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## *Cal Poly Society of Women Engineers Named Best in the Nation*

### **University's Chapter Breaks Records at National Conference**

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly's Society of Women Engineers (SWE) is not only one of the nation's largest chapters, it has also been named the best. Cal Poly received the Gold Level Award, large collegiate section, at the National SWE conference held Nov. 8-10 in Houston.

The award honors outstanding achievements in a wide range of areas, including planning and administration, communication, member recruitment, regional and national participation, education and outreach, inclusiveness and diversity, and alignment with the national SWE mission.

This is the second year in a row and the ninth since 2002 that Cal Poly SWE has been recognized as the nation's top collegiate section.

Cal Poly SWE also won the Outreach Award for its high school shadow event and placed third in the Team Tech competition for creating a mobility device that allows wheelchair users to switch easily from power to manual operation.

"Our success on all fronts is a direct result of the commitment of our adviser, Helene Finger, club officers and our members," said Cal Poly SWE President Laura Harris.

Cal Poly SWE also broke records in individual awards with five Cal Poly alumnae honored in three categories.

"No other university has ever had as many individual award winners at a national conference," said Finger, women's engineering program director. "It's a first that Cal Poly alumnae received two out of five of the Distinguished New Engineer awards and another two out of five of the Outstanding Collegiate Member awards."

"Not only do this year's national awards celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of Cal Poly SWE as a chapter," said Cal Poly Engineering Dean Deb Larson, "but they also honor the caliber of individual members – students and alumnae – on an unprecedented level. The awards highlight the culture of achievement here that actively nurtures, shapes and inspires new generations of leaders, role models and difference-makers."

Five Cal Poly SWE alumnae received awards in three individual areas, as follows:

**Distinguished New Engineer Award:** Jennifer Harris Nichols (B.S., Industrial Engineering, 2003, Cal Poly; M.S., Engineering, 2003, Cal Poly) and Tracy Van Houten (B.S., Aerospace Engineering, 2004, Cal Poly; M.S., astronautical engineering, 2008, USC).

Harris Nichols' engineering career began at UPS, where she was promoted three times in five years, making her the company's youngest woman engineering manager. She is now a clinical engineering manager for TriMedx, a healthcare technology management company. In both settings she has been actively involved in women's leadership development.

Van Houten, a systems engineer for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, was part of the team that landed the Curiosity rover on Mars in August. She is now transitioning to a new project, an orbiter launching in 2014 to map Earth's soil moisture and freeze/thaw state.

**Outstanding Collegiate Member Award:** Megan Adams (B.S., Mechanical Engineering, 2012, Cal Poly) and Morgan Miller (B.S., Civil Engineering, 2012, Cal Poly).

Adams is in charge of the 2013 SWE Future Leaders training, and is the 2014 collegiate

leadership forum coordinator. Last year, Miller served as president of the SWE Cal Poly section and vice president of Chi Epsilon, the civil and environmental engineering honor society.

Emerging Leader Award: Elizabeth Green (B.S., Business Administration, 2000, Cal Poly; MBA, Finance and Management, 2002 and M.S. Systems Engineering, 2005, Loyola Marymount University).

A corporate manager at Northrop Grumman, Green was recognized for superior achievements in the areas of systems engineering, risk management and supply chain management. An active SWE life member, Green is chair emeritus of the Northrop Grumman Corporate Women Engineers Group and co-founded diversity organizations at the company for women and new hires. She has led many STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) outreach activities and currently chairs the Institute for Supply Management's risk management group board and the industry advisory board for Cal Poly's Women's Engineering Program.

Related links:

About the Society of Women Engineers:

<http://societyofwomenengineers.swe.org/>

For a complete list and profiles of 2012 SWE award recipients:<http://www.nxtbook.com>

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