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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cal Poly Food and Wine Analysis Lab Federally Certified for Commercial Beverage Alcohol and Quality Analysis

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly is now the first and only university in the nation with a laboratory federally certified to commercially test the alcohol content of wine, beer and distilled spirits, as well as other chemical components of those beverages.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms recently notified the university that both the Cal Poly Food and Wine Analysis Laboratory and Food Science Professor Joseph Montecalvo are fully certified to perform commercial alcoholic beverage testing.

"This certification comes as a result of many Saturdays and summers spent working, and it gives me a great sense of accomplishment for our students, department and college," said Montecalvo, creator of the pioneering laboratory. Montecalvo has been working with the food and beverage industry and grant agencies since the mid-1990s to gather the funding and the equipment needed to furnish a complete food and wine analysis laboratory at Cal Poly. "Private donations and grants make up 99.5 percent of the lab's funding," stressed Montecalvo.

Wineries and alcoholic beverage makers must by law report the alcohol content of those beverages on labels. The testing is performed by commercial laboratories. The new ATF certification allows Cal Poly's academic Food and Wine Analysis Laboratory to perform the testing for wineries and distilleries and other alcoholic beverage makers.

Currently the lab is used for a summer course in wine chemistry and analysis offered through the Cal Poly Continuing Education program since summer 2000, as well as an undergraduate wine analysis level course offered for the first time this year and several food science courses. In the wine analysis classes, students learn how to run

chemical analyses of wines, then compare chemical profiles of wines. Montecalvo had sought ATF certification for the lab in 2001 in order to offer alcohol percentage testing and other chemical testing to California wineries and distillers.

"My vision is to have this lab serve as a wine chemistry and analysis lab available to help the wine industry conduct appropriate analysis of their wines professionally and swiftly," he said. "The lab will also provide a great learning opportunity for our students and support our proposed wine and viticulture major."

The ATF certification was granted retroactive to July 1, 2002. The ATF letter granting the certification praised Montecalvo and his lab for "demonstrated expertise in the analysis of wine." The agency granted the lab a two-year certification.

Cal Poly College of Agriculture Dean David J. Wehner stressed that the laboratory's ATF certification is another demonstration of the university's excellence.

Noting that graduate students are already working with Montecalvo in the lab, the dean praised the students for their work. "Even the length of the certification is a remarkable feat and a tribute to both the laboratory's donors and to the precision with which the students prepared the laboratory under Dr. Montecalvo's direction," Wehner said.

"This certification would not be possible if our students didn't already possess the technical competency in their respective disciplines," he stressed.

Equipment available in the lab includes a high-pressure liquid chromatography unit, UV-visible recording spectrophotometer, distillation equipment, a thermolyne ash furnace capable of ashing wine samples at 550 degrees Celsius for mineral analysis, digital refractometers used to measure sugar content of grapes, and a Shimadzu 19A, a state-of-the-art gas chromatography unit that works with a computer to provide students with a color display of the alcohol and other chemical components in wine samples.

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