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Cal Poly Names 2005-2006 Distinguished Teachers

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly has named one professor from the college of Engineering and two professors from the College of Liberal Arts to receive this year's highest teaching award.

Associate Professor Yarrow Nelson of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, Professor Michael Miller of the Art and Design Department and Mary Armstrong of the English Department are the recipients of a 2005-2006 Distinguished Teaching Award.

All three were cited for providing stimulating, challenging and entertaining courses and helping students both in the classroom and beyond.

Nelson came to Cal Poly in 1999 from Cornell University , where he was a visiting assistant professor. At Cal Poly he teaches graduate courses in environmental engineering and biochemical engineering. His research includes hydrocarbon biodegradation and phytoremediation, toxic metal bioaccumulation in shellfish and biofilm modeling.

"Dr. Nelson is not just an excellent teacher and remarkable researcher, he is also a friend and mentor for his students," said one student nominator. Additional comments included:

- . "Dr. Nelson's positive attitude toward life and people makes him a great example for his students."
- . "He dedicates his time generously to his students."
- . "I am honored to know him as the person who extended my knowledge in science and provided me with a wide range of technical experiences."

Nelson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1979 from University of California , Berkeley , a master's degree in 1992 and a Ph.D. in 1997, both from Cornell University .

Miller came to Cal Poly in 1997. He completed his undergraduate studies in art at University of California , Irvine , in 1986 and received a Master of Fine Arts from University of Southern California in 1988. He taught on the college level beginning in 1990 at several institutions in Los Angeles . He teaches drawing, intermedia, sculpture, and critical theory.

Comments from nominating students included:

- . "What makes Professor Miller great is that he doesn't see us as only his students, he sees us as fellow artists."
- . "He has inspired me to explore new areas of art and try new things."
- . "Professor Miller challenges us to be artists, not just students fulfilling a professor's assignments."

Armstrong joined the faculty in 2000. Armstrong teaches Victorian literature, modernism, critical theory, and women's studies. She has published several essays on Charles Dickens, as well as articles on feminist theory and queer theory. Her current research includes the articulation of the gendered subject through the scientific vernacular in Bronte's "Jane Eyre," and discourses of sexology in Hall's "The Well of Loneliness."

"Dr. Armstrong presents sophisticated feminist theories in a way that make them understandable," one student said.

- . "By skillfully guiding class discussion, she allows students to make relevant connections to their own lives, to historical events, and to other academic disciplines."
- . "Dr. Armstrong works to help students develop an inquiring approach to matters they may otherwise take for granted."
- . "Mary Armstrong provides an amazing example for both female and male students to challenge themselves academically and intellectually."

Armstrong earned a bachelor's degree from Holy Cross in 1987, a master's in 1989 and Ph.D. in 1995, both from Duke University .

The three 2005-2006 Distinguished Teachers will be recognized at the General Session of Cal Poly's Fall Conference, Monday, Sept. 18. The distinguished teachers are nominated by students and alumni of the university. Cal Poly has named 132 distinguished professors since the awards program began in 1964.

For more information on the awards and previous winners, go to the Cal Poly Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Web page at <http://www.calpoly.edu/~acadsen/dta.html>.

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