

California Polytechnic State University

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly Hosts Public Forum on Genetic Engineering Oct. 6

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture and College of Science and Mathematics are sponsoring a free public forum Oct. 6 on genetically modified organisms – the subject of Measure Q on the ballot in San Luis Obispo County’s November election.

The forum, titled “Genetic Engineering and the Measure Q Controversy,” will begin at 7 p.m. in Harmon Hall in the Performing Arts Center’s Christopher Cohan Center on campus. Public parking is available in the Performing Arts Center parking garage for \$5.

The forum will start with a presentation on the science of biotechnology from UC. Riverside Professor Alan McHughen. McHughen is a member of the committee of the National Academy of Sciences which produced the NAS report, “Safety of Genetically Engineered Foods: Approaches to Assessing Unintended Health Effects.” The report can be found online at <http://www.nationalacademies.org/agriculture/>.

Following Professor McHughen’s presentation, four speakers will present remarks on San Luis Obispo County’s Measure Q. Organic farmer Ryan Rich, owner and operator of Four Elements Organics, and Mike Zelina, one of the authors of Measure Q, will speak in favor of the measure and Tom Ikeda, a farmer and current president of the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, and Jan Haynes, Director of Development at FzioMed, a San Luis Obispo biotech firm, will speak in opposition to Measure Q. The four speakers will alternate remarks.

Cal Poly College of Agriculture Dean David Wehner said the forum is a chance to hear expert information on the science behind genetic engineering and biotechnology, and what the National Academy of Sciences has concluded.

“There are complex issues involved, and this forum can provide some of the background and scientific information to help everyone understand the field of genetic engineering,” Wehner said.

Since genetic engineering is also the topic of Measure Q on the November ballot, the College of Agriculture and the College of Science and Mathematics are hosting the forum and including both proponents and opponents of the measure to encourage community discussion and education on the issue.

“Genetic engineering is a timely issue, and we hope the community will take advantage of the forum to learn more about its benefits and risks,” Wehner said.

Audience members will have a chance to write questions on cards for possible response by the panel during a portion of the forum.

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Editors please note: for more information on Professor McHughen, visit http://www.facultydirectory.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/pub/public_individual.pl?faculty=1912.

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