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Northern Arizona University Administrator and Civil Engineering Professor Debra Larson Named Dean of Cal Poly Engineering

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Debra Larson, a civil engineering professor and Academic Affairs administrator with Northern Arizona University, has been named the new dean of Cal Poly Engineering, university President Jeffrey D. Armstrong announced today.

Larson, 54, will join Cal Poly Aug. 22, taking the reins of the university's largest college with about 5,000 students, 13 degree programs and more than 80 laboratories.

"Debra understands Cal Poly thoroughly and brings an excellent blend of experience as an administrator and faculty member," Armstrong said. "She knows that our primary mission is undergraduate education, that our highest priority is student success, and that Learn by Doing is an integral part of the Cal Poly experience."

Armstrong added that Larson's colleagues consistently praised her focus on student learning, her high energy and her uncanny ability to build consensus among peers. "Cal Poly has one of the nation's most respected engineering programs, yet everyone in the College of Engineering believes we can be even better, and Debra is the right person to help us enrich our program," Armstrong said.

Larson has been with Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff since 1994, serving as a civil engineering professor; associate dean of Engineering and Professional Programs; chair of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department; associate dean of the College of Engineering, Forestry and Natural Sciences; and, since July 2010, as associate vice provost for Academic Affairs.

Larson's professional background includes stints with private engineering firms in Arizona, Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Wisconsin. She also served as visiting professor at the Helsinki University of Technology in Espoo, Finland, in 2003.

The Arizona Society of Civil Engineers presented Larson with its Distinguished Service Award in 2008 and President's Award in 2005. She won the 1999 Pacific Southwest Section Outstanding Teaching Award from the American Society of Engineering Educators, the same year she lead a faculty team that was awarded a \$50,000 Boeing Outstanding Educator Award for Design4Practice: Engineering Design.

She has served or currently serves on the boards of many notable professional organizations, including the ABET, the Pacific Southwest Section American Society for Engineering Education, several American Society of Civil Engineers committees, and as a

proposal reviewer for the National Science Foundation.

She is a co-author or contributor to two engineering texts and has written numerous journal articles and reports.

Larson earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from Michigan Technological University and her doctorate, also in civil engineering, from Arizona State University.

She currently lives in Flagstaff with her husband, Gale Wilberger.

"I am thrilled to join Cal Poly Engineering," said Larson. "I believe that my passion for undergraduate teaching along with my administrative and industry experience make me a good fit for the College, which is so highly regarded in engineering education as well as the profession. I am lucky – and privileged – to be empowered as the incoming dean to do everything I can to contribute to the creation of engineering solutions to the challenges we face as a society. I'm eager to begin."

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