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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Professor Completes Successful Inaugural Year as Appointed Chair

Architect, Engineer Nick Watry Brings Real-Life Experience to the Classroom

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Last fall when Nick Watry was named the inaugural recipient of the George Hasslein Endowed Chair for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental Design, his main goal was to bring real-life experiences to the classroom and engage architecture and engineering students in interdisciplinary studies.

An architect, engineer and founder of the Watry Design Group of Redwood City, Watry is a 1964 Cal Poly architectural engineering graduate who has spent the past 40 years designing concrete buildings and parking structures. In 2000 he earned his executive master's degree in architecture at Cal Poly and returned to the university the following year to teach construction management, concrete technology, and interdisciplinary design/build classes.

"I wanted to make the classroom more like it was when I was a student; a place where I could learn everything there is to know about the career I was planning to pursue," said Watry.

Watry stresses the importance of assigning projects in which students are required to learn the various aspects of the business of architecture, engineering and construction. "I want my students to engage in a collaborative effort in which they learn each person's role and how to effectively work together on their various projects," Watry said. "Because that's what we do out in the real world."

His approach is working. Devin O'Neill, a construction management student in Watry's Integrated Project Services class, said he appreciated that the class "judged students by the product they produced and that the students were held 100 percent accountable for what they turned in."

Watry recently taught a class in which 37 students developed a plan for a Cal Poly University Center, a four-part project that would include extended learning center, an events center, a faculty and staff club and a new alumni house. Cal Poly's Executive Vice Provost and Chief Planning Officer, Linda Dalton approached Watry and asked if his students might be interested in putting together a proposal for the project. Watry had his students approach the project as though they were working for a real client. The students planned, designed, engineered and developed a construction cost estimate schedule, and financing program for the new 60-thousand-square-foot center.

"Our faculty and students have benefited tremendously from the professional perspectives, enthusiasm and skills of Nick Watry," said R. Thomas Jones dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. "In the spirit of the founding dean, he has helped rekindle collaboration through real-world-based learning that has energized the entire college."

Watry will continue to teach at Cal Poly, conducting classes for the College of Architecture and Environmental Design's construction management and architectural engineering departments. "I love teaching so much, and fortunately the students like me, so I've been offered additional teaching opportunities," he said.

About the George Hasslein Endowed Chair

The George Hasslein Endowed Chair for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental Design honors the founding dean of Cal Poly's College of Architecture and Environmental Design. The endowed chair honors Hasslein for his "particular vision of student-focused education." Its goal is to bring pre-eminent practitioners and scholars into the classroom to enrich learning environments for students in the CAED. The endowment is supported by the CAED Foundation, Peter and Ida Mae Berg, the Hasslein family and many alumni and friends.

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