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## Cal Poly to Host Oct. 8 Talk on Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Aliens abound on the movie screens, but in reality scientists are still trying to find out if we share our universe with other sentient creatures. Hear the latest perspective on the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI) from Jill Tarter, director of the Center for SETI Research at the SETI Institute in Mountain View, Calif.

Tarter will give a talk titled "Are We Alone?" on Saturday, Oct. 8, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Business Building Rotunda (03-213). The event is free and open to the public.

Tarter's work has brought her wide recognition in the scientific community and the general public. Her scientific recognition includes two Public Service Medals from NASA. She was a recipient of the Silicon Valley Women of Influence 2010 Award and in 2009 won one of three \$100,000 prizes presented by TED (Technology Entertainment and Design), a network of conferences that explore the research and practice of science and culture.

She received her Bachelor of Engineering Physics Degree with Distinction from Cornell University and her master's and doctorate degrees in Astronomy from the UC Berkeley. She has served as Project Scientist for NASA's SETI program, the High Resolution Microwave Survey, and has conducted numerous observational programs at radio observatories worldwide.

In 2004, Time Magazine named her one of its "100 Most Influential People" in the world. Her career as a radio astronomer was the model for the main character, played by Jodie Foster, in the 1997 movie "Contact," based on a novel written by astronomer Carl Sagan.

According to Tarter, extra-terrestrial intelligence is difficult to define and impossible to directly detect over interstellar distances. Therefore, the SETI community has attempted to detect indirect evidence of another distant technology. Because of the limitations of detection and analysis, they have had a pragmatic definition of intelligence for the past 50 years: the ability to build large transmitters.

The majority of SETI searches to date have looked for radio signals coming from distant civilizations. "If we find such evidence, we will infer the existence of intelligent technologists," said Tarter.

"We've recently begun looking for very short optical pulses as well. As our own technology matures and innovates, we may try other means of searching and we will certainly improve upon the searches that we are already conducting," she said.

For more information on Tarter's Oct. 8 talk, visit: [www.facebook.com/theforumatpoly](http://www.facebook.com/theforumatpoly) or <http://theforumatpoly.com/talks/jilltarter>.

This event is sponsored by The Forum at Cal Poly, the Cal Poly Astronomical Society, the Central Coast Astronomical Society and CESaME (the Cal Poly Center for Excellence in Science and Math Education).

Click here for a campus map with the location of the Business Rotunda.

[www.maps.calpoly.edu/flashmap/map.html?vlist=003-213](http://www.maps.calpoly.edu/flashmap/map.html?vlist=003-213).

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