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Cal Poly and Finnish Polytechnic University Establish Exchange Program

SAN LUIS OBISPO - A Cal Poly natural resources management professor will teach in Finland next fall as part of a new exchange program between polytechnic universities.

Cal Poly College of Agriculture Dean David Wehner and officials from Seinajoki Polytechnic of Finland signed an agreement Wednesday setting up the program that will send Cal Poly faculty and students to Finland and eventually bring their Finnish counterparts to Cal Poly.

Natural Resources Management Department Head and Professor Doug Piirto will be the first to take part in the new program. The natural resources management professor will spend 10 weeks teaching and conducting research at Seinajoki Polytechnic, a university located in western Finland.

Forestry plays a major role in that country's economy, and Piirto teaches introduction to forest ecosystem management, forest harvesting and utilization, among other classes, at Cal Poly.

Next summer, two Cal Poly agriculture students will do their internships at the Finland university farm, where they will learn about growing crops like barley, oats, wheat and rye in a northern region with a very short growing season.

The students, Kari Reina and Kiana Amiri-Davani, will learn about different types of agriculture in a very different climate and in a small country where the farms average less than 100 acres, said Asko Peltola, research and development director for Seinajoki Polytechnic.

Peltola spent the past few months at Cal Poly developing the exchange program and signed the agreement this week. "The students will experience a new culture," said Peltola. "That's good. You always learn something when you are away from home."

Seinajoki Polytechnic has 5,000 students and has arranged similar exchange programs with 100 other universities worldwide. Peltola said faculty from his university's agricultural college want to come to Cal Poly to teach.

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Note to editors: Contact polynews@calpoly.edu for photos of Professor Peltola and the Cal Poly Finland study students.