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Contact: Jo Ann Lloyd
Cal Poly Public Affairs
(805) 756-1511

Cal Poly Names 2004-2005 Distinguished Teachers

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly has named professors from the colleges of Agriculture, Engineering and Liberal Arts to receive this year's highest teaching award.

Professor Fred DePiero in the Electrical Engineering Department, Professor John Hampsey, in the English Department, and Associate Professor David Headrick in the Horticulture and Crop Science Department are the recipients of a 2004-2005 Distinguished Teaching Award.

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

Professor DePiero came to Cal Poly in 1996 from the University of Tennessee, where he was a research associate. At Cal Poly he teaches graduate-level electrical engineering classes in digital filters and image processing and undergraduate classes in digital signal processing, linear systems and control.

"Dr. DePiero is lively and teaches with the type of enthusiasm that is infectious," said one student nominator. Additional comments included:

- "During every lecture, he has a purpose and makes a point. He provides the perfect marriage between challenging work and fun work, all the while keeping the end result very rewarding. He pushed me to venture outside my comfort zone and inspired me to pursue furthering my education at the graduate level."
- "His lectures are always energetic, well-prepared and inspiring. His knowledge and enthusiasm have a positive impact on me."
- "DePiero is a very entertaining instructor. He leads you to the path of discovery."

DePiero earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1985 and a master's degree in 1987 both from Michigan State University. He earned a Ph.D. in 1996 from the University of Tennessee. He lives in San Luis Obispo.

Professor Hampsey has taught at Cal Poly since 1989. Prior to that he was a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an assistant professor at Boston University.

He teaches a variety of courses at Cal Poly, including classical literature and British romanticism, Victorian poetry and prose, the existential tradition, history of criticism and modern drama, among others.

A biology student in Hampsey's great books class credits the professor with teaching not only the literature of the time period being studied, but the political and social atmosphere of those times and places as well. "He ties relevant lessons from ancient times to current events and larger concepts such as gender roles and morality." Additional praise included:

- "I have never been challenged in any other class like I have been in Dr. Hampsey's class. His method of teaching is thought-provoking and inspiring. His class has strengthened my ability to reason and reinforced my understanding of morality."

- “His lectures are excellent. He has challenged me to question everything in my life in order to find out who I am.”
- “He relates to his students in an utterly profound way. He opens your eyes to wisdom” and “gives you the freedom to think, write and say what you want. I have an entirely new way of looking at life itself.”

Hampsey earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Holy Cross College in 1976 and a Ph.D. from Boston College in 1982. He is a resident of San Luis Obispo.

Associate Professor Headrick joined the faculty in 1998, after completing graduate and post-doctoral studies at UC Riverside. At Cal Poly he teaches; agricultural entomology; biological control; people, pests and plagues; and applied systematics for agriculture.

“Dr. Headrick has a wonderful way of presenting the material to make it interesting and easy to comprehend,” said one senior. “He makes me enjoy entomology very much and makes me believe in myself.” Others wrote:

- “He does a brilliant, outstanding job of teaching. He gives us a reason to believe that learning can be fun. He is extremely funny and relates to us students very well. He presents the material clearly, logically and enthusiastically.”
- “This man has a heart of gold. He has accepted about twice as many advisees as other members of the department and always makes time for anyone needing extra help academically or emotionally.”
- “He gets students to want to be challenged. He has guided me emotionally through hard times and has pushed me academically to be my best.”

Headrick earned a bachelor’s degree in 1986 from Cal Poly, Pomona, a master’s degree in 1988 and a Ph.D. in 1992, both from UC Riverside. He lives in San Luis Obispo.

The three 2004-2005 Distinguished Teachers will be honored at Cal Poly’s June 11 Commencement ceremonies. The distinguished teachers are nominated by students and alumni of the university. Cal Poly has named 129 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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Cal Poly Public Affairs
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
805.756.7266
polynews@calpoly.edu