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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Reading Program Engages 3,000 Freshmen, 200 Volunteers and the City of San Luis Obispo

SAN LUIS OBISPO – For the first time, Preface, The Cal Poly Shared Reading Program, is inviting the entire city of San Luis Obispo to join with new students for a common intellectual experience.

Since 2002, Preface, has asked incoming freshmen and transfer students to read a pre-selected book as part of their college orientation experience. The students then review and discuss the book during Cal Poly's annual Week of Welcome with the help of volunteer discussion facilitators. This year, the book will be "the Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini.

Preface is joining forces with the SLO City-County Library to recruit and train community volunteers for the new joint program that will include two off-campus discussion sessions designed specifically for community members. The SLO City Reads discussion groups for the community will take place at noon and 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 21. The program also includes a free public reading and presentation by the author on Thursday, Oct. 20 in the Performing Arts Center's Christopher Cohan Center.

"Although our town and gown relationship is excellent in San Luis Obispo, this collaboration between the university and the city will serve to make the relationship even better," said San Luis Obispo City Mayor Dave Romero.

Judy Rohr, manager of the SLO City-County Library anticipates a great response from the community. "Not only is this a well-reviewed and best selling title, but cities and towns across the nation have found that 'One city/One book' programs serve as a focal point for community discussions. They strengthen a sense of community and enrich our civic life by bringing people of all ages together to listen to other points of view and share their own responses," said Rohr.

"Our city joins many leading cities in emphasizing quality of life issues through lifelong learning. Reading is crucial to an individual's education and enjoyment of life. A city-wide program will result in untold benefits for many individuals," said Mayor Romero.

To serve as a Preface discussion facilitator or find out more about the book or its author, visit <http://www.preface.calpoly.edu>, click on "Volunteers," complete the "Preface Volunteer Registration Form," and attend a short information session. Discussion facilitators will meet with 12-15 new students during Cal Poly's annual Week of Welcome on the morning of Wednesday, Sept. 14 to lead individual 75-minute discussion groups.

To participate in one of the two SLO City Reads community discussion groups on Sept. 21 at the SLO Library, email SLOreads@SLOlibrary.org with a preferred time. For additional information contact Moe McGee, assistant library director, at (805) 781-5990. The Library purchased 20 extra copies of the book with a donation from the Rotary Club of San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.

Patricia Ponce, Cal Poly Preface coordinator encourages those interested to pick up a copy of the book and dive in. "Taking part in Preface & SLO City Reads will reward you with a wonderful, shared intellectual experience and the opportunity to hear first-hand from a fascinating and engaging author who writes about Afghanistan — a current topic for all Americans," said Ponce.

About "The Kite Runner" and author Khaled Hosseini:

The New York Times Book Review calls "Kite Runner" a "Powerful and Haunting" novel. The story, set in Afghanistan, describes a complex father-son relationship and the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant. Amir, the young protagonist, narrates the story as he grapples with issues of class difference, social divide, love, loyalty, betrayal, and redemption – all told within an eye-opening account of the country's political turmoil.

Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965. His father worked for the Afghan foreign ministry and his mother was a teacher of Farsi and History at a large girls high school. In 1976, Khaled's family was relocated to Paris, France, where his father was assigned a diplomatic post in the Afghan embassy. The assignment would return the Hosseini family in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the Soviet invasion.

Khaled's family was granted political asylum in the U.S. they moved to San Jose, CA, in 1980. Having lost all of their property in Afghanistan, the Hosseinis lived on welfare and food stamps for a short while. Khaled attended Santa Clara University and graduated from UC San Diego School of Medicine.

He has been in practice as an internist since 1996 but his first love has always been writing. Khaled's vivid, and fond, memories of peaceful pre-Soviet era Afghanistan led partially to the writing of "The Kite Runner," his first novel.

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