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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cal Poly Launches New Summer Carver College Program for High School Students

Cal Poly's College of Agriculture will offer a new program this summer for high-achieving students from across California who show promise in technology and science-based careers in agriculture and ag-related industries.

The first Carver College program at Cal Poly will bring 24 California high school students - 12 boys and 12 girls - to live on campus for four days of classes and workshops taught by university faculty June 23-27.

Cal Poly's Carver College program, named in honor of African-American agriculture researcher, professor and pioneer George Washington Carver, is free to the 24 students thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Cacique Foundation, the charitable arm of Mexican cheese company Cacique Inc. While at the university, students will take courses in food science and nutrition, earth and soil sciences, bioresource and agricultural engineering, animal science, horticulture and crop science, dairy science, and forestry and natural resource management.

The university hopes to expose students to the changing face of agriculture, explained Carver College Director Bret Harrison, who is also the director of the university's MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) agricultural outreach initiative.

"Agriculture needs managers up to date on the latest developments in processing, packaging and marketing food commodities. Agriculture needs students who are very savvy with math and science and have the technical skills to program a computer or a GPS unit in a tractor to tell it how to lay the proper pattern of drip irrigation line, or apply pesticides or fertilizers using satellite coordinates from a GPS

system, and people who know the chemical characteristics of their soils, how they percolate, hold water or hold nutrients," Harrison said.

Giving promising students a look at the high-tech side of modern agriculture and its financially rewarding careers is what Carver College is about. Cal Poly modeled the program on one at Tuskegee University in Alabama as well as outreach programs already used by other California college MESA programs.

Naming the new Cal Poly summer program in honor of pioneering agriculturalist Carver was a natural choice, said Harrison. Carver, born a slave in Missouri about 1864, went on to study botany at what is now Iowa State University and became the first black faculty member there. He later taught at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, doing pioneering research in agriculture that gave Southern farmers profitable crop alternatives to cotton.

"George Washington Carver is a symbol of agricultural initiative. He was born a slave, but he had a passion for agriculture and agricultural science. He wound up revolutionizing farming practice in the United States, and in essence saved the Southern agriculture industry with the practices he developed," said Harrison.

It's that kind of passion Cal Poly's Carver College program hopes to stir, Harrison said. With continuing support from industry, Cal Poly's College of Agriculture hopes to make Carver College an annual event, and expand the program to include a summer Carver Academy for middle school students.

The university hopes to use the summer programs to reach out to bright students in some of the state's most economically disadvantaged areas and encourage them toward college, Harrison said.

Cal Poly is currently among the leading schools in the nation in awarding bachelor's degrees to Hispanic students. "We are proud of that, but we intend to improve on our record by getting the word out about careers available to those who graduate from Cal Poly," said College of Agriculture Dean David Wehner. "Our graduates from the College of Agriculture - including minority graduates - are already in the legislature, in law offices, in biotechnology companies and research and quality assurance laboratories. They're helping lead some of the most remarkable technological changes America has ever experienced."

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