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Cal Poly Wine and Viticulture Program Honored with 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award

SAN LUIS OBISPO – The Cal Poly Wine and Viticulture program received the California Exposition and State Fair's 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award for the university's enduring contributions to the advancement of the California wine industry. Cal Poly joins UC Davis and CSU Fresno as recipients of the prestigious award, presented today at the California State Fair Gala at Cal Expo in Sacramento.

Since its inception with the planting of vineyards three decades ago, Cal Poly's Wine and Viticulture program has evolved to become the largest of its kind in the United States. Rooted in Cal Poly's renowned Learn by Doing tradition, the hands-on curriculum spans from the classroom and lab to the campus vineyard and pilot winery, preparing students for jobs in the California and worldwide wine industry.

Cal Poly Wine and Viticulture was acknowledged for its unique interdisciplinary learning experience encompassing lessons from three departments – Horticulture and Crop Science, Food Science and Nutrition, and Agribusiness – combining an understanding of grape cultivation, winemaking and wine business. Upon graduation, students are industry-ready, having mastered fundamental and applied sciences, modern agribusiness principles, social science, grape cultivation, enology and wine business principles.

"We are honored to be recognized along with such an impressive group of Lifetime Achievement Award recipients," said program Director John Peterson. "This is truly a student success story, since it is the students who define us. Every graduate of our program learns how to grow the grapes, make the wine and sell the finished product. Because of the collaboration between faculty and industry experts, our students gain hands-on experience through internships at more than 300 Central Coast wineries in Cal Poly's backyard and at wineries and vineyards throughout California."

The university's positive impact on the California wine industry is evidenced by the notable alumni who have come out of the program. "I am proud to trace part of my success back to the time I spent at Cal Poly," said Kenneth Volk, award-winning winemaker of Kenneth Volk Vineyards and founder of Wild Horse Winery. "The hands-on learning and specialized attention I received from the faculty at Cal Poly enriched my education in a way that no other program could have."

Cal Poly graduates have risen to positions of leadership across all areas of the wine industry and at dozens of leading wineries, including E. and J. Gallo Winery, J. Lohr Vineyards and Wines, Kendall Jackson, Robert Mondavi Wines, and Justin Vineyards and Winery.

For more information on Cal Poly Wine and Viticulture, visit: www.wvit.calpoly.edu.

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