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April 13, 2009

Contact: Amy Hewes

805-756-6402

ahewes@calpoly.edu

National Engineering Student Leaders Congregate at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Student leaders from 41 engineering schools across the nation—and representatives from Canada, Qatar and Africa—congregated at Cal Poly for the National Association of Engineering Student Councils (NAESC) conference April 2-4.

At the conference, the NAESC National Executive Board announced Cal Poly as the winner of the Most Involved Engineering Student Council Award.

In congratulating Cal Poly's Engineering Student Council, Cal Poly's Engineering Associate Dean Dan Walsh said he has never seen a student group do a better job of organizing a major event. "This conference was flawless and demonstrated the professionalism and dedication of Cal Poly engineers," he said.

The weekend's events included workshops, industry tours and speakers, including the famous co-founder of Palm and Handspring, Jeff Hawkin. Participants also had a chance to enjoy special Central Coast activities, such as the San Luis Obispo Farmers' Market, surf lessons and a beach concert featuring local band StillTime. Bill Vass, chief operating officer and president of Sun Microsystems, was the speaker at the closing banquet at Robert Hall Winery in Paso Robles, Calif.

Opening its doors to the national conference boosted Cal Poly's reputation as an engineering powerhouse. "It was a tremendous honor to host the conference, and students from across the nation were able to see Cal Poly's learn-by-doing philosophy," said Engineering Student Council Chair Jessica Paz.

Students were impressed by how Cal Poly's partnership with industry enhances the hands-on curriculum, which was demonstrated when they attended Northrop Grumman's presentation of an unmanned helicopter, given to the school for student projects and research said Paz.

Hawkin, the conference keynote speaker, gave a presentation on how the brain works in relation to technology. He founded the non-profit Redwood Neuroscience Institute, to study how the human neocortex processes information, and wrote a book on his theories, "On Intelligence," which was published in 2004. Since then he has been developing a technology platform based on the results of his research.

The conference was made possible through support from industry sponsors. "They not only provided monetary resources, but suggestions to improve the planning and implementation, speakers, workshops and much more," said Joel Hanson, one of this year's NAESC student organizers. Sponsors included Parsons, the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Sun Microsystems.

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Cal Poly Public Affairs

California Polytechnic State University

San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

805.756.7266

polynews@calpoly.edu

