose families earn less than \$80,000 annually. Many of the students come from Cal Poly's Partner Schools, a collection of California public high schools that serve low-income populations and have low percentages of students advancing to college.

The scholarship criterion also includes students who are National Merit Scholars, National Hispanic Scholars or National Achievement Scholars.

The 14 first-year engineering students who received awards represent the first of what Armstrong hopes will be hundreds of Cal Poly Scholars. "We've established the first cohort of Cal Poly Scholars in the College of Engineering," he said, "but we intend to grow the program across the university and increase the amount of the scholarship awards by raising additional resources from donors and industry partners."

In welcoming the students, Armstrong said, "Many of you, like me and Sharon, are the first in your family to go to college. We want to give you the tools and support you need to succeed."

The scholarship program provides an iPad, a \$3,000 housing grant renewable for up to four years, and programmatic aid to support the students' academic progress.

Jackie Duerr of the College of Engineering's Multicultural Engineering Program explained that many first-generation students experience social and intellectual isolation that can impede their ability to thrive.

"We'll be coaching the Cal Poly Scholars at every step in their academic journey," Duerr said. "Their success means a lot to us. The scholarship program will help ensure that a Cal Poly education is available to all students."

The new students were excited about having been chosen for the scholarship, and they seemed equally enthusiastic about their classes. "Cal Poly was my top choice, and I was literally dancing in joy when I learned that I had been chosen for this scholarship," said Andy Matsumoto, a computer science major from El Monte, Calif.

"I feel like my future is made," said Geoff Wacker, a computer engineering major from Norco, Calif. "My classes are challenging, but we're already designing and building computer games in the first-year course. It's awesome."

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